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From 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid' to 'Diario di una Schiappa': A case study in the translation of children's literature

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The present dissertation presents a comparative analysis between the American children's novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and its Italian translation *Diario di una Schiappa*. The first three chapters, theoretical in nature, aim at exploring how children's literature has developed through the centuries until nowadays, where translation plays a fundamental role in bridging the gap not only between languages but also cultures; in the last chapter, on the other hand, the analysis of the series is carried out. Specifically, Chapter One offers an overview on the history of children's literature in English by focusing on five main periods in world history, that is the Classic World, the Middle Ages, the Modern Period, which also includes a brief excursus in the Puritan era, the 19th century and contemporary days. This chapter also aims at showing how the uses and the goals of children's books have changed throughout the centuries: indeed, in the past, books for children used to be written with the sole purpose of instructing young readers, teaching them good manners and helping them become successful and prominent figures. Today, on the contrary, children's literature is also used to let children travel to unknown places and explore different cultures, and this confirms once again the importance translation has acquired in both shaping identities and allowing children to discover new worlds and peoples. The role played by translation is better explored in the Chapter Two. After clarifying the concept of translation, I have focused here on the role and status of translation in children's literature. Books and texts written for a young readership have always been placed at the margins of the literary polysystem, thus failing to recognise the importance such stories have for the child's upbringing. Literature has indeed proved to be fundamental in shaping one's cultural identity as well as ideological affiliations, and the same can be said about translation, which contributes to broaden children's knowledge about the world. However, when translating for children, translators have to pay particular attention to all of the elements that make a clear reference to the source culture, since children may fail to

understand the connotations attached to them due to their lack of knowledge and inexperience. Hence the need to explore one of the main controversies in translation studies – here analysed with regard to children's literature – that is the question about equivalence and the status of adaptations. In addition to this, Chapter Two will also focus on other issues regarding children's literature, such as the challenges involved in the translation of images and the problems parents may encounter when reading stories aloud.

In Chapter Three I shifted my attention to the role of translators, who would better be defined as cultural mediators due to mediating role they play in adapting texts from one culture to another. Their action on texts seems to be invisible, as Venuti (2011) describes it, however it will be shown that such invisibility is only illusory, given the incredible process of transformation texts go through. Indeed, translators often have to adapt their translations according to the needs and conventions of the receiving culture, also respecting the ideological norms at the time they are translating the text. In addition to the need to conform to the conventions of the target culture, the alterations a translator makes prove to be necessary for the child's understanding as well. The strategies translators dispose of when dealing with culture-specific items will be better explored in Chapter Four, where the first nine books of the series *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* will be analysed. For my analysis, I decided to focus on all of the elements that made a clear reference to the uses and customs of the American culture and which therefore posed some problems to the Italian translator Rossella Bernascone. In particular, I decided to analyse the translation strategies adopted when dealing with food, names, units of measurement, social institutions, titles, idiomatic expressions, onomatopoeias, customs and practices, TV programmes and nursery rhymes. My analysis will be introduced by the theoretical rules translators have to adhere to when translating cultural references and will be supported by examples from the texts. The controversy about whether cultural references should be adapted to the conventions of the receiving culture or not is reflected in the choices the translator Rossella Bernascone has made. Where children are

believed to understand the connotations attached to a culture-specific element, then a literal translation is provided, otherwise an equivalent referent in the target culture has proved to be necessary. The adoption of such a dual strategy can enhance the child's curiosity about diversity and the 'foreign', and at same time it provides young readers with familiar elements that prevent him or her from getting lost in the book.

CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW ON THE HISTORY OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN ENGLAND

1.1. The origins of children's literature

'Ever since there were children, there has been children's literature' (Lerer, 2008, p.1). Two conditions were believed to be fundamental in order to let the genre flourish and spread: the awareness that childhood, since it is different from adulthood, requires special treatment, and the social conditions that allowed children to be educated enough to read and enjoy books (O'Sullivan, 2006, cited in Frimmelova, 2010). However, children's literature started to become more and more popular even when these two factors were not yet in operation, since children simply used the literature of the entire culture (Frimmelova, 2010).

It is rather unimaginable to raise a child without the help of the stories parents are used to reading before bedtime; it is difficult to think about children learning how to live and behave without the morals their beloved animal friends teach them, and, above all, it is only thanks to the stories they were told when they were infants that parents have become who they are. Even the most ordinary words become magical when read aloud at bedtime and it is there that they develop the power of teaching something (Lerer, 2008). Although each word might hide hundreds of meanings, children are slowly led to a process of discovery firstly through the soft voice of a mother and then by themselves, and this is exactly what literature aims at, that is driving children from the disclosure of the essence of words to that of life itself (Kahn, cited in Lerer, 2008, p.4).

First of all we should start by asking ourselves what childhood is; a widespread definition suggests that childhood can be defined "in relation to other stages of personal development

and family life" (Lerer, 2008, p.2). Wartofsky, on the contrary, suggests that children develop thanks both to the idea other people have of them and the idea children make of their own; this idea changes as the child interacts with others, and so does literature.

Even though it is possible to detect the presence of books and manuals exclusively written for children in the Classic World, most historians believe that children's literature as we know it today began in the mid 18th century. They state that Britain was its main cradle, especially thanks to its stories full of riddles and rhymes, all of them hiding a moral lesson (Grenby, 2009). The sudden growth of the genre was mainly possible thanks to the new idea of childhood proposed by Locke, who considered children's minds as a blank page waiting to be filled with teachings (Frimmelova, 2010). Together with Rousseau, he formulated a new idea of childhood and education that regarded pleasure and enjoyment as crucial for the learning process. Therefore new books started to develop, whose main aim was to amuse and entertain children rather than to instruct them, bearing in mind that children have special characteristics and thus special needs (Bobulová, 2003, cited in Frimmelova, 2010, p.11).

A Little Pretty Pocket-Book by John Newbury, first published in 1744, is said to be the book that started this new tradition, even though other authors had already published books of the same kind before him – for instance Thomas Boreman, with his *A Description of Three Hundred Animals*, and Mary and Thomas Cooper, whose books started to spread from 1742 (Grenby, 2009; Townsend, 1990). What made Newbery and his contemporaries' literature so famous, however, was the fact that they did not invent it out of nothing: contrary to the previous tradition, these new books did not only mean to instruct children, but rather to entertain them (Grenby, 2009), and beyond doubt this was the ingredient that helped them most with their success. By the way, it is right to suppose that children's literature has always existed outside the commercial context, maybe in the form of simple nursery rhymes or magical tales (Petrina, 2011).

Medievalists have recently argued that children's literature has its roots in the Middle Ages, where children could read about beasts, medical herbs and lapidaries, while others suggest that it started in China (Grenby, 2009; Lerer, 2008). Whichever the place or time of origin might be, the question seems to be destined to remain unsolved, as it is almost impossible to state that there is only one kind of children's literature (Grenby, 2009). Each country, throughout its history, has indeed developed its own concept of children's literature, and we might therefore argue that "children's literature is world literature" (Lerer, 2008, p.11).

There are several ways one might choose to establish the beginning of children's literature, but, despite what a person might believe, the tradition of such a trend is beyond questions a product that gained success in the age of Newbery and soon began to proliferate. One of the factors that allowed this spread throughout the course of the 17th and 18th century is the revision of children's status in the Modern Era, when children themselves became "the object of grater parental and societal solicitude and psychological interest" (Grenby, 2009, p.7). Another important factor concerns the increase in the number of children at that time, so that people began to feel more interested in investing in them; parents, indeed, began to feel the need to educate their sons and daughters, and that is why, in this period, it is also possible to witness the establishment of new schools as well (Grenby, 2009).

Developments in the trade of books definitely helped in the process of establishing the new trend and technological innovations were not less important: thanks to the steps forward technology made at that time, indeed, books prices decreased and illustrations could be printed in a higher quality. Pictures could help the child in the understanding, also simplifying the process of reading and letting infants have fun at the same time (Grenby, 2009).

Changes in the status of the novel significantly marked the development of children's literature as well: in the 18th century the novel began to be considered suitable for the whole family, and the aspect that mainly determined the spread of this genre was the socio-economic context in which it developed. In the same period, indeed, especially thanks to the affluence

of certain social classes, the tendency to make use of non essential commodities began to spread and children's literature was on the edge of this new trend. Fundamental was the belief that social mobility was possible and therefore books for children, especially educational ones, were considered to be one of the engines for such mobility. Education was now seen as the means through which people could gain prestige and prosperity and that is why mothers and fathers decided to invest in it more and more. It is not surprising that one of the main themes of the time was social advancement, which was said to be achievable through education and hard work (Grenby, 2009).

The new concept of maternity is another factor that highly contributed to the spread of children's literature: mothers were now totally devoted to the growth of their babies, and especially to their education. They were believed to be able to change curricula according to the needs of their children, developing new strategies to influence them with their pleasing educational process more and more (Grenby, 2009). Being a mother started now to be understood as a labour; in this way telling stories, entertaining and instructing children began to be appreciated as an 'act of authorship' (Lerer, 2008, p.11). During the 1740s, the collection of tools and texts by Jane Johnson, wife of a wealthy vicar, shows the spread of such a practice: all the cards, booklets and sets of tiles she has left are accurately designed and make us aware of the care she took and the time she spent in preparing herself for the lectures (Grenby, 2009).

At the same time, printed and home-made children's books continued to be produced. One particular aspects of the children's books of this period was the dedication that could be found at the beginning, where it was underlined that the book had been written for a particular child; by stating that their book was written for their own child, the book was placed in a respectable tradition and its efficacy was asserted (Grenby, 2009).

What is important to say about children's literature is that there is no work in this field that is better than another, there are no times in which children's literature is more effective and

more precise (Lerer, 2008). We might then argue that this is due to its ability to refer to everlasting truths, to teach morals and lessons that cannot be limited to a certain time or place, or even to a certain number of readers. Children's literature is for everyone, everywhere, at any time.

1.2. Children's literature in the Classic World

Ideas about children's literature are tightly bound with the culture the book is written in, therefore such an image varies according to the opinion a culture has about children themselves (Immel, 2009).

In the Classic World, for example, children were supposed to learn poems or passages by heart and then perform them, while other times children had to invent their performances on their own. Such activities aimed at improving the child's ability to speak, therefore leading him to be proficient in rhetoric, law, politics and military leadership, the cornerstones of males' activity in Roman and Greek times. Public life was indeed the main goal for both Roman and Greek students, although the ways children were educated reasonably differed between the two cultures: while the Greeks may have loved their children without showing it, the Romans used to celebrate them through the writing of poems and the performance of rites (Lerer, 2008). Children were therefore considered as creatures that had to be trained in order to be ready to face the world of adulthood, so books did not give pleasure to these young readers but were only meant to instruct them (Townsend, 1990). The literature of the period, as a result, focused on the development of the child as a citizen: the young Roman was raised to become ideally a senator, a judge, a defender or a prosecutor. As in the future he may also have to speak in the voice of other people, the child had to be trained in the art of impersonation, too, especially through the reading of fictional works. Since all these works

had to prepare children to fulfil new roles, they were expected to be particularly capable in the art of performance and the whole world was considered as a stage (Lerer, 2008).

The Greeks, too, regarded education as a kind of performance: through the impersonation of the characters they had read about in fictional works, children learned how to behave, how to mirror a true leader and so how to take a superior position both inside and outside the family. Young boys had to study Homer as a model of style, as a cultural encyclopaedia or simply as the main poetic author of the Classical world; students had to memorize parts of his poems, especially of the Iliad, whose similes "evoked the humble and the everyday experience of common life" that contrasted the drama of a heroic past. In memorizing such passages, the child could improve both his skills in recitation and learn the idioms he may need as an adult. Comic actors were usually the models that children had to refer to in order to learn how to deliver narrative, how to make tone authoritative and how to measure excitement, and their training was also supported by teachers that were in charge of choosing the passages children had to memorize and then perform, thus practicing both delivery, voice and memory (Lerer, 2008, p.25).

The Roman education was mainly rooted in works of Greek origin as well, even though Virgil was sometimes taken as a model. Thanks to his great speeches, his similes and epic range, Virgil's *Aeneid* was taught in the majority of schools, where teachers paid particular attention to both grammatical and stylistic analysis and also chose some parts of the work that were supposed to be performed. The Romans' choice to make their pupils study such a text mainly depended on the fact that it is a "story of paternal care and filial devotion", thanks to which children could take the parental role they were inevitably going to perform in the future. Slavery was another important topic: students were educated on how to become masters, therefore separating themselves from the slaves that had to raise them. Education was in fact regarded as the means through which children could reach a notable position in the social scale and through which they could build a superior status and achieve social standing and

wealth, as well as be more influential than how their parents had been throughout their lives (Lerer, 2008).

1.3. Children's literature in the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages are often accused of being a period where both the spiritual and material needs of infants were neglected, although it has been recently shown that this span of time was in fact an 'aetas puerorum', where Christ's infancy was taken as an educational model that could be taken as an example by any child (Lerer, 2008; Petrina, 2011). The life of the innocent Hugh of Lincoln is one of the most striking instances: in 1255 the child was indeed the protagonist of a brutal murder. After his death, the body of the little boy was protected by the Virgin Mary, symbol of the protection offered by mothers: this event contributed to the creation of the universal meaning of the narration, that is every reader is like a child in the hands of the Virgin (Petrina, 2011).

The structure of the family also changed in this period: patrilienage and primogeniture were now the ways thorough which wealth and power could be passed on, and sacraments had transformed the family itself into something spiritual. The Christ child and other holy children therefore became the omnipresent subjects of poems and stories, placed side by side with heroes showing how, thanks to both their personal skills and their education, they had been able to progress in their lives (Lerer, 2008).

In the same period, the image of the child started to be associated with the court; courts, indeed, were full of young aristocrats who were sent there to extend and complete their education. There was thus the need to shift the focus of books towards new topics, instructing boys (and more rarely also girls) on how to take family and social roles through courtesy and conduct manuals (Lerer, 2008; Petrina, 2011). In such books, young high-status children were usually given advice in rhyme, so that instructions could be easily remembered (Townsend,

1990). It is also thanks to the advent of such a courtly literature that the representation of children became more realistic: at that time they were the centre of family scenes, thus replacing the old image that used to represent them as provided with supernatural powers (McMunn and McMunn, 1972).

There is no doubt that Medieval children were literate, especially thanks to the birth of the so-called Songs and Grammar Schools, public institutions for young noble boys generally located within cathedrals. Schools for girls, on the other hand, could be found within monasteries, despite such institutions mainly aimed to educate future monks and nuns. Finally, as far as the richest classes are concerned, young aristocrats usually received their education at home, mainly through 'babees books', also known as 'courtesy books' or 'books of table manners' (Petrina, 2011).

One of the most famous examples of 'babees books' is *De disciplina scholarium,* usually attributed to Severeino Boezio, which survives in at least eighty manuscripts. Such books were not written only in Latin, indeed it is possible to find some examples also in Italian, Occitan, Polish and English. The style is simple and writers often made use of imperatives to address the young reader directly; the vocabulary is limited and sentences are rather short, often presenting rhymes, which no doubt helped young learners memorise the words and then play them. The main focus of such 'courtesy books' is on behaviour: children were mainly instructed on how to behave correctly both in public and at court, especially during the most important circumstances of the day, that is when the child met his master and during the meals. The meals were indeed considered the most important events in the social life of an aristocrat, since it is during such moments that the natural instinct of alleviating one's hunger has to be controlled by polite table manners. Such manuals also aimed at teaching how to be considerate of others, to share food even with the needy and the stranger and above all to take care of one's cleanliness, as well as to respect the masters, women and God (Petrina, 2011).

The focus of these books is therefore mainly on good manners and correct behaviour and the message they try to convey is that this kind of education has to be studied, in order for children to be able to honour their noble origins. Reference to religion was almost absent, as well as references to intellectual activities, such as music or dance, were generally avoided. The only exception is *The Book of Curtesye*, already mentioned above, in which it is suggested that children should study music and learn how to sing and dance. In the same book children could find a list of the authors they should have read: John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate, all English writers that should be taken as models in order to learn how to use language correctly (Petrina, 2011).

Not only literature but also poetry continued to survive, and it mainly concerned advice on moral and social behaviour, with fathers and masters addressing to their children and therefore letting the new genre of parental advice literature emerge. Although children in monasteries continued to read Ovid, Horace and Virgil, new genres began to spread at the same time, like lullabies and primers. While lullabies used to present a repetition of syllables which did not necessarily have to make sense, primers used to be prayer books that included lists of letters, generally introduced by a cross and usually followed by a series of prayers, which main goal was to teach children how to read (Lerer, 2008; Orme, 2001, cited in Petrina, 2011, p.41). Primers later developed into 'horn-books', religious pomes that took their inspiration from Psalm 118 of the Bible, since in the original version the 22 stanzas of the Psalm begin with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Christianity was thus in the centre of such texts; indeed, it was not unusual to find the word 'amen' at the end of alphabet lists, and letters could also be arranged in the shape of a cross. On the whole, the literature of the time was charged with the typical medieval way of thinking: as life, it was full of symbols and hidden meanings that children had to interpret. Decorated manuscripts with annotations at the margins were popular as well, suggesting how children used to learn both English and Latin and showing how they were taught history and mythology. Sometimes students were even

challenged with riddles about the most diverse subjects, frequently used to help them understand the world and the ambiguity of the linguistic experience at the same time (Lerer, 2008).

As in the previous cultures, even in the Middle Ages there was a tendency to make children learn lines by heart, thus teaching them how to speak correctly. Students had to reproduce and perform what they had learned, thus starting a tradition of production that developed in all Europe, and whose main sources could be found in the Mass and in liturgies, in the folk tradition, in the public display of justice and in the Bible. Parents, masters and teachers often used to compose for their children as well, in order to give them pieces of advice; one of the work that best shows this trend is Geoffrey Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe*. Chaucer began to write this scientific manual for his ten-year-old son Lewis in 1391 but never completed it; the astrolabe was a device usually used to locate physical objects, while in the text it is used to teach the child how to find himself both on earth and in the stars. Despite the difficulty of the topic, the author makes use of simple and colloquial words, alternating technical explanations with examples, using the imperative form of verbs and the second person singular to directly address the child. In this way, the writer also mirrors the relationship between teachers and students, a paternal exchange that really aimed at helping and facilitating the child's understanding (Lerer, 2008; Petrina, 2011).

In addition to conduct manuals and religious books, children could also read or listen to legends, romances, ballads, fairy tales (especially Aesop's ones) and folk-tales, which continued to be transmitted orally, usually around fires, therefore letting everyone participate in the sharing of such traditional works (Frimmelova, 2010; Petrina, 2011; Townsend, 1990). Young learners could also learn from the famous collection *Gesta Romanorum* or *Acts of the Romans*, a series of stories whose disparate origins can be found both in hagiographies and in tales from the Far East. Full of allegories and moral teachings, the collection continued to be popular until the 18th century. The reading of chivalric romances and ballads was generally

condemned since this kind of texts did not offer neither moral nor religious teachings but only pleasure and entertainment. In particular, the ballads about Robin Hood used to be condemned since they were believed to encourage people towards idleness, leading readers to forget even about the importance of the messages conveyed by religion (Petrina, 2011).

By the time of the Reformation, the negativity that used to be associated with this small part of the literature produced in the Middle Ages led to consider medieval literature as corrupting and papist, and it is for this reason that in the 1540s the reprinting of all the literature of the earlier period was prohibited. Also, in past Reformation-England, all medieval literature was regarded as childish, and it was associated with 'childishness, error, sloth, idleness and foolery'; it is only at the end of the 17th century that pleasure and entertainment will be given some prominence in the educational process of the child (Lerer, 2008, p.79).

Despite the negative connotation that is usually associated with this period, it is important to remember that it is in the Middle Ages, in 1474 precisely, and thanks to William Caxton that printing was invented (Lerer, 2008; Townsend, 1990). Indeed, Caxton himself and his successors, Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson, published much of the manuscripts of the time, such as the *Book of Courtesy* in 1477 or the *Book of Good Manners* in 1487, thus making literature accessible to a wider and purchasing readership (Frimmelova, 2010; Lerer, 2008).

1.4. The Modern Period

During the first years of the Modern Period the famous 'babees books' witness a decrease in their popularity, which is mainly due to the gradual development of schools that necessarily required the use of school books. While this kind of books was meant for teachers and educators, children could still delight themselves by reading the so-called 'hornbooks' – lists

of alphabet, numbers or prayers which were printed and then stuck on pieces of wood –, chapbooks and battledores, small books usually folded in three that often included illustrations or etchings alongside the text. Chapbooks, on the other hand, were small booklets of seventy pages each that generally included more popular kinds of literature, such as romances, ballads and nursery rhymes (Petrina, 2011).

The growing spread of public and collective schools, as well as the further development of the medieval grammar schools, implied the creation of manuals that aimed at teaching children good conduct manners and virtue. Young learners were also encouraged to read Latin and Greek authors, while the literature produced in the previous Middle Ages was generally rejected, since it was believed to be futile and childish. It therefore seems that the kind of literature of the period did not mean to entertain or delight children but rather to instruct them and keep them away from idleness through a strict programme that included the teaching of Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Logics, Rhetoric and Philosophy, as well as Mathematics, Geometry and Military Arts. Such a programme, however, did not include the reading of texts in English: the universities of the isle will have to wait until the nineteenth century to see the introduction of such a practice (Petrina, 2011).

The manuals analysed so far give us an idea of the books that parents, educators and teachers thought to be good for the child, but they do not provide us with the kinds of texts mostly loved by young readers. This is mainly due to the fact that still in the first years of the Modern Period it is hard to think about a literature that was exclusively meant for the child: it will take some time before this will happen (Petrina, 2011).

1.4.1. Children's literature in the Puritan era

In the last decades of the sixteenth century the adjective 'puritan' was used with reference to those who showed active opposition to all the practices of the Anglican religion, since this

one was believed to go against the principles of the Scriptures. The movement later turned to political action through the execution of king Charles I Stuart and the declaration of the republic of Oliver Cromwell, which lasted until 1660, when the monarchy was restored once again. Despite the restoration of the monarchy, some of the movements that opposed the official religion still refused to conform to the Anglican church and continued to publish doctrinal manuals, sermons, collections of prayers and conduct manuals (Bonsignore, 2011).

It is thanks to these new publications that the first religious books meant specifically for children began to spread, letting children's literature become a new and separate genre. Such 'little godly books' had first of all the child's education in mind: their aim was to teach that even during childhood life has a spiritual goal and they also tried to keep children away from light heartedness and useless games (Bonsignore, 2011; Lerer, 2008). Indeed, such texts, alongside the support and help provided by adults, aimed at guiding children towards sanctification (Bonsignore, 2011).

It is then thanks to the puritans that at least some of the religious texts that had originally been produced for adults were adapted to the needs and abilities of the child, through the insertion of lists of alphabets, simple exercises that aimed at helping children improve their reading and norms for punctuation, thus letting children participate in the same way as adults in the process that was believed to lead to salvation and conversion (Bonsignore, 2011).

The majority of the authors, some of the most famous being John Bunyan and Abraham Chear, was constituted by humble, not particularly educated people, who used to address the new generations of the middle classes hoping that these young heirs would continue or even expand the message of their belief. The child's salvation was the main goal of the author: from here the development of a paternal relationship between writers and young readers which manifested also through the choice of forms such as 'My dear Children', 'My little Lambs' or 'My dear pretty Children'. Topics concerning death, judgement, hell and heaven were always present in the texts for this young readership: indeed, children were first of all

reminded of the possibility of premature death, quite common at the time; secondly, writers aimed at causing some fear for the judgement that would follow and for the possibility of eternal punishment. Finally, in order to make children aware of the pleasure and joy they would find in heaven and of the tortures of hell, authors used to make reference to everyday life, thus implicitly hinting at the difficulties of the reality of the time (Bonsignore, 2011).

Poetry was no less important for the puritans, since they believed that the musicality of the verses would better help children memorise the lesson; it is for this reason that in the second half of the century it was possible to assist a consistent growth in the publication of passages from the Scriptures or from the Credo, readapted by following a rhyme scheme for the new audience. One of the most famous, *A Book for Boys and Girls: Or, Country Rhymes for Children,* published in 1686, is by the already mentioned John Bunyan: in addition to the religious teachings, the book also aims at helping children develop a critical thinking towards both animals and the reality surrounding them, encouraging young readers to find the hidden meanings of the world by making constant reference to the words of the holy texts. Despite the dramatic tone of the majority of the passages of the text, Bunyan does his best to keep a loving and sympathetic behaviour, showing how religion can sometimes be joyful, too (Bonsignore, 2011).

1.4.2. The eighteenth century

The role played by women in the 18th century was decisive: both in a more religious type of literature and in the laic one, female authors filled their books with a clear intent on didacticism, also teaching children how to be reflective about the world and how to confront themselves with reality (Orestano, 2011). Despite the differences between them, all these authors shared the desire to instruct a female readership, also trying to promote a new model

in which women were not subordinate to male authority anymore (Todd, 1988, cited in Orestano, 2011, p.88).

Sarah Fielding was one of the most eminent figures of the time: sister of the famous Henry Fielding, Sarah, in her *The Governess, or The Little Female Academy* (1749), fused together the reality of the period with a hint of fantasy, breaking the rules of the time that required a more didactic type of literature. Indeed, it was believed that young readers should be aware of the fact that magic was introduced in the texts only for their amusement, since it may distract them from the moral teachings offered by the stories. On the contrary, Sarah Trimmer and Anna Laetitia Barbauld offered a more religious kind of lesson. While Trimmer is better known for her significant contribution to the creation of the so-called 'Sunday Schools', Sunday elementary schools where children could learn to read, write and where they could be introduced to catechism, Barbauld is mostly remembered for associating religion with the libertarian principles formulated by Rousseau (Orestano, 2011).

New topics were explored in the works of both Catherine Macaulay and Hannah More, who discussed about the kind of texts children should be allowed to read in accordance with their age. Macaulay warned parents against all the texts that belong to the fantasy genre, since she believed that children should be rather exposed to the observation of physical phenomena, to arithmetic and geography, which are inevitably going to help them develop during their growth. In line with Macaulay, More also had a negative view about all of those books that facilitate learning and comprehension –for example those which include pictures – since according to the writer all achievements require a bit of sacrifice and this kind of readings did not help girls develop such a determined attitude (Orestano, 2011).

Fantasy and magic peeked out once again thanks to Mary Wollstonecraft and in particular to her husband, who, after the writer's premature death, founded the first series for children, the so-called *Juvenile Library,* based on the texts left by the wife. In her works, Wollstonecraft also criticised romantic and sentimental literature, since it was believed to

distract and corrupt young ladies; the same advice will be offered by Maria Edgeworth with even more emphasis. The latter writer, indeed, encouraged towards a more laic and practical kind of readings, based on experience rather than on imagination. In her first book, *Practical Education* (1798), Edgeworth suggested that the child should be placed in spacious areas, so that he or she could observe all the natural phenomena and experience the true sense of life, without having to look for hidden meanings and without having to make any reference to religion. It will be thanks to this first-hand observation that children will understand the misleading nature of all of those texts that refer to fairies and ogres, which do not exist in reality and therefore have to be avoided; children should be instead encouraged to focus on those readings that provide a more vivid picture of the world and that promote rationality in a fun and intriguing way (Orestano, 2011).

Later on in the same century, children's literature still aimed at instructing children through the exposure to both positive and negative behaviour, therefore providing young readers with clear models that should be avoided or followed also in accordance with the disciplinary rules set out by adults. This kind of narrative also wanted to convey to the younger generations of the middle classes the real values of the time, such as seriousness, respect, kindness and compassion towards the poor ones and towards animals, as well as good manners and politeness. Great popularity was enjoyed also by moral tales where animals were the main protagonists: these new characters used to represent all the different types of human beings coming from the most diverse social classes, and they were used to show how virtuous behaviours can lead to praise as opposed to the sad consequences of bad conduct. Through the autobiographical narration provided by animals, readers could also get an insight about the sufferings animals were sometimes inflicted by human beings, when especially dogs, cats and birds were killed. From the last decade of the century, such moral tales also began to focus on the acceptance of one's status: contrary to the stories of the past, which used to present social advancement as a prize for all the efforts people had made during their lives, children were

now encouraged to accept their status in order to live happily. Even one of the most famous tales of the period, *Fabulous Histories. Designed for the Instruction of Children, Respecting their Treatment of Animals* (1786) by Sarah Trimmer, has contentment as its central theme and aims at conveying to children that their behaviour towards animals should be dictated by the "divine principle of Universal Benevolence" (Trimmer, 1798, cited in Bonsignore, 2011, p.112).

It was quite common for moral tales to transform into cautionary tales, where usually parents or educators warned children against immoral behaviours, also showing them the potential consequences they might have to face. Such cautionary tales could be found both in prose and in verse, and they usually displayed the punishments imposed upon disobedient and imprudent behaviours: some children might have been whipped, others deprived of food, toys or any other kind of entertainment as well as poisoned with wild fruits (Bonsignore, 2011).

In the last decades of the eighteenth century it was still possible to witness a considerable growth in the publishing of religious texts specifically meant for children: such a development owed much also to the spread of the evangelic movement – which believed that salvation could be attained only through an intense reading of the Bible – and to the diffusion of the previously mentioned Sunday Schools all over the country. Education was then seen as the only means that would lead to the achievement of a new life, which would be then based on the evangelic principles, and the regular attendance at Sunday schools should have contributed to keep children busy, taking them away from the dangers of the street. Still from a religious backgrounds, in the first year of the nineteenth century it was possible to witness the development of periodicals for children, such as *The Youth's Magazine* or *Evangelical Miscellany*, *The Children's Friend* and *The Child's Companion* also known as *Sunday School Reward*, which, in addition to prayers and homilies, slowly came to include Geography and History notions as well as more scientific topics (Bonsignore, 2011).

1.5. The 19th century

In the literature produced in the Victorian era, which characterised part of the 19th century, it is possible to find the description of the new wonders of technology and the exploration of the poor conditions of the lower classes, as well as a discussion of Darwin's theories and the analysis of passages from the Bible. It was only in 1840 that the current of realistic literature first made its appearance, thanks to *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy*, by Francis Trollope. In this book the writer explored the miserable conditions under which children had to work in factories: the accusations in the text were so strong that after it was published there was a restriction of the working hours of children in industry (Orestano, 2011).

Trollope based his novel on what he could really see in the factories based in Manchester and Bradford, where even four-year-old children had to work under the supervision of the so-called 'manufacturists', who were ready to whip and hit them every time they made a mistake or accidentally fell asleep; because of the way these children were treated the writer even compared them to the slaves that used to work in the American plantations. This realistic literature used to tell about the present and aimed at showing young rich readers what really happened in the life of their peers (often referred to as 'city sparrows'), thus functioning as a bridge between the rich and the poor. Despite these sad tones, however, writers always managed to find some hope in their stories thanks to frequent references to the Bible and to religious education, to the belief in the real values of the family as well as to instruction and to the will to combat alcoholism (Orestano, 2011).

Charles Dickens is the most famous author of the time thanks to whom such themes are explored and let be known; some of the topics the writer discussed in his novels, all of which have become classics for children thanks to their young protagonists, include prostitution and violence, murders and fights as well as a criticism of the educational environments of the

period. *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield*, *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist* are only some of the most famous novels Dickens wrote, where he encouraged people to consider how children were exploited and manipulated on a daily basis, or even bought and sold as commodities. However, Dickens found the perfect solution against these unhappy and tragic endings in his Christmas book, *A Christmas Carol*, where both adults and children gather around the Christmas tree and try to forget about their misfortunes (Orestano, 2011).

In 18th-century England, the preference for realistic literature was encouraged by the belief that unrealistic works, and in particular fables, might spread irrationality and superstition among children. This idea started to be rejected in the first decades of the 19th century, when the Romantic Movement and its support for fantasy managed to prevail over rationality and religion. Thanks to this movement and to the spread of the first translations of the tales of the Grimm brothers, there was an increase in the interest for fairy tales and the folkloric tradition, as well as in other foreign and distant cultures (Frimmelova, 2010; Tosi, 2011). By the end of the century the genre was fully established in the country, where it was possible to find collections of popular English tales, such as the one by Joseph Jacob, *English Fairy Tales* (1890), or that by Andrew Lang, *The Blue Fairy Book* (1898) (Tosi, 2011).

Fables were now considered as one of the tools through which children could act out their fantasies and stimulate their imagination, but they were also used to make both adults and young readers aware of the social conditions of certain classes: Oscar Wilde was one of the first ones who used this genre to show the inequalities between the rich and the poor, also underlining that people should be compassionate towards the poor ones and be will to share their goods with them. Though his two collections *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *The House of Pomegranates* (1891) still present some of the traditional features that associate fairy tales with the oral tradition, his works are enriched with new meanings, themes and characters (Tosi, 2011).

The majority of the fables produced in the period, due to the serious topics they explored, seemed to be meant for both adults and children: indeed, some of them were even used to discuss the new position of women, who, in the Victorian Era, became more active and brave as opposed to the passive role they had usually been associated with so far. The introduction of topics concerning contemporary issues and situations allowed to distinguish these new fables from the more traditional folktales, since now characters were more self-conscious, their actions were not dictated by external stimulus anymore, and readers were expected to reflect upon the distinction between fiction and reality, also thinking about the importance of the themes presented (Tosi, 2011).

The craze for unrealistic worlds and imagination, which opposed the trend towards a more realistic kind of literature previously described, manifested itself also through the fantasy genre. Despite this new type of literature owes much to fables, from which it has inherited several features, the two genres can be clearly discerned: while fables derive from the folklore and other oral forms of literature, fantasy works combine apparently conflicting elements, taken from both animal and gothic stories, chivalric literature and science fiction as well as features from Paganism and Christianity. Moreover, fantasy works do not necessarily have a happy ending and their protagonists are usually expected to face more demanding challenges, also accomplishing a process of maturation which will let them discover their real identity. The construction of time and space is also different in the two genres: if the heroes of fables live in a distant and undefined past (underlined by the opening sentence 'Once upon a time'), the actions we can read about in fantasy works take place in a magic world which is clearly detached from reality, and which seems to recall a dreamlike and fantastic experience. These incredible worlds seem to mirror the uncertainty of the time, due to the continuous changes and developments of reality, brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the continuous improvements of technology, as well as by the evolutionary theories proposed by Darwin. This is the case in *The Water-Babies. A Fairy Tale for a Land-Boy* (1863), by

Charles Kingsley, where the evolutionary view of life mixes with ethics and where the Darwinian theory of evolution by natural selection is discarded in favour of a development which seems to be determined only by moral choices. After two years, this aquatic journey is followed by probably the most famous adventure of the time, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* by Lewis Carroll. The expedient of the dream seems here to be used to talk about all the topics that used to be considered as taboos by the society of the time and to parody the rules and manners of the society of the period (Paruolo and Tosi, 2011).

The chaos of Wonderland is linked to the important discoveries of the time, among which the decoding of weird ancient languages and writing systems, whose nonsense started to be associated with the power of imagination and with the 'weapon' children needed in order to defeat the logic of adulthood and the laws of life. This symptom of general confusion is shown also through the choice of the language; Carroll, together with other contemporary authors such as Edward Lerer, Sir Walter Scott, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray, does his best to explore and challenge the limits of the English language: their works are full of caricatures and nonsense that best mirror people's relationship with words, "worldly things, human interaction and the pictorial imagination" (Lerer, 2008, p.192).

The nonsense that words carried at that time seemed to be justified by one of Carroll's most famous claims: "no word has a meaning inseparably attached to it; a word means what the speaker intends by it, and what the hearer understands by it, and that is all" (Lerer, 2008, p.193). Such a statement explains why sometimes people do not understand literature and why it is in the writer's hands to disclose to readers the hidden meanings that words usually carry. Through the exploration of language, the writers of this period showed a deep interest in the variety of tongues that inhabit the world, also displaying the weirdness of languages and the oddity of the creatures the populate our planet. Stories were indeed full of illustrations of animals, like the ones that we can find in Lear's stories and in Kipling's *The Jungle Book,* or of the oddities of nature that we can read about in the adventures of Carroll's characters

(Frimmelova, 2010; Lerer, 2008). *Alice in Wonderland*, indeed, is written for the sole pleasure of children, it is full of free imagination and fantasy and does not refer to any classical stereotypes of good or bad (Frimmelova, 2010).

The language of such stories also mirrors the development of life from non-life recently proposed by Darwin: names, in fact, "evoke a primitive, prelinguistic expressiveness", as if writers wished to travel back to the time preceding civilized speech (Lerer, 2008, p.203). Thanks to this particular device, authors could show how ordinary language can lose its meaning and become nonsense, illustrating the world of everyday experience in new and unexpected ways. This tradition of nonsense, the use of language in new and innovative ways, continued to survive even after Carroll and Lear, thanks to Kipling, Chesterton and De la Mare, with the result that by the end of the Victorian age it had firmly established in both British and American literature. Nonsense is said to be "a journey to the edges of experience", with words allowing readers to travel to unknown places. Such a tradition was also fundamental in inspiring artistic movements like Dada, Futurism and Surrealism, which saw in the nonsense of the language the absurd nature of life itself. Nonsense challenges the limits of expression, at the same time letting children remain in a state of longing and imagination that can only come to an end when kids fall asleep and parents close the book they are reading (Lerer, 2008, p.204). Such a state, however, can be evoked once again every time a child lets his or her fantasy go, so that a new adventure inevitably begins.

This is exactly what happens with the genre of the adventure novel, which constitutes one of the main genres of children's literature in the 19th century. Some of the main features of this genre are the presence of a mysterious island, a journey through unexplored seas and the encounter with wild and uncivilized peoples. These stories represent both the need and will to leave and discover new places but also the nostalgic feeling aroused by distance, which will let protagonists understand the real value of the love they can find at home (Petrina, 2011).

The genre is said to have started with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719, which soon become one of the classics for both children and adults. Here the protagonist, Robinson, after a shipwreck, finds himself on what he believes to be a desert island, where he does his best to rebuild the world he used to live in while in England. The island later turns out to be occasionally inhabited by cannibals, among whom Robinson will find his slave Friday; Robinson exhibits an authoritative behaviour towards Friday, thus mirroring the kind of relationship that used to be built when colonisers encountered foreign races. This novel also shows the wonder that used to be associated with adventure at that time: the exploration of new worlds was indeed regarded as a symptom of progress and of the belief that men are really superior to nature, which they can manipulate and change as they prefer (Petrina, 2011).

The wild feature confers the isle a sense of purity and extraordinary beauty, makes it an utopian place where people will be able to fulfil their aspirations: this is the ground for Robert Michael Ballantyne's *The Coral Island. A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1858), which later inspired the more famous *Treasure Island* (1883), by Louis Stevenson. Stevenson's work also offers to teach readers that sometimes desires can turn into nightmares: Jim, the protagonist, finds a treasure map and decides to look for it, but during his search he has to face some pirates, who will kill most of the gentlemen that were helping Jim with his challenge. The decisions Jim will have to take during the journey will help him mature and will convey to readers the importance of making the right choice in order to understand the real value of both wishes and affections (Petrina, 2011).

Still in the same period it is possible for young readers to delight themselves through *The Jungle Book*, written by Rudyard Kipling between 1894 and 1895. Here animals are anthropomorphised and it is shown how human beings themselves are in reality animals as well. While it is not possible to clearly state whether this novel belongs to the adventure genre, Kipling's other famous work, *Kim* (1901), definitely does. In the story, the protagonist is led to the discovery of a treasure that represents the achievement of maturity and wisdom.

Contrary to many other writers, who considered undiscovered lands as places which had to be merely conquered and civilised, Kipling regards the discovery of India, where his novel is set, as the perfect chance for people to know and get closer to 'otherness', and it is only through such a process that colonisers will mature and really know themselves, and this is all adventures really aim at (Petrina, 2011).

1.6. Children's literature in contemporary days

The decline in the popularity of adventure fiction coincides with a new growth of the fantasy genre, which, as it already used to happen in the nineteenth century, conveys the nostalgia for a lost world but which is also recently characterised by a veil of uncertainty that best mirrors the state people live in contemporary days. There is however one feature that still ties modern fantasy stories to the past: such works, indeed, continue to propose well-known worlds, such as the ones readers have already experienced in the *Iliad*, in *Beowulf* or in the stories about Arthur, since authors are aware of the fact that readers want to discover new worlds but at the same time they do not want to feel distant from what they already know. C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien seem to know this quite well, as it is possible to notice from the presence of medieval elements in their novels, which accompany the didactic and religious aim of their works (Petrina, 2011).

Lewis became famous as an author of children's literature thanks to the seven books of the *Chronicles of Narnia* (1949-1956), written for all of those children who still had in mind the experience of the war, and in particular for all of those who had been victims of the operation 'Pied Piper', according to which they had to be sent away from big cities and moved to the countryside. The four protagonists of the novel can reach the apparently innocent world of Narnia through an abandoned and old closet in the house of the professor who was hosting them: this parallel world, in fact, is already inhabited by an evil figure, the White Queen, who

will have to be defeated by the children and the supernatural lion Aslan. In the end, the world of Narnia will prove to be the symbol of Heaven, with love being the main theme not only of the seven books of the series but also of all of all the novels written by Lewis, who will make his character look for generosity in every adventure (Petrina, 2011).

As for Tolkien, the rebirth of the fantasy genre in England is usually associated with the publication of his novel *The Hobbit*, written in 1937. His works also give birth to the so-called 'high fantasy' genre and are mainly set in a fantastic world, the Middle-Earth, in which protagonists can speak an imaginary language invented by Tolkien himself. This world is inhabited by elves, ogres, dwarves, dragons, mysterious knights and hobbits (Petrina, 2011).

It is thanks to the hobbits that Tolkien was inspired to write *The Hobbit,* where the writer anticipates what is going to happen during the Second World War, where even common men were required to fight for their nation. The theme is different in *The Lord of the Rings*, its sequel, which focuses on the process of maturation every human being has to face and on the necessity to lose oneself in order to find the real meaning of life. Just like Lewis, also Tolkien loves talking about the conflict between good and evil, thus using his imaginary world to mirror the condition of our real world at that time (Petrina, 2011).

In addition to the magic worlds proposed by Lewis and Tolkien, the fantasy genre of the 20th century also offers a revival of the life of King Arthur and of the fantastic figures of his era, such as Merlin or Morgana: some examples are *The Sword in the Stone*, written by Terence Hanbury White in 1938, followed by *The Witch in the Wood* (1939), *The Ill-Made Knight* (1940) and *The Book of Merlin* (1958). The Arthurian legends can be easily adapted to the fantasy genre mainly thanks to their heterogeneous and versatile characters, which can be adopted by several types of literature. The myths and stories from the Welsh culture also inspired some authors of the century, such as Alan Garner or Susan Cooper, who combine the typical elements and characters of the culture with some of the contemporary issues, for

example the dark force that represents the destructive power of the atomic bomb (Petrina, 2011).

Among all the other authors that enjoyed notable success in the pre-Harry Potter era it is important to mention Enid Blyton and Ronald Dahl: the former became famous mainly thanks to the two series *Famous Five* (1942-1963) and *Secret Seven* (written from 1963 onwards), and her fantasy novels, for instance *The Enchanted Wood* (1939). Even though Blyton creates imaginary worlds for her characters, the settings of her stories are typically British, full of cottages, woods and cliffs, and the language she uses is rather simple and with a narrow vocabulary, which shows the author's aim to refer only to a young readership (Tosi, 2011).

The scenario changes completely when one reads Dahl's stories: the writer, indeed, loves playing with language, thus rendering it original and unique, with magic making a sudden apparition in the urban lives of the protagonists. The magic element is usually used by the author to help the young protagonist, who is often in trouble, and its aim is to ensure a proper distribution of power once again. Such a pattern can be found in some of his memorable works, such as *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964) and *Matilda* (1990), where the use of hyperboles contributes to attenuate adults' cruelty towards the young protagonists (Tosi, 2011).

Given the importance attributed to the family and its fundamental role in the child's growth, the genre of the family story gains popularity once again in the first part of the 20th century: some of the most popular novels of the period are *The Family from One End Street*, written in 1937 by Eve Garnett, which explores the life and customs of a working-class family, or *The Borrowers* (1951) by Mary Norton, which presents the difficulties that families had to overcome after the end of the war in the form of an allegory (Tosi, 2011).

Towards the end of the century, family stories have started to modernise, also coming to include even those family models that do not totally match the perfect and traditional Victorian ideal of the family institution. Such a contradiction can be found, for instance, in the

contrast between the Dursley and the Weasley families in the Harry Potter saga: the former, selfish and mean, are just able to spoil their only child, whereas the latter mirrors the perfect idea of a warm and comfortable family (Thiel, 2008, cited in Tosi, 2011, p.358).

Anne Fine and Jacqueline Wilson are two of the most famous authors who have best succeeded in the representation of the contemporary family model and of its contradictions. Among her successful novels, it is with *Madame Doubtfire* (1986) that Fine probably best shows the devastating effects a divorce can have on children: the writer describes the violent fights between the parents and the frustration of the children in a very credible and detailed way, providing readers with the sad but true ending where parents do not reconcile and families do not manage to resolve their conflicts, thus reminding children that real life does not always have a happy ending. Wilson, on the other hand, prefers to focus on the so-called 'transformative families', that is all families that do not comply with the traditional model of family, generally composed by mother, father and children, but rather present all of those instances where children often do not have a guide or a model to follow, as it is possible to read in *The Story of Tracy Baker* (1991), her first successful novel (Tosi, 2011).

The real settings and events that are described in the genre of the family story can be found also in the novels that fill children's shelves during the First World War, such as the novels by George Alfred Henty as well as those by Geoffrey Trease – author of one of the milestones of children's literature *Bows Against the Barons* (1934) – who sets his stories in the ancient Greece, in the Roman Britain, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, during the Civil War in England and in the period of the Italian unification. The same love for historical facts and events can be found also in the narrative of Jill Paton Walsh, one of the first authors who discussed the theme of the Second World War in children's literature. In her books, the writer prefers to focus on the private dimension of the conflict, on its repercussion on the lives of the victims of the Nazi persecution and on the sufferings of those children who had to leave their houses in London and move to the countryside (Tosi, 2011).

And it is exactly the conflict that inspired the majority of the literature for children produced in that period: both Judith Kerr in her *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* (1971) and Nina Bawden in *Carrie's War* use their experience as refugees to talk about the war from the so-called 'home front', also underlining the impotence of children before adults' mistakes. The same experience is used also by Michael Morpurgo in *Friend or Foe* (1977) and *War House* (1987), where the author will insist on the importance of keeping one's moral integrity even in such a difficult situation (Tosi, 2011).

In order to mitigate the seriousness of these topics, in the second half of the century, particularly thanks to the healthy action of postmodernism, it possible to notice a new interest in fairy tales, although their typical linearity is now replaced by the love for innovation that best characterises the movement. For example, authors frequently recur to metatextuality, that is the construction of a story within another story, as it possible to notice in *The Jolly Postman and Other People's Letters* (1986) and its sequels *The Jolly Christmas Postman* (1991) and *The Jolly Pocket Postman* (1995), by Allan and Janet Ahlberg, where the second story can be read in the letters that are exchanged between the protagonists (Tosi, 2011).

Still in the same period, fables were also used to criticise and explore the condition of women by giving female protagonists more power and freedom, thus conveying the idea that women's independence does not have to end with marriage. The same stories tended to destroy the ideal of femininity conveyed by Disney's fables, mainly based on beauty, class and obedience, and preferred to promote an image that better mirrored reality, as it is possible to read in *Princess Smartypants* (1986) or *Prince Cinders* (1993) by Babette Cole. Thanks to the exploration of such important and sensitive topics, children are now given the chance to reflect upon the distinction between reality and fiction, at the same time allowing them to enjoy more complex reading experiences (Tosi, 2011).

Getting closer to our days, it is inevitable to devote some attention to Philip Pullman and J.K. Rowling, who enjoy their fame respectively thanks to *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) –

later followed by *Once Upon a Time in the North* (2000) and *Lyra's Oxford* (2003) – and the lucky series of *Harry Potter*. The fantastic characters of Pullman's stories are inspired by the most diverse mythologies as well as by the author's own fantasy: these protagonists will have to face difficult situations and will have to take important decisions, thus showing how even through the fantasy genre it is possible to explore some important issues of real life. Contrary to the previous tradition, these new stories also aim at showing how even children are sometimes driven by impulses, thus discarding the Puritan ideal of moral perfection that used to characterise childhood (Petrina, 2011).

As far as J.K. Rowling is concerned, her stories have totally changed the habits of young readers, by committing them to more demanding and long narrations. Like Lewis and Tolkien, Rowling is inspired by the most diverse traditions, as the classic centaurs, the medieval unicorns and the German dragons that populate the surroundings of Hogwarts can prove. The author, however, does not forget to make her protagonists celebrate Christmas or Halloween, go to lectures and wear uniforms (Petrina, 2011), thus creating a perfect balance between fantasy and reality that prevents children from getting totally lost in this new world. If on the one hand Rowling seems to remind us of Lewis, Carroll and Tolkien, especially thanks to the creation of new words and languages, on the other she distances herself from the previous writers thanks to a more subtle exploration of the human soul: indeed, some of her characters are anything but a mere representation of people's feelings and emotions, such as the Dementors, which can suck people's happiness, or the Patronus, which are a manifestation of the magicians' emotions (Petrina, 2011).

The contribution this British author has given to literature has been so significant that her books have been taken as a model for the series *Artemis Fowl*, by Eoin Colfer, or *Karmidee*, started in 2002 by Charlotte Haptie: thanks to both her human and fantastic characters, Rowling has been able to create a world that perfectly mirrors the difficulties and challenges

of everyday life, also conveying both to children and grown-ups the importance of individual will and affections over material goods (Petrina, 2011).

From the simple and instructional speeches that Roman and Greek students had to learn and then perform, books have evolved into something much more complicated, where the vulnerability that characterizes nowadays' condition permeates every single line (Lerer, 2008). Childhood, however, is still considered an important period of life, whose influence is definitely going to shape what children will become in the future (Frimmelova, 2010). As Orwell reminds us, "It is probable that many people who would consider themselves extremely sophisticated and 'advanced' are actually carrying through life an imaginative background which they acquired in childhood" (Hunt, 1994, p.1).

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

2.1. What is translation?

The English word *translation* derives from the Latin term *translatio* ('transporting'), which in turn comes from the participle of the verb *transferre* ('to carry over'). Nowadays, as far as the field of language study is concerned, the term *translation* has mainly three meanings:

- it can refer to the general subject of the field;

- it can denote the text that has been subjected to the process of translation;

- it can be identified with the process of producing a translation, that is translating (Munday, 2012).

In the process of translation, a given text in the original language (source text or ST) is transferred into a written text in another, foreign language (target text or TT). According to Jakobson, it is possible to distinguish among three different categories of translation:

- *intralingual translation* or 'rewording': "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language". This occurs when a text is rewritten or summarised in the same language, or when an expression is rephrased, still in the same language;

- *interlingual translation* or 'translation proper': "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of another language", which corresponds to the definition of translation provided above;

- *intersemiotic translation* or 'transmutation': "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems". Thanks to the reference this definition makes to semiotics, the concept of translation is not limited to verbal language only, but it also includes

the cases when a written text is translated into a different code, such as a movie, a painting or music (Jakobson, 1994, cited in Munday, 2012, p.22).

Other definitions have however been provided in accordance with the different theoretical approaches. Venuti, for instance, defines translation as a process of communication that establishes a relationship of analogy or identity between the source text and the target text; Nida and Taber, on the other hand, focus on the response of the readers of the translated text and show how the main aim of translation is to reproduce the language of the original text, first of all in terms of meaning and then in terms of style; finally, Shavit provides a definition from a semiotic point of view, characterising translation as a mechanism through which texts are transferred from one language to another (Frimmelova, 2010).

Diverting now our attention to the product of translation, the translated text itself, it is important to underline that it is more than a mere reproduction of a text that had already been written, since translators have to work creatively and make their contribution in order to conform the original words and meanings to the norms and customs of the receiving culture (Frimmelova, 2010). What translators have to bear in mind, indeed, is that what has a particular meaning in a certain context does not necessarily have the same meaning in another, different context (Bassnett, 2011). It is in fact impossible to understand language "outside the total framework of the culture, of which the language in question is only an integral part". Thus, in order to make an adequate translation, translators must have a deep 'contextual understanding', which will let them fill the potential gaps created by deep cultural differences (Nida, 1964, cited in Bassnett, 2011, p.96).

2.2. The status of translation in children's literature

Before focusing on the status of translation in children's literature, we should first of all pose ourselves the question concerning what counts as children's literature. A possible answer

might be provided by all the texts that are specifically written for children, by the texts written for adults but which have later been read by children as well, by those texts that are meant to be for both adults and children and, last but not least, by that literature that is meant to be read aloud to children. This definition shows that children's literature often has a dual audience, and that within these ambivalent texts it is possible to spot the existence of two levels of reading: a more demanding one for adults and a less demanding one for children (Lathey, 2011; Oittinen, 2000).

Barbara Wall poses another question, the one concerning whether children's literature can be considered as a separate genre (Wall, 1991, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.65). Thanks to some shared similarities between children's books and adults' literature, for instance they both require a collaboration between readers and writers, and to the process of translation of the two – it is in both anonymous and apparently invisible, as we shall see in Chapter Three – it is possible to affirm that the two encompass several common features, therefore leading us to reject a potential distinction between them (Oittinen, 1993; Oittinen, 2000).

However, there is one main aspect that distinguishes the two types of literature: the reader. Children's literature, in fact, seems to be more direct towards its reader, and this is also reflected by the choices that both authors and translators make. If we take the child's view into account, then the definition of children's literature might be broadened to the point that it might come to include anything that a child finds interesting. Unfortunately, however, children do not often have a say in choosing what to read, since it is adults who, especially when a child is still illiterate, take decisions on his or her behalf. In any case, it is in the translator's hands to make the child become central again by taking his will and abilities into consideration, and here the image the translator has of the child proves to be crucial. This can be something each individual has according to his or her personal history, or, on the other hand, it can be something collectivized in the society (Oittinen, 1993; Oittinen, 2000; Stolze, 2003).

The freedom a translator has is another distinctive feature: the translator of children's literature has indeed fewer constraints than a translator of adults' literature. Such a feature depends on the status that children's literature has in the literary polysystem, where it has always been considered as a marginal component of adult and mainstream literature (Lathey, 2011; Shavit, 1981). This is mainly determined by the fact that children's literature is generally more canonical, less demanding and less innovative than the literature written for adults, since it usually follows predefined patterns that continue to repeat across distinct times. In addition to this apparent simplicity, another reason that has contributed to a lack of appreciation of children's literature, and therefore to its translation, may be the dominant role that women have occupied in writing for young readers since the 1960s. This may in fact have led to the creation of a comparison between children's literature, literature written for women and literature written for men, where the latter has always been regarded as more important and demanding than the former two (Oittinen, 2000). It is however thanks to translation that children's literature has started to be taken more seriously, since it has encouraged writers to produce and dare new combinations in the national language on the basis of the foreign text (Ghesquiere, 2006). This is mainly due to central position maintained by translated literature in literary polysystem. Indeed, translation is considered as one of the major contributors for the introduction of innovations in the target language, since it is thanks to foreign works that new elements can be introduced. This usually happens in the following circumstances: when a literary system has not fully developed yet; when the target literature is weaker than the source one or when literary vacuums are present in the target literature. In the first two instances it is highly improbable that the target literature is able to create texts of all the possible types, therefore it has to rely on the experience of other, more mature literatures. In the latter case, when some models are not valid for younger generations anymore, the translated literature will fill the empty gaps and finally assume a central position (Even-Zohar, 2004).

As far as the functions children's literature fulfils, it can be considered as both didactic and creative (Tabbert, 1980, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.65). Creative texts often present many gaps that children can fill in, while in didactic ones the reader merely has to learn some morals and lessons (Oittinen, 2000). The same didactic function can be spotted in the translation of children's literature as well. According to Shavit (1981), in fact, two are the main principles for the translation of children's literature: the adjustments of texts in conformity with what society thinks to be 'good for the child', and the adjustments towards the child's level of comprehension and reading abilities. Indeed, all the alterations made to a text have the aim to conform the text itself to what is believed to be good for the young reader in the target culture, and therefore both texts and their alterations reflect the ideological perspectives of the time (Lathey, 2011). Klingberg (1986) talks about this as an act of 'purification', whose aim is to bring a text closer to the values of those who are in charge of the education of the child.

2.3. The act of reading

"A text is not an immovable object: it evokes a different response at every reading"; in this way all texts seem to be open to an infinite number of interpretations, which may vary according to the reader (Oittinen, 2000, p.15). However, not everyone can read, in fact we need to go through a series of stages of development in order to become real readers: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, moral, spiritual, personal and linguistic, and even though people may develop in more or less the same way, there will still be differences in the reception of the message according to one's background and general knowledge, experience and associations (Spink, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.15-16). Reading is also involvement, and, precisely because it is an act guided by readers and because each person can give words different interpretations, reading is generally an active process rather than a passive one (Oittinen, 2000).

But what is reading? According to Rosenblatt, the reading experience is an event in time, something happening "during a coming-together, as a compenetration, of a reader and a text", and it always takes place in a specific situation. Therefore, there can be infinite ways of reading something depending on the situation in which the act takes place (Rosenblatt, 1978, cited in Oittinen, 1993, p.326). It is clear then that the act of reading varies according to the different readers, the different times in which the act is performed and thus the different situations (Oittinen, 1993), but also according to the kind of text that is being read.

Bakhtin expresses the same idea but classifies the reading experience as dialogic: according to him, it consists of the interaction between writers, readers and context. In his view, there will never be two identical readings of the same thing, since the understanding of words closely depends on the person reading them and the situation the reader is in at the moment of reading (Bakhtin, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2006, p.37).

The translator is first of all a reader who travels both in the original text and in the translation he or she is going to make; such movements between texts recall the idea of an 'hermeneutic circle', since "translation is not a linear, progressive process leading from a starting point S to a target point T, but a circular, basically recursive process comprising an indefinite number of feedback loops, in which it is possible and even advisable to return to earlier stages of the analysis" (Nord, 1991, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.16). A completely different view is presented by Kolodny, who believes that more than reading, readers 'review' texts with fresh eyes, and Bloom underlines this idea by also adding that reading is misunderstanding, and it is thanks to misinterpretations that literature can survive, since literal meaning means death (Bloom, 1980 and Kolondy, 1985, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.17).

Whichever the interpretation of the reading situation, there is no doubt that reading and translation are inseparable experiences and the very first step for each translation is reading (Oittinen, 2000). In this process translators are fundamental, and they can be considered as special readers who share their reading experience with the target-language readership

(Oittinen, 1993). In this case, translation is some sort of a re-creation of the text read by the translator, which will be inevitably re-created once again also by every future reader (Holland and Sherman, 1986, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.17). It is thanks to readers that texts can also carry a meaning, which again mainly depends on the general situation of the reader and thus varies according to it, whereas the pages are the same for everybody. And it is also thanks to the understanding of the text that readers are able to make sense of what they read and attribute meanings to the words of the text itself; moreover, since understanding means making choices, agreeing and disagreeing, texts are continuously given new meanings by different readers and also by the same reader in different situations (Oittinen, 2000).

Therefore, translators provide readers with their own interpretation of the text, which could be accepted or rejected by those who are going to read the book; the latter, indeed, may express a different understanding of the words they have read, providing the same story with a new meaning (Oittinen, 2000). Thus, there usually are no correct or incorrect interpretations, but the coexistence of diverse responses to a text. This view is underlined by Benton, who regards the act of reading as a collaboration, since it combines what is offered by a text and what the reader adds to it; the text is therefore somewhere in between the reader and the author's imagination (Benton1980, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.22).

Several are the opinions about the status of the reader. According to Fish, each individual is part of different interpretative communities, which determine the ways such individuals are going to interpret some given texts (Fish, 1980, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.23). This view is not far from what Jauss calls 'horizon of expectations', which affects the reader's response to a text on the basis of the features that link the book to other similar books which are already familiar to the reader (Jauss, 1980, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.23). Iser distances himself from the two scholars and proposes the idea of the 'implied reader', a figure created by the author who constantly has to infer and bring to the surface the hidden meanings of a text (Iser, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.24). This view has been strongly criticized by Oittinen (2000), who

states that if authors were able to imagine even one of their future readers, they should also be able to create immovable and unchangeable texts, but this is impossible since we have already seen how texts are open to an infinite number of interpretations.

No author or speaker can be absolutely sure of how their readers or listeners are going to interpret their message, therefore when they write or speak they can only try to imagine a possible 'superaddressee' who does not exist in reality (Bakhtin, 1979, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.24; Oittinen, 2000). The same applies to translators. In particular, translators of children's books imagine a hypothetical child reader who is going to influence the way the translator addresses to him or her. At the same time, also children are going to try and imagine the author of their book, and this, together with the interpretation of the book they will have to provide, is definitely going to help them develop their imagination (Oittinen, 2000). Such an imaginative process is possible thanks to what Robinson refers to as 'somatics', that is the ability of words to arouse certain feelings, memories and emotions (Robinson, 1991, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.25).

2.4. Transaction and dialogue between readers and texts

As Rosenblatt underlines, the act of reading is always performed by a specific reader in a given situation; by changing any of the two we have a new and diverse situation that is going to determine a different interpretation of the text (Rosenblatt, 1978, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.26-27). In the translation of books for children, not only is the actual reading experience of the reader important, but also that of the translator, as well as that of the potential reader as imagined by the translator (Oittinen, 2006). There are however different kinds of reading, which are mainly affected by time and experience: aesthetic reading and efferent reading (Rosenblatt, 1978, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.27). In aesthetic reading, the reader focuses on what he or she feels while reading, whereas in efferent reading what the reader has learned

after the reading process is more important (Rosenblatt, 1978, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.27). While readers usually select either the aesthetic or the efferent way of reading in accordance with the goals of their reading experience, the translator's way of reading continuously shifts between the two (Bolt and Tellegen, 1991, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.27; Oittinen, 1993). In fact, during the first reading translators might be fascinated and emotionally engaged by the story, while during the second and efferent reading they become more analytical, even though they will be constantly influenced by what they have experienced in the first approach to the text (Oittinen, 2000).

Like translators, we are almost always encouraged to adopt a critical approach when reading a text, too, even though sometimes we should take children as an example and surrender to the emotions books can arouse. It is thanks to this involvement that children will be encouraged to develop both their emotions and an enduring reading habit (Oittinen, 2000). This is why writers and translators of books for children continuously have to remind themselves of their future readers and of the fact that such stories might even be read aloud by parents, therefore striving to make texts live and taste good on the adult's tongue, too (Oittinen, 1993).

The reading experience can also be defined as dialogic, as Bakhtin points out, since the meanings words are attributed with solely depend on the continuous dialogue between the text, the reader (including the whole situation surrounding him or her) and the author. Dialogue is linked to what Bakhtin refers to as 'heteroglossia', that is the ability of words to take on a different meaning depending on the different situations in which they are used (Bakhtin, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.29-30). Words are therefore meaningless if extracted from their context, but they are also ready to take up any meaning when they interact with other lexical items. In the dialogue between words and readers, readers play an active role and are responsible for what they read and understand, suggesting how dialogics is

something 'subjective and even casual' (Bakhtin, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.30; Oittinen, 2000).

The same kind of subjectivity can be found in translations as well, where translators, alongside the actual translation, give an interpretation of the original text which is inevitably going to create a new text, detached from the initial one. Thanks to the dialogic dimension translators provide their translations with, the original text will be thus able to live on and be appreciated also in the target-language culture (Oittinen, 2000).

2.5. The reading child versus the decisive adult

2.5.1. The child reader

Whatever adults create for children reflects the view grown-ups have of being a child and the value they place on such a stage of life. Indeed, children's culture has always reflected the way the whole society and adults regard childhood and how children themselves experience it (Oittinen, 2000).

All the definitions of childhood that have been provided try defining the term in relation to adulthood. Huizinga distinguishes the two by referring to 'play', claiming that it is often associated with children since it implies the 'not useful' or the magic, and therefore it opposes the 'truth' all adults place a high value on (Huizinga, 1984, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.42). Innocence is another distinctive feature, usually associated with the young reader: adults have in fact more experience and knowledge of their limits, and it is because of this that they are more cynical, realistic and rational than children, and they always make comparisons with what they have already experienced, while children usually cannot (Miller, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.42; Postman, 1985, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.42). It is thus thanks to such an

innocence that children can understand better, since their perception is more direct and it is not influenced by previous experiences (Oittinen, 2000).

The first years of life of a human being are often considered magical and the child is a magician immersed in this surreal world full of talking animals (Fraiberg, 1959, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.48). It is between the ages of three and six that children become more rational and sensible, their 'I' shifts from being magical to being rational and they become aware of their nature as individuals, which in turn lets young human beings realize the existence of other people and their needs (Fraiberg, 1959, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.49). At this stage children should be allowed to take some decisions, perhaps even making better ones than adults and teaching the latter something new about the magic adults had once been aware of as well (Oittinen, 2000).

As far as translation is concerned, children are not usually aware of the fact that what they are reading is not the original text but a translation, and they might find the truth many years later. While reading, however, they may be challenged by the foreign elements they find in the text, which in turn will let them enjoy an unforgettable experience (Lathey, 2016).

2.5.2. Adults' authority

The question of authority is a very important one in children's literature, since the child is always under the authority of the adult, who is in charge of all the decisions about the literature children are going to read. Translators, in fact, have to transfer the story to the second language in a way that, even in the target language, words are alive, carry meanings, and let "children actively participate in the reading event" (Oittinen, 1993, p.325). In order to succeed in the conveyance of the message, translators should aim to directly refer to children by trying to experience their childhood again, identifying themselves with the child they used to be (Oittinen, 2000). Other than this, translators may also use other strategies to

communicate with their young readers, such as the distant, the omniscient or the didactic narrator (Lathey, 2016).

Although adults should respect children's feelings and decisions, at the same time they have to encourage children to "internalise order and discipline", and this can be done through the choice of the books children will read. Since it is adults who choose the stories their children will be raised with, books have to attract elder readers' attention first (Oittinen, 2006, p.52). The same can be said about translation: also in this case, it is adults who choose the texts to be translated and it is still adults who translate them (Oittinen, 2006). Therefore, grown-ups have a crucial mediating role, without which children's literature would not even exist (O'Sullivan, 2012).

As long as children's literature has existed, adults have always been decisive in censuring those parts of books by them considered 'not appropriate', failing to take into consideration the child's will. For instance, if parents do not want their children to read or listen to frightening stories, they simply avoid buying frightening books, "denying children the right to learn to be frightened" and not helping them overcome such fears (Oittinen, 2000, p.53).

The main problem here is that adults write, read and translate with the education of children in mind, and therefore they will inevitably try to manipulate them in accordance with their beliefs and the image they have of childhood itself (Oittinen, 2000). With such authoritative behaviour, adults seem to forget that, in the end, children are human beings just like them, and that "for their development, children need the respect and protection of adults who take them seriously, love them, and honestly help them become oriented in the world" (Miller, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.55).

The same authoritative behaviour also places children's culture in a marginal position, which in the Middle Ages was occupied by the non official and non authoritarian carnivalism, whose laughter used to ridicule all that might have been considered official (Bakhtin, 1984, cited in Oittinen, 1993, p.332). Nowadays, laughter is usually associated with low culture, and

that it is why the genres associated with it are not given much prominence, failing to remember that it is only thanks to laughter that children can overcome their fears (Bakhtin, 1984, cited in Oittinen, 1993, p.332). It is in fact when devils, witches and all the other scary characters of fairy tales are ridiculed that they become less dangerous (Oittinen, 2000).

Several are the features that children's literature and carnivalism have in common, such as disrespect towards linguistic norms, love for the grotesque, ridicule of all that is scary and games. By giving these aspects negative connotations, adults fail to realise that it is exactly thanks to these features that carnivalism, as well as children's literature, can teach grown-ups something new and place them in a dialogic communication with their children (Oittinen, 2000). Indeed, it is the madness and abnormality of carnivalism that allows children to detach from everyday life and reach that world where adults have once been and where they should try to go again (Bakhtin, 1994, cited in Oittinen, 1993, p.333).

2.6. The question of equivalence and the status of adaptations

Equivalence and adaptation are two opposing concepts whose acceptance and rejection have always been controversial in the field of translation studies.

2.6.1. Equivalence and situation

Equivalence is one of the central issues in translation studies, whose interpretation in the 1960s and 1970s was based on the assumption of a perfect match between an original text and its translation. Nowadays, on the contrary, the majority of scholars consider equivalence as an illusory concept that aims to mislead readers about the perfect symmetry between texts and their translations, despite some specializing in children's literature still taking for granted the idea of sameness when it comes to translating for children (Leonardi, 2000; Oittinen, 2000).

Several are the ways to look at equivalence: Vinay and Darbelnet consider equivalence as a tool to replicate what is stated in the original text by using different words (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995, cited in Leonardi, 2000). Later, they added that language is not enough and that translators also have to be clear with the situation of the source text in order to be able to reproduce it correctly in the target language (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995, cited in Leonardi, 2000). Jakobson, on the other hand, looks at equivalence from a semiotic point of view and introduces the idea of 'equivalence in difference' (Jakobson, 1959, cited in Leonardi, 2000). In his opinion, translators make use of synonyms in order to replicate the original message in the target text, and where no corresponding words are available they should recur to neologisms or circumlocutions (Jakobson, 1959, cited in Leonardi, 2000). Similarly to the theory proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, Jakobson, too, seems to stress the idea that translations are always possible (except for poetry, since its phonetic similarity is sensed as a semantic relationship and thus requires a creative transposition), as translators dispose of several linguistic tools that let them overcome the barriers that languages make them face, thus favouring a totally linguistic approach to translation (Jakobson, 1959, cited in Munday, 2012, p.60-61; Leonardi, 2000). Contrary to the previous attitudes, Nida and Taber propose a new theory that presents a distinction between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence: the former refers to an equivalence in the choice of both words and phrases between the source language and the target language, while the latter aims to trigger the same effect on the target audience as the original text had on its readers (Nida and Taber, 1969; Oittinen, 2000). It is possible to see that in this case Nida is more interested in the conveyance of the meaning of the message rather than in its linguistic form, also "pointing the road away from strict word-for-word equivalence" (Leonardi, 2000; Munday, 2012, p.66).

Not only equivalence, but also situation, that is time, place, culture and the individual interpretation of the context, is a central issue within translation studies. When we write, read or translate we all are in a unique situation that is crucial in determining our understanding

and interpretation. Situation does not only have to do with the context surrounding the reading event, but first and foremost it involves the translator and his or her ideology. According to this school of thought, the equivalence between the source text and the target one has to be rejected in favour of a manipulation by the translator, who takes into consideration the norms and conventions of the target culture. Translators' interpretation of texts is also influenced by the their background and literary tradition, and the analysis they make becomes crucial especially when it comes to translating for children, since the latter are not aware of the tradition of literature yet (Oittinen, 2000).

Translators therefore seem to have a commitment to both the source text and the target one, as well as to the reader and to the skopos (Oittinen, 2000). The term 'skopos' is used here with reference to the purpose, the aim, the goal or objective of a translation and it has to be defined before the actual translation is started; its aim is not to reproduce a text as close to the source text as possible, but rather to create a text "in a target setting for a target purpose and target addresses in target circumstances" (Vermeer, 1987, cited in Schäffner, 2009, p.117). It is thus the purpose of the target text that determines the translation methods, and this underlines that, according to skopos theory, there is not a single, correct translation of the source text and that every translation should contain some skopos, which can in turn vary according to the target culture in question (Vermeer, 2004¸ Schäffner, 2009). Therefore the skopos inevitably differs between the original text and the target one, since their respective readers belong to two different cultures, read in different ways and speak different languages, thus creating two distinct situations (Oittinen, 2000).

2.6.2. Adaptations and transformations

As long as literature has been translated there have been adaptations. Adaptations can be defined as a series of changes and interventions by the translator that creates a text which is

not accepted as a translation anymore but rather as new source text. There are different situations in which translators can decide to make use of adaptations: when the context of the original text does not exist in the target culture and therefore adaptations are needed in order to overcome cultural differences; when they have to neutralise the text for a new readership in order to reproduce the same effect the original text had on the source audience, or when the text has to be adapted in accordance with the reader's expected knowledge (Bastin, 2009). In the case of children's literature, adaptations are mainly used to re-create the message of the source text but at the same time adapting it to the sociolinguistic needs of the new readership (Puurtinen, 1995, cited in Bastin, 2009). Here translators can make use of summarising techniques, paraphrases or omissions (Bastin, 2009).

In this genre of literature, the opinion concerning the acceptability of adaptations has always divided scholars into two groups: those in favour of transformations, and those against them. Adaptations are often considered in a negative way since it is believed that what is stated in the original does not have to be altered, and also that different cultural elements can increase the child's curiosity, therefore making the reading experience more challenging (Lathey, 2011; Oittinen, 2000).

Among those in favour of the maintenance of the 'foreign' in texts is Venuti (2008), who defines translation as an act of both domestication and foreignization. Domestication has the task of assimilating texts to target linguistic and cultural values, while in the act of foreignization some of the features of the original text are maintained. Domestication is criticised by Venuti since it conforms a text to dominant cultural values, whereas foreignization not only challenges such values, but also celebrates the cultural elements that tie the original text to a particular culture. As far as children's literature is concerned, foreignization should be therefore preferred since it encourages children to find the 'foreign' and helps them become more tolerant towards diversity (Oittinen, 2006).

Adaptations, however, are generally preferable since the process of translation is inevitably influenced by the image translators have of the child; so, translating for children is not an innocent act as it involves the collaboration of both ideology and ethics. It is for this reason that translators cannot be said to be totally invisible in the process of transferring a text into a different language, since their choices are constantly influenced by the type of reader they are translating for, and their adaptations aim at showing their loyalty towards such a reader (Oittinen, 2000).

Several are the reasons that encourage translators, film directors or illustrators to make use of adaptations: they can be for the children, in order to let them understand better; they can be for the parents, to make the book more appealing to the target culture, they can be necessary when a book becomes a film or they can simply be a consequence of the different time and situation translators find themselves in. Despite their diverse purposes, all adaptations share a common feature: they are invisible (Oittinen, 2000; Rossi, 2003).

According to Nida and de Ward it is possible to distinguish two main kinds of adaptations, one for different art forms and media and one concerning deletions and additions, this latter being highly determined by the requirements of the target culture (Nida and de Ward, 1986, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.78). In the process of adjustment of a text to existing models in the target culture, translators sometimes have to add elements that do not exist in the original text, but, because they are required by the target model, they have to be added. Not only additions, but also deletions are quite common, especially where translators believe that children might not understand, or when they want to conform to what is permitted or forbidden for their young readers (Shavit, 1981). Examples of censorship are more evident in totalitarian regimes, where the ideology of the regime itself has to indoctrinate the young population. Texts are therefore considered as a powerful means to educate children, and their didactic aim is also displayed by their highly literary style, which strives to improve and enrich the child's vocabulary. Adaptations, however, are not due to ideological reasons only; sometimes, in fact,

translators have to make texts more familiar, often even recurring to additional explanations, because children are believed to lack the experience adult readers have in the understanding of the foreign and the different (Lathey, 2011).

All these examples seem to justify the use of adaptations, confirming what has been suggested by Nord, that is "the function of the target text is not arrived at automatically from an analysis of the source text, but is pragmatically defined by the purpose of the intercultural communication" (Nord, 1991, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.78). Indeed, in order to make successful translations, translators do not have to lose sight of their hypothetical readers, aiming at adapting texts in conformity with the capabilities of their readership (Oittinen, 2000).

Several are the scholars who share a positive view of adaptations: Bloom claims that adaptations are not so different from the original text, since even the latter can be considered as a different version of real life; Steiner regards adaptations as the only means through which the classics can be kept alive, through which one's past can be built, and Hellsing underlines this idea by suggesting how many classics would have been forgotten without later adaptations for children (Bloom, 1980; Hellsing, 1963; Steiner, 1976, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.80). On the whole, what encourages to accept and appreciate adaptations seems to be the idea that texts would not exist without the interpretation of translators, and, thanks to the their translations, of readers belonging to diverse cultures (Oittinen, 2000). Thanks to their interventions, translators create a text that sounds and looks like an original, new work, and it is exactly this originality that translations need in order to be considered really successful (Bastin, 2009).

Therefore, it is rather difficult to treat adaptation and translation as separate issues, since translation involves an act of 'getting closer' to the target culture through a familiar language that necessary requires the domestication of certain features (Oittinen, 2000). This highlights the role of the translator as a mediator, and underlines the importance translations have at the

level of meaning, and adaptations are the only means translators dispose of in order to reproduce the purpose of the source text. Adaptations should be therefore regarded as a creative process which aim is "to restore the balance of communication" (Bastin, 2009, p.6).

2.7. The world of pictures in translation

With reference to what had been proposed by Bakhtin, Oittinen regards translation as a process that combines the information that is given by the text and the interpretation of the reader (Bakhtin, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.112; Oittinen, 2000). This dialogue "may be described as some kind of context, a situation which occurs between texts, human beings and the world around them" (Oittinen, 2000, p.112). When interpreting the images of iconotexts, which by definition are composed of words and pictures, several are the factors that have to be taken into consideration by translators: the audience, the work of art, the society where the image is found and the medium (Berger, 1998, cited in Oittinen, 2001, p.113).

Indeed, in the translation of books for children, translators often have to deal with images, which, together with words, constitute the entirety of a text; in picture books, in fact, there is the interaction of two semiotic systems, that of words and that of illustrations. Oittinen explains this in her definition of picture books, that is "iconotexts, unities formed by words, images, and effects, which have a language of their own" (Oittinen, 2000; Oittinen, 2001, p.109-110). Contrary to story books, which narrate stories through words and where pictures do not play an important role in the conveyance of the message, picture books mainly tell stories through illustrations, and here words only perform an auxiliary role, that of explaining what cannot be expressed through images. In such books pictures play a major role, clarifying and extending meanings or even taking the place of words themselves (Schulevitz, 1985, cited in Oittinen, 2001, p.110).

The genre of picture books includes toy books, pop-up books, illustrated stories or stories told only through pictures. According to David Lewis, picture books can tell one or more stories, or no story at all; they can combine the possible and the impossible, and even different techniques of writing and illustrating. Picture books do not necessarily have to follow literary norms, in fact they often include fragmentation, decanonization, irony and hybridization, and they may also ask for the direct participation of the reader for the development of the story (Lewis, 2001, cited in Oittinen, 2003, p.130; Oittinen, 2003).

When reading a picture book, the reader is part of a dialogue between himself or herself and the story that is narrated through both words and pictures, visualizing an idea of the scene just as in a theatre or in a cinema. Since the relationship between words and images can vary according to the situation of the reader, in the process of translation the message that derives from the unity of words and images is translated with the aim of creating a new picture book in the target culture (Oittinen, 2000; Oittinen, 2001).

The visual appearance of the book (shape, style of letters and headings) has also to be taken into account when translating, since it has a significant influence on the emotional response of readers (Oittinen, 2003). The layout and typography are thus part of the total effect of the book, in the same way as illustrations are part of the dialectic whole of the text, and contribute to influence the content of the story. Visual details are therefore central in picture books since they give rhythm to the story; also, their importance is relevant not only for aesthetic purposes but also for the influence on the reader's emotions (Oittinen, 2000).

What images and words have in common is their versatility and the variety of relationships that can occur between them. Sometimes the story is narrated through words, while other times it is thanks to pictures that the plot unfolds, and the reader's attention is constantly engaged through the filling of gaps and through the request to provide new interpretations to the interaction of words and images (Oittinen, 2003). There are however several conventions that readers need to be aware of in order to be able to read and interpret picture books:

'scaling down', since a picture is smaller than the real thing; the bi-dimensionality of objects; the indication of colour in monochrome; the stylized indications of mental processes and mental states and the fact that the frozen action depicted in the picture in reality stands for an action in motion (Spink, 1990, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.101).

According to Joseph Schwarcz, illustrations can affect the reading experience in mainly two ways, through congruency or deviation (Schwarcz, 1982, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.103). Congruency entails a collaboration between words and pictures in the conveyance of the message, while in deviation pictures tend to drift away from what is expressed by words (Oittinen, 2003). Barthes explains the same phenomenon by using different labels: the anchoring function appears when words define what should be told by pictures, while the alternation function refers to those cases where pictures and words take turns for the transmission of the message (Barthes, 1977, cited in Oittinen, 2003, p.115). Whichever the relationship between the two, pictures always add something to the story that could not be conveyed otherwise, and also prove to be fundamental in providing readers with the cultural, temporal and spatial background of the narration, as well as with anticipations of what might happen in the following pages. Furthermore, illustrations can make the new text closer to the target culture or they can decide to keep the foreign element in the story, and they can also give hints on how to perform a text when it is meant to be read aloud, instructing on how to use one's voice. In one way or another, illustrations take the story into new directions, sometimes drawing the reader's attention towards certain scenes, other simply functioning as a decoration for the story or eventually telling a different story from the one presented by the words of the author (Oittinen, 2000; Oittinen, 2001; Oittinen, 2001). The latter property is also underlined by Shulevitz (cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.106), who claims that "the pictures in a successful picture book are more than a repetition of what is said in words".

In picture books, not only do pictures influence words, but words as well influence pictures: this is particularly evident in those cases where an illustration is first seen without a

caption and then a second time with it. The second response to the image will be inevitably affected by what is described by words, which are then going to drive the reader's interpretation (Oittinen, 2000).

Illustrated books, however, are not simply a combination of words and pictures, in fact they might also present other features such as sound and rhythm, which can therefore be heard, since picture books are often meant to be read aloud. But even when adults read the book silently they may sing the song in their mind, since "the music, even inaudible, is part of the emotivity of the reading situation, it is part of the nonverbal text elements" (Oittinen, 2000, p.110). As Shulevitz points out, "by telling a story visually, instead of through verbal description, a picture book becomes a dramatic experience: immediate, vivid, moving. A picture book is closer to theatre and film [...] than to other kind of books", and the role of the audience now assumes a public dimension, in opposition to the private one of the private reading experience (Oittinen, 2001; Shulevitz, 1985, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.111). There is however one feature that distinguishes picture books from movies, and that is time: while films are usually seen in one sitting, when reading a book readers can decide to stop and start the reading whenever they want (Oittinen, 2000).

2.8. The dimension of performance in children's books

Reading aloud is the only means through which illiterate children can approach the world of literature, and it is thanks to the stories that children hear that they can start admiring the act of reading (Oittinen, 2000; Trelease, 1989, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.32). Translators of children's literature should bear this in mind, since their words will have to live also on the reader's tongue. This aspect recalls the question of 'readability', which often "involves the implicit idea of understanding the full meaning of the text" and is determined by both the text and the reading situation (Oittinen, 1993; Oittinen, 2000, p.32).

Words also carry feelings and emotions, and, according to the context in which a word is used, the sensations it arouses can vary; translators of books for children therefore have to make the children inside them live again in order to be able to choose the right words to arouse a certain emotion (Oittinen, 2000; Puranen, 1982, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.33). The role emotions themselves play when a text is read aloud is crucial, since they contribute to the shaping of the image a child creates while listening to a story; translators should thus strive to engage the aloud-reader as much as possible, in order to maximise his or her performance. This could be done through punctuation, which, in children's literature, does not necessarily have to follow grammatical conventions but rather the rhythm the reader hears and feels (Oittinen, 2000). Emotions can be conveyed also through paralinguistic elements such as intonation, tone, tempo, pauses, stress, rhythm, duration, and even through a whisper or a sigh; the act of reading aloud involves a re-creation and it leads the listener towards new experiences, as well as it gives him or her information and contributes to create their sense of literature (Lehmuskallio, 1983, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.35).

By listening to the story told by an adult, children are never alone with the 'monsters of fairy tales', and adult readers can also choose to change their attitude towards the reading according to the reaction of their listener. Adults are in fact performing, acting the story they are reading: their interpretation is suggested by the words of the text and the listening child is their audience (Oittinen, 2000). Grown-up readers are therefore mediators between the text and the young listener, and they may explain, fill in what is missing, omit or modify the story in accordance with their reader or even with their idea of the child (Tabbert, 1980, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.36). In this way we have the creation of a sense of togetherness and of shared illusions that is fundamental in the passage from fantasy to real emotion (Hägglunds, 1985, cited in Oittinen, 2000, p.36).

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF TRANSLATORS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

3.1. Who is a translator?

Sith the time that the great and high tower of Babylon was builded, men have spoken with divers tongues, in such wise that divers men be strange to other and understand not others' speech […] but God of His mercy and grace hath ordained double remedy. One is that some man learneth and knoweth many divers speeches, and so between strange men, of the which neither understandeth other's speech, such a man may be mean and tell either what other will mean […].[1]

(John Trevisa)

As can be seen from this extract from Trevisa's *Dialogue between a Lord and a Clerk*, the importance of the role translators fulfil was already known in the 14th Century, since only those who "knoweth many divers speeches" can transfer a message from one language to another. However, in order to be very good, a translator must satisfy several requirements. First of all he or she has to have a satisfactory knowledge of the source language, so as to be able to understand the most hidden meanings of words and infer all that is not explicitly stated in the message. Secondly and perhaps even more importantly, a translator must be in a complete control of the target language, also with regard to technical terms, especially when dealing with specific fields (Nida, 2003).

Although the knowledge of both languages is important, it is however not enough for translators to fulfil their task; in fact, they must have an effective empathy with the original author in order to arouse the same emotions of the original text but on a different readership (Nida, 2003). Translators therefore have to be sensitive to language, that is they have to be

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[1] http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30851/30851-h/30851-h.htm#Dialogue

endowed with a sixth sense that guides them in making the best choices in the target language (Newmark, 1988). This can be linked to the capacity for literary expression, which is another essential requirement a translator must have in order to give his or her readers some joy during the reading experience (Nida, 2003).

Moreover, translators must be endowed also with the so-called 'intercultural communicative competence', which combines a detailed knowledge of both the source language and the target one with a good intercultural competence (Savignon, 2004, cited in Byram, 2012, p.88). Such a competence in both language and culture will allow them to mediate in any task where the two 'languacultures' in question are present (Byram, 2012).

Thus, being bilingual in the strict sense – being able to use two or more languages on a daily basis – does not seem to be enough for a translator. Indeed, translators must have special bilingual skills thanks to which they can express in a given language the meaning a text has in another language, also trying to reproduce the same style as the original. This process of transfer requires a deep understanding of the original message written in the source language, very good transfer skills as well as considerable knowledge of the target language and culture (Grosjean, 2010). It is then possible to identify the role of the translator with that of the mediator, whose main task is to find and interpret all the elements that belong to a certain group and transfer them to another group. In order to be able to do so, such a professional has to be, to some extent, bicultural, too (Taft, 1981, cited in Katan, 2014, p.17). Such a biculturalism necessarily requires the ability "to be flexible in switching cultural orientation", and appeals for the suspension of disbelief about foreign cultures and of belief about one's own culture (Byram, 2000, cited in Sharifian, 2012, p.318; Taft, 1981, cited in Katan, 2014, p.18).

One of the most common risks for translators is that they might inevitably "leave the stamp of their own personality on any translation they make", though they should do their best not to be personally involved with the text they are translating. Sometimes they change the message

on purpose, in order to conform it to the target culture, however the majority of the alterations seems to be caused by those personality traits that innocently influence a person's work. The more a translator is involved in the text, the more he or she is going to express his or her subjectivity (Nida, 2003, p.154).

The following model explains the processes that are at work in the translator's mind when he or she is making a translation.

Fig.1. The activity of the translator based on Nida 2003
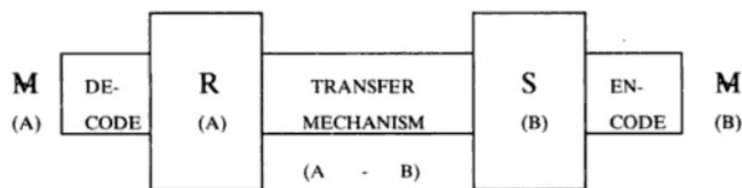
According to this model, a message in the source language A is decoded into a different form of language A itself, then later, thanks to the so-called 'transfer mechanism', it is encoded into the target language B, thus creating a corresponding message in such a language. In this process, not only are translators expected to match the symbols and grammatical structures of the two languages, but above all they have to transfer the meaning of the message in accordance with the norms of the target system (Nida, 2003).

The role of the translator can be explained also with reference to narratology, since the way general narrative develops can further be extended to translation as well. Let us start with the model of narrative communication proposed by Chatman (1978):

Fig2. Model of narrative communication based on Chatman 1978
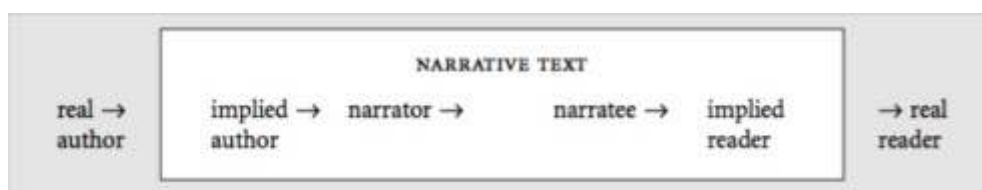
According to this model, the message can be conveyed hanks to the so-called 'implied author', who substitutes the real author and represents the idea a reader has of the real author after he or she has read the book. Unlike the narrator, the implied author has no voice throughout the story, while the implied reader, on the other hand, is the counterpart of the implied author, that is the image of the reader inscribed in the text itself (Chatman, 1978).

The other important distinction in the diagram is between narrator and narratee, where the former is the narrative voice throughout the text, whereas the latter is the being the narrator speaks to (Wall, 1991, cited in O'Sullivan, 2003). While the implied author and the implied reader are always present, there may or may not be a narratee in a text. Indeed the narratee, who does not have to be confused with the reader, is only a device through which the implied author informs the readership about how the story should be read. Finally it is important to underline that the narrator does not necessarily correspond to the implied author (Chatman, 1978). From this model proposed by Chatman, which can only be applied to general narratives, it is possible to create a new model specific for translation (O'Sullivan, 2003).

Fig.3. Model of translation in narrative communication based on O'Sullivan 2003
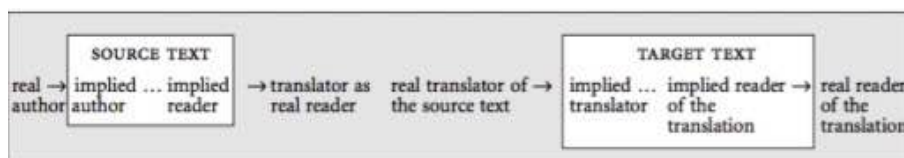
In Fig.3, the parties of the source text are the same that had already been described by Chatman, then by moving towards the right side of the model the focus shifts on translators and translation. As we can tell from the model, the translator is first of all a real reader of the original text (ST) who, thanks to his knowledge of both linguistic and cultural conventions of the ST, can take the role of an implied reader. Since the translator is an adult, however, he or she is not among the potential implied readers of a text that is meant to be for children, but he or she has to mediate the communication between the implied author of the ST and the implied reader of the target text (TT). Also, given that the translator is the creator of the target

text, he or she functions as the real author of a narration in the previous model, since he or she is the one who creates the text in the target culture (O'Sullivan, 2003).

The translator, though, does not create a new text, but rather interprets the original one and transfers it to the target culture, thus creating a new relationship between the translated text and the readers of the target culture. In this way there is also a new implied reader, that of the translation, who will always be different from that of the original text, since the former is created by the implied author while the latter is constructed by the implied translator (O'Sullivan, 2003).

Fig.4. Communicative model of the translated narrative text based on O'Sullivan 2003
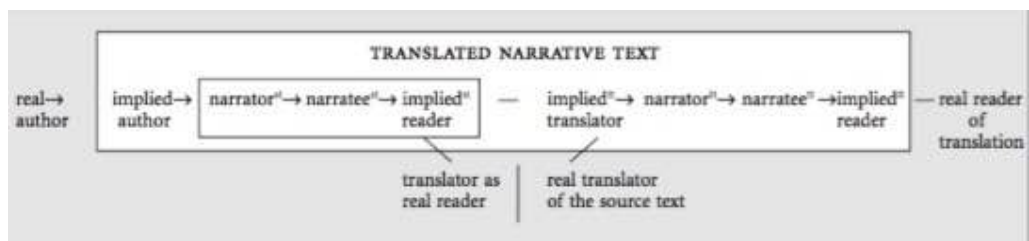
The communication between the real author of the original text and the real reader of the translation can therefore occur thanks to the real translator, who first of all receives the source text and then transmits it to the target reader thanks to the so-called 'intratextual agency of the implied translator'. Thus, in the translated text, there will be two different voices: that of the narrator of the original text and that of the translator (O'Sullivan, 2003).

The translator's voice can be identified on two different levels in a translated text. The first level is that of the implied translator as author of explanations and other paratextual information: in this case his or her voice is clear, he or she manifests him or herself throughout the text. The second level is the one where the voice of the translator corresponds to that of the narrator of the translation. This latter case is particularly evident in children's literature, due to the asymmetrical communication between adult authors and young readers. In such texts, indeed, it is thanks to the culture-specific conceptions of childhood that the

image of the implied reader will be created, and it is on the same conceptions that translators will base their choices when translating for a young readership (O'Sullivan 2003).

3.2. The illusory invisibility of translators within texts

With the term 'invisibility', Lawrence Venuti (2008) refers to the situation and activity of translators in contemporary British and American culture. The expression refers to the illusion that, thanks to the manipulation of the translator, the translated text sounds like an original one, absolutely fluent, giving the impression that what is being conveyed is the foreign author's personality or the essential meaning of the original text. This transparency effect can only be achieved if translators adhere to current usage of the language, maintain continuous syntax thus creating a precise meaning. However, also readers play an important role in the creation of the meaning, by primarily focusing on meaning itself and without questioning the translator's intervention on the original text. Thus, according to this idea, translations should sound like the original work and not like the 'second best' as they have usually been labelled; the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator and therefore more visible the author of the source text.

The adjective 'fluent' in an English-language translation refers to all those instances written in a modern, largely used and standard English. Foreign words, and even words belonging to different varieties of English, are generally avoided, and syntax has to unfold continuously and easily in order to achieve semantic accuracy as well. The canons that determine whether a translation is fluent or not vary, depending on the variable nature of linguistic norms and conventions. Overall, a fluent translation has to give the reader direct access to what is discussed in the original text, without letting him or her notice that the words he or she is reading have been domesticated by a translator. These professionals therefore have to create the illusion that the translated text is instead the original work (Venuti, 2008).

Although this strategy facilitates the reading process, as it makes the text closer to the reader and eliminates any instances of 'foreignness', at the same time it eclipses the translator's work. Furthermore, translators' invisibility is highlighted also by the individualistic conception of authorship that is linked to the author of the source text. Authors, indeed, are free to express themselves through the words they choose, which are not going to be altered by translators. In that respect, translations are often regarded as 'second-order representations', potentially fake copies of the foreign text, but at the same time, despite the contradiction, translations have to create the illusion of the presence of the author even in the target text. It is at this point that translators act as authors and translations look like source texts, although all this being just an illusion (Venuti, 2008).

Translations can be regarded as source texts mainly because translators make use of the so-called 'domesticating practice' when translating a text. According to this technique, the cultural elements in the source text have to be reduced and adapted to the conventions and norms of the target text. This underlines once again the position of translators, since they have to make a constant reference to the conditions of the receiving culture at the time the translation is produced; here-hence the incredible power of translation when it comes to constructing identities and ideologies. Strangely enough, even though by making use of this technique translators have to manipulate and adapt texts more than if they used the so-called 'foreignisation' (through which the foreign elements in the text are left untouched, thus letting the reader immerge in the foreign culture), in the end they incredibly find themselves in an even more invisible position (Venuti, 2008).

It is for all these reasons that translation is usually given less prominence and importance, and that translators rarely appear on the books they translate. Indeed, the original hierarchy has always considered the source text superior than the translated one, also due to the degree of reduction translations have to undergo in order to conform to the needs of the receiving culture. There is thus the illusion of a 'faithful rendition' thanks to the deceptive effect of

transparency combined with the originality of the translator. And it is exactly thanks to such originality that translators should be acknowledged some authorship, since they are the ones in charge of choosing which are the texts that are going to be translated as well as of developing a discursive strategy that is successful in the target language, too. Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, translators are also responsible for the interpretation of the meaning of the source text, which later they will have to transfer to the target one (Venuti, 2008). It is in particular for this reason that Carol Maier (2007) talks about translators as intervenient beings: they cannot be said to be invisible since the features of their translations are highly influenced by their place of enunciation and their ideological, geographical and temporal positioning (Maier, 2007, cited in Munday, 2012, p.228). Thus, because of their active role in the process, translators are undoubtedly worthy of some authorship (Venuti, 2002).

3.3. The didactic role of translators in children's literature

Since the very beginning, children's literature has been dominated by translations, especially those of the Christian Scriptures, the Bible and primes, the latter also including a translation of the Lord's prayer. The English monk Bede (673-735) is said to be the first one who aimed to translate specifically for children, followed by King Alfred and the Benedictine monk Ælfric of Eynsham, who, about a century later, expressed their desire to instruct all the young free men of England, both in Latin and in the spoken English vernacular (Lathey, 2010).

With the Norman conquest in 1066 the British Isles became trilingual, with English being the language of the mass of the population, Latin being the language of religion and education and French being used in the court and in socially privileged environments. Towards the mid thirteenth century, however, English started to appear in official documents and the use of French started to decline, although Latin still remained central in education. It is from the

fourteenth century onwards that children started being taught in English at the elementary levels of education, while those who decided to attend grammar schools still had to study in Latin. This language division favoured the spread of dual-language textbooks in Latin and English and encouraged the young learners who attended grammar schools towards the practice of translation into Latin (Lathey, 2010).

Latin and French were the main two languages of source texts translated into English for didactic purposes, thanks to the cultural ties that continued to link the British Isles and France and the dominance of Latin in education. Texts in the Middle Ages mainly focused on religion and courtesy, although even fables became more and more popular, thanks to the moral lessons they hid (Lathey, 2010).

Courtesy and conduct books were the most commonly translated texts in the medieval period, whose aim was to encourage children towards the acquisition of social manners and moral virtue. According to Caxton, who "enjoyed a time as a productive translator under the patronage of Margaret of Burgundy", young learners had to learn such a courtesy and such virtues in English and thus, in order to follow this policy, the famous printer and translator printed a *Book of Curtesye* in 1477 and John Lydgate's English translation of the Latin book about table manners by Bishop Grosseteste of Lincoln, *Stans puer ad mensam* in 1478, as well as he himself translated a conduct book originally written in French, *The Book of the Knight of the Tower*, in 1484 (Lathey, 2010, p.17). In addition to courtesy books, children could also take some inspiration also from the tales of the Latin collection *Gesta Romanorum*, which continued to be popular even throughout the 18th century, from the medieval romances of Scandinavian origin such as *Havelock the Dane,* or from translations from the French, as *Morte d'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Malory, first printed by Caxton in 1485 (Bamberger, 1978).

The majority of translators of the Middle Ages and early modern period usually decided to remain invisible, with the exception of those who wanted to sign their translations with their names or of Caxton himself, who only did so for pressing reasons. Anonymity remained quite

popular also through the 18th century, where translators might have just used their initials or the formula 'translation by several hands' to indicate a collective work. According to Lesser (2006, cited in Lathey, 2010, p.111), invisibility was not necessarily an indication of low status, but rather it was used to protect translators from potential criticisms. Modesty was another typical features of translators: indeed, they never exalt their works, which again contributed to the often-cited low status of translation (Lathey, 2010).

This habit of considering translation as a low practice also had an impact on the financial reward of translators, whose occupation was mainly regarded as a secondary and part-time one. It was only towards the mid 19th century that translators finally gained more control of financial matters (Lathey, 2010).

Still in the early modern period, those who directly translated for children were mainly concerned with pedagogical matters. One of the most prominent translators of this period was William Bullokar, whose main focus was on Aesop's fables and on the English spelling and grammar. Frustrated by the irregularities between the spelling of the English letters and their sound, he proposed a reform that consisted in the use of diacritical marks which had to suggest the correct pronunciation. His deep interest in the study of language was mainly due to the belief that the knowledge of the English grammar would facilitate children in the acquisition of other languages (Lathey, 2010).

John Brinsley was another renowned schoolmaster who underlined the importance of learning grammar and written language in his translation of Aesop fables from Latin. He firmly believed that it is mainly through fables that children can embrace learning and wisdom, since they can help them reflect thanks to the several interpretations and performances that pupils can give to each story (Lathey, 2010).

Like the two previous translators, also Charles Hoole's interest was in a pedagogical reform that favoured a playful approach to the acquisition of literacy. He mainly drew his inspiration from the Czech educationalist John Amos Comenius' *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*,

where the author suggests that children learn through their senses, and in line with this belief he makes explicit references to the auditory and visual channels through the representation of sounds and pictures throughout the whole book. Hoole was also concerned with translation and with the approach children should adopt towards it; the schoolmaster already proposed the difficulties that translators may encounter when facing a text that includes pictures, since the translation of a particular phrase in the original text may not match the accompanying figure in the target text (Lathey, 2010), thus anticipating the previously discussed problematic nature of equivalence.

In the bookselling for the domestic market, fables, including those of Aesop as well, continued to be popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The translations that circulated at that time were mainly used for political and religious propaganda, especially thanks to translators such as Sir Roger L'Estrange and Samuel Croxall (Lathey, 2010). The two scholars believed that the child's mind is a 'blank paper', easy to impress and corrupt; for this reason, L'Estrange started a practice in which he aimed to translate texts for the good of children rather than for their entertainment, since he believed that the genius of the child can develop thanks to the hearing, learning and telling of short stories (Darton, 1958, cited in Bamberg, 1978, p.21; Lathey, 2010).

It is exactly the focus on the didactic purpose of translations, on their religion persuasion and moral education that encourages translators of books and texts for children to take their young readers into account. Indeed, the commentary that used to be provided alongside texts in the Middle Ages shows a gradual acknowledgment of the child reader. One of the first examples is taken from Caxton, who, in one of the prologues of his translation from the French version of Virgil's Aeneid, affirms that he is modifying the original text in order to make it comprehensible to common people, assuming that children might read or listen to it as well (Lathey, 2010).

Other translators such as Bullokar and Brinsley developed other strategies in their translations of Aesop in 1585 and 1624. Bullokar, for example, added to his work some explanations of the Latin text that he regarded as necessary in order to let the English reader understand. To indicate that such alterations were not present in the original text, the translator decided to place them in square brackets. A similar strategy was used by Brinsley, who proposed an English variant of those passages that were too harsh in the target language by setting them in the margins and writing them in italic letters. Thanks to these explanations, pupils were able to learn grammar, syntax as well as the translation techniques of the time (Lathey, 2010).

This latter strategy had a significant effect on the comprehension of the text and it shows how cultural items have always been adapted in translations for children, to avoid that the young reader gets lost in the text. But, at the same time, it implied a loss o fluency in translation, which was slowly restored in the 18th century, where most translators of children's literature did their best to conform to the fluency norms of the time (Lathey, 2010).

Although we have already seen that Venuti criticises such a 'domesticating' strategy, since he believes that adaptations create the illusion that what the reader is going to read is not a translation and that no translators has intervened in the original text, it is the only solutions translators dispose of when it comes to translating for children (Lathey, 2010; Venuti, 2008). What is really important, however, is that the same image of the source text is maintained in the target one as well, in spite of all the necessary adaptations required by the situation of the translation (Pascua, 2003).

3.3.1. Translating women

It is especially from 1855 onwards that female translators became more and more popular: due to their secondary social role, indeed, women found translation to be a very good and

satisfying occupation that could be conducted at home, since they usually had no access to public academic and professional activities. Women as translators had existed since the Renaissance, but it is towards the end of the 17th century that their activity increases, especially thanks to the access to education that some fortunate daughters of the professional and mercantile classes gained at that time. By the end of the 18th century, women were thus translating contemporary French authors and children's texts (Lathey, 2010).

The encouragement women were gaining throughout the century in studying foreign languages and travelling also underlines the increasing autonomy of women from professional backgrounds, therefore encouraging them to focus on autonomous activities such as translation. It is rather difficult to make a proportion of the number of women and men as translators of literature for children – this difficulty being also due to the fact that the majority of the works translated by women remained anonymous, underlining once again the invisibility that has always been associated with translators – but it is possible to notice that women were more predominant as children's authors in the second half of the 19th century. Some of the most influential were Mary Howitt, translator of Hans Christian Andersen's tales, Sarah Austin and Harriet Martineau, both relatives of Edgar Taylor, the translator of Grimm's tales, who all grew up in the same intellectual society in Norwich (Lathey, 2010).

3.4. The revelation of translators and their mediating role in children's literature

As previously discussed, in the Middle Ages translators mainly had to instruct and delight young readers; some of them, for instance William Caxton or Sir Roger L'Estrange, became eminent figures thanks to their achievements in fields other than translation, while others remained anonymous. The trend towards the translation of religious texts, especially those from France and Germany, continued also in the 18th century, although it is fairy tales and romances that are mostly remembered with passion with regard to this period. It is in the 19th

centuries that the children's literature written in English is taken to new directions, thanks to the new tendencies from different genres, such as science fiction or the literature of World War Two, or even other languages (Lathey, 2010).

It is because of such a tendency that translators have started to perform the role of mediators, continuously conforming culturally-related elements to the canons of the receiving culture (Lathey, 2010). Thus, it is possible to introduce the idea of 'cultural translation' to refer to all the instances which do not simply involve a linguistic exchange, but also a cultural one. Thanks to the work and mediation of translators, such texts, which are deeply tied to a particular context, can live in other foreign contexts as well (Bassnett, 2011).

In the process translators might also face the problem of untranslatability, which is due to those elements that cannot be simply adopted by the receiving culture but which need further transformations. What really matters in translators is therefore a great intercultural competence through which they will be able to cut, modify or even restructure texts according to the needs and conventions of the target culture (Bassnett, 2011).

As far as the translation of children's literature is concerned, translators have to act as mediators also with regard to the expectations and values of childhood that are implied by the source text, and this is shown by the fact that in the early 21st century there still is an authoritative attitude towards children, since translators usually make decisions according to what they believe to be best for the child (Lathey, 2010).

Such an attitude reveals itself also through the didactic behaviour of translators (Lathey, 2010). Indeed, they always have the children's education in mind while translating, therefore applying censorship whenever required and showing a concern for didacticism but also entertainment. It is mainly this educational concern that allows translators to become more transparent in children's texts, especially when the source text and the target one are compared. Indeed, in this circumstance the translators' presence comes to the surface through their linguistic and cultural choices as well as through their adaptations, all of which are

dictated by the need of the child to learn in conformity with the norms and conventions of their culture. It is possible to spot the translator's presence in the preface of a text as well, where he or she usually clearly justifies his or her choices or expresses his or her didactic intentions, as well as instructs adults on how the text should be read (Lathey, 2006). It is thus rather difficult to affirm that translators are completely invisible figures as far as children's literature is concerned, since their voice clearly emerges in the texts they translate, both through their choices and suggestions.

CHAPTER IV

FROM *DIARY OF A WIMPY KID* TO *DIARIO DI UNA SCHIAPPA*

4.1. The book

Diary of a Wimpy Kid is a novel in cartoons made of ten books (the last one still unpublished in Italy) by the American online game developer, designer and author Jeff Kinney. The first book was released online on Funbrain.com in 2004 and then in hardcover in April 2007, selling more than 150 million copies all over the world and being translated in 50 languages.[2] Moreover, the book has also been one of the New York Times bestsellers for more than one year. The Italian version of the series has been translated by Rossella Bernascone with the title *Diario di una Schiappa*.[3]

Diary of a Wimpy Kid tells about the life of the funny Gregory Heffley, a middle-school American student who has to face several unlucky situations, to deal with the problematic relationship between parents and children during adolescence and with the first infatuations, as well as with all the difficulties that arise in any friendly relationship both inside and outside school. It is thanks to his 'normality', to his awkwardness, that Gregory has found way into the hearts of so many young readers all around the world, becoming representative of the majority of the children of his age who, despite being clumsy, always manages to succeed one way or the other. The book also presents more serious themes, for instance bullying, thus getting even closer to the everyday reality it tells about and making children aware of the problems they might have to overcome in their lives in a funny and light hearted way.[4]

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[2] http://www.wimpykid.com/ (last accessed between June and July 2016)
[3] http://www.castoro-on-line.it/libri/diario-di-una-schiappa/ (last accessed between June and July 2016)
[4] http://www.castoro-on-line.it/libri/diario-di-una-shiappa/ (last accessed between June and July 2016)

The series, originally written in English by an American writer, is full of references to the culture, habits and customs of the United States. Some of the cultural markers that I have encountered concern food (peanut butter), festivities (Thanksgiving), the school system (a diverse grading system), units of measurement (feet, inches) and type of currency (dollars). I have also found some differences in the translation of names and wordplays as well as idiomatic expressions and other cultural references, which have been adapted to the needs of the Italian readership.

Here follows a list of the original books of the series and of their translations.

Table 1. Titles of the books of the series of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and their Italian translations

Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2007), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2008)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Rodrick Rules (2008), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa – La Legge dei più Grandi* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2009)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – The Last Straw (2009), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa Diario di una Schiappa – Ora basta!* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2010)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Dog Days (2009), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa – Vita da cani* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2011)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – The Ugly Truth (2010), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa – La dura verità* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2012)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Cabin Fever (2011), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa – Si salvi chi può!* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2013)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – The Third Wheel (2012), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa – Guai in arrivo!* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2014)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Hard Luck (2013), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa – Sfortuna nera.* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2014)
Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Long Haul (2014), by Jeff Kinney	*Diario di una Schiappa – Portatemi a casa!* Translated by Rossella Bernascone (2015)

4.2. Translating cultural references in children's literature

Multicultural studies have been encouraged by the continuous increase of immigration, which inevitably leads to the birth of multicultural and multilingual societies. It is at this point that it becomes vital for children to learn about and start appreciating diversity, and this can happen also through the reading of books about children coming from different parts of the world, which will help young readers tolerate and respect the 'foreign' (Pascua, 2003).

However, translating or writing for children does not merely involve the creation or the transfer of a text with only the child's image in mind, since writers and translators also have to think about the potential opinion of the parents who would buy the book, of the teachers who would use it in their classes or the possible didactic purposes of the text itself. Children's literature is therefore a combination of both social, educational and literary systems, which reunites the needs of the young reader, the expectations of parents and the requirements of the educational system of the receiving culture (Pascua-Febles, 2006).

Let us start with a broad definition of culture, which can be characterised as a set of values, attitudes and behaviours shared by a given group and passed on from one generation to another. Any of the features that can be linked to a particular people can be adopted by the author of a text and have to be made accessible to the reader of the translation. So, the role of the translator-mediator is to provide target readers with whatever they need to know "in order to process the translation in a way similar to the way members of the source culture process the source text" (Davies, 2003, p.68).

Aixelá (1996) notes that it is rather difficult to give a definition of what culture-specific items are, since everything in a language is culturally produced, starting from language itself. Generally speaking, culture-specific items are usually identified with those arbitrary references that can be linked to a particular linguistic system, such as place names, historical figures, periodicals, local institutions or personal names, and translators are solely required to

appeal to their intuition in order to identify them. However, such a strategy allows excessive arbitrariness and implies a static character of cultural items, no matter what the function of the text is, also denying the dynamic nature of translation itself. The author goes on to suggest then that culture-specific items can be defined only in relation to the conflict that arises when a reference in the source text poses a translation problem when it is transferred to the target one, possibly due to nonexistence or to a different value in the target culture. At the same time, it is also true that those elements that are perceived as culture specific items with regard to a given culture are likely to be considered so even with reference to other cultures, since their cultural differential tends to be stable when compared to any other people. However, the degree of the conflict can vary according to the distance between the two cultures: where two cultures are very close, the potential conflict would be easily-solvable, whereas where two cultures belong to two completely diverse systems, translators will have to face a more difficult challenge. It therefore seems that the number of culture-specific items in a text can also vary according to the culture in which they are going to be transferred. In addition to this, the preference for either domestication or foreignization plays an important role, too. Many factors can contribute to decide how far to domesticate a translation or to leave it closer to the source text, such as the historical norms during certain historical periods, the text type, the nature of the target audience and the distance between the source and the target languages and cultures (Davies, 2003).

According to some Canadian scholars, the term 'multiculturalism' is used with reference to the belief that cultural diversity is beneficial for any society since it helps create an environment where people from different backgrounds learn how to appreciate diversity; however, it is possible to notice that most of the times people from one culture tend not to mix with those from another culture, but they rather create close communities within an heterogeneous society. Translation is one of the main means through which this situation can be overcome, since it is usually referred to as "an action between cultures rather than between

languages" (Pascua, 2003, p.279). This interest in the cultural dimension of translation is increasing more and more, thanks to the recognition that such a process does not merely involve a linguistic transfer (Cascallana, 2006) but also a cultural one. In order to achieve this goal, the foreign element within the source text should be maintained in the target one as well, always bearing in mind that the text is going to be read by children and that has to be acceptable for the norms and conventions of the receiving culture (Pascua, 2003). Indeed, issues such as culture and ideology are believed to be more important in children's literature than in any other literature, due to the fundamental role that readings have in shaping young readers' cultural identity as well as in broadening their understanding of other cultures (Inggs, 2003). Thus, what really matters is that the image that characterises the culture of the source text is still present and functions in the target one, too, despite the necessary adaptations (Pascua, 2003).

In order to make the original text closer to the receiving culture, therefore avoiding that the text might sound alien to target readers, translators of children's literature usually take some liberties with respect to the original text, also adjusting it in conformity with the target ideology. If it is generally expected that children's books should have the same effect that the source text had on the source text reader, then changes and adaptations should be expected; on the contrary, translators can choose to leave their translation as close as possible to the original text, running the risk that culture-specific elements may sound alien to the target reader, also potentially confusing him or her (Inggs, 2003). The degree of adaptation of a text should be suggested by the perceived reading experience of the future reader (the age of the reader himself might be a good indicator), alongside the degree of foreignness that is accepted by the receiving culture (Frimmelova, 2010; Lathey, 2016).

Venuti's preference for foreignization thus has to be reviewed in the light of a literature that is destined to young and inexperienced readers, whose lack of knowledge may compromise the understanding of the text. However, such a view is still opposed by those

who believe that adaptations should be kept to a minimum, since they are firmly convinced that foreign elements within a text pose some challenges and create excitement in the young reader (Lathey, 2016). A good balance between the two opposing view could be found with the domesticating strategy being used when it comes to translating for a very young readership, while some foreign elements might be left as such with children of the upper-age level, since such elements might allow them to discover new cultures. Nevertheless, translators always have to take into account the degree of tolerance for foreignness of the receiving culture (Frimmelova, 2010).

Before starting my analysis, I tried to understand the role of children's literature within the literary polysystem and that of translated stories as well. It has often been stated that the interaction between children and the stories they read has important implications on the child's development, since, as it has been pointed out, we are "at least in part what we read" (Spink, 1989, cited in Marriott, 1998, p.9). Similarly, the stories read aloud by parents should help children make sense of their cultural identity and of the world in general (Marriott, 1998). If it is said that stories play an important role in shaping one's political, economical, religious, cultural and sexual affiliations, the same can be said about translations, which seem to be fundamental in broadening one's knowledge about how the same aspects can vary from culture to culture. Indeed, translation has long been considered as a cross-cultural form of communication, that is it is not a mere conglomeration of words and sentences between two languages but rather a cultural entity which emerges from two diverse cultural contexts (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1998, cited in Liang, 2007, p.92). Hence the importance for translators to know how to deal with all the cultural references in a text that may potentially create some difficulties in the child's understanding. The strategies translators dispose of when they have to translate culture-specific items are listed below.

- Non translation, reproducing, copying, preservation: when translators have to deal with an entity which has no close equivalent in the target language, the source term is

maintained even in the translation. This is an operation of lexical borrowing through which the elements that belong to a language and a culture are passed into a different one, and later the same elements might even become fully integrated in the host language. However, it is important to underline that the degree of tolerance of this process varies from culture to culture: foreign items are indeed accepted where there the two 'languacultures' are not so distant, otherwise translators will have to look for an equivalent form. Moreover, this strategy might make it difficult for the target reader to identify him or herself with the character due to linguistic barriers. In addition to this, words in a foreign language are often difficult to read, and this may compromise the mere pleasure of reading. However, if the element is repeated throughout the story, then readers might become used to it and the initially foreign effect may slowly dwindle; this process is usually referred to as 'deforeignization'. Decisions regarding whether to opt for formal or semantic preservation may vary according to the translating conventions of the different target cultures and to the audience perceived expectations.

- Non translation plus additional explanation: this strategy is used to bridge the lack of knowledge of the target reader. By using this technique, however, translators have to be careful since they might alter the function the item has in the original language, or, in case the element has a divertive function, the pun might no longer be funny. Moreover, the insertion of explanations in the text may burden the reader with irritating details, possibly diverging the text from the style of the original, hence the need for a skilled translator who can include such explanations without interfering with the natural flow of the narration. Those who do not manage to integrate explanations in the text can recur to footnotes, thus expecting readers to pause and consult these further explanations in order to make sense of what they are reading. The

choice of how and when to use such further explanations mainly depends on the expected knowledge of the target reader.

- Globalization or replacement by a more widely known element from the source culture or by an internationally known name with the same function would allow translators to successfully communicate with multicultural audiences. When using this strategy, translators neutralize and generalize the meaning of the culture-specific item but at the same time they have to make sure that the semantic features of the original name remain unchanged. This is a convenient strategy to open up the text to a wider audience, since it manages to convey the features of an element without running the risk of sounding unfamiliar. However, in many cases some of the associations attached to the original might be lost.

- Localization or replacement by another culture-specific item from the target language: this strategy is used to avoid loss of effect, and it encourages to look for a reference that is firmly rooted in the target culture. Though the majority of translations do not seek total localization, translators may use such a technique when they have to deal with very problematic elements, although this may arise certain inconsistency in the text, given that elements associated with the target culture may be inserted in a text which is centred in the source one. Despite the incongruity, this perfectly mirrors the dual goals of translators, that is that of doing justice to the original text and at the same time make their translation acceptable to the target audience.

- Transformation is used with reference to those instances where the modification of a culture-specific item can be considered as a distortion or an alteration of the original one. These changes may be suggested by the perceived low tolerance or flexibility of the target audience, even though at the same time they might alter the connotations attached to the original.

- Creation occurs when translators create a culture-specific reference which is not present in the original text. For example, especially when translating names, the English features of the name may be removed but at the same time the English flavour might still be conveyed by incorporating other elements. Such a strategy may compensate for the loss of the features that attach the text to its original culture at other points in the text.

- Deletion, omission: this strategy is used when translators cannot find an equivalent in the target language, especially when they are faced with plays on words which would not make sense in the target language since they would be unknown to the target reader, or when the paraphrase or the explanation of the item would give it a prominence it does not have in the original. This strategy is usually used in order to keep the harmony of the original tone, whereas the inclusion of a problematic cultural-reference might create a confusing effect (Davies, 2003; Van Collie, 2006).

The strategy a translator chooses to adopt can be determined by several factors. First of all, among the so-called supratextual parameters it is possible to find the degree of linguistic prescriptivism, that is the greater or lesser preference to preserve the linguistic conventions of the target culture; the presumed nature and expectations of the potential readers, possibly with reference to their age, too; the aims of the initiators (author or publisher), who may impose some restrictions to the translator, as well as the working conditions and the training of the translator, which will definitely determine the quality of the final product. In addition to the abilities of translators, the adoption of a certain strategy can also be determined by the translator's own view: as for children's literature, for example, some translators believe that children should be provided with clear texts, since they cannot be expected to look up for unknown words in a dictionary. Others, on the other hand, are firmly convinced that it will be thanks to such elements that young readers' imagination will be stimulated and their curiosity will be increased, thus involving them in the reading process even more. Moreover, the

preference for either recognisability or foreignization is another important factor that determines the adoption of a certain strategy (Aixelá, 1996; Van Collie, 2006).

Textual parameters have to be taken into account as well: the presence of some images, for example, may influence the decisions of a translator, as well as previous translations of the same work or of the same author may place some constraints on the translation of the target text. In addition to these two, the degree of canonization, that is the constraints imposed by some literary genres, might have a decisive impact on the choice of the strategy. Even the nature of the culture-specific item itself is going to affect a translator's decision. When dealing with a cultural reference, translators should first of all check whether the same item has already been translated, since the previous existence of a socially accepted translation of the item usually forces an already determined translation. The transparency of the cultural reference is another important factor, as its degree of transparency or opacity may suggest translators whether they should translate it literally, adapt it to the needs and conventions of the receiving culture or, in extreme circumstances, omit it. The same can be said about the ideological status of the cultural item, which definitely affects the degree of tolerance of the receiving culture. Moreover, the connotation attached to the cultural item or other factors which can be linked to its nature play an important role, too. Usually, the more 'exotic' the reference, the more often it is to be modified, partly due to the potential difficulty a target reader might have when trying to understand it (Aixelá, 1996; Van Collie, 2006).

Finally, but not less importantly, translators also have to refer to intratextual parameters, the most important of which being the function of the source text, which necessarily has to be reproduced also in the translation. Even the cultural context of the translation itself is going to determine the degree of adaptation of cultural items: if the cultural background is essential to the text, it is very unlikely that references to the source culture will be changed, otherwise some modifications might be made. The same can be said about the single cultural items: if a reference is believed to be important for the understanding and for the credibility of the text,

then it is likely to be kept, otherwise it is going to be changed or even omitted. And that is what more or less happens with recurrence as well: the more frequent a culture-specific item, the more likely it is that it is going to be left in its original form. In the end, whichever strategy they decide to adopt, translators have to be sure that the final product is coherent (Aixelá, 1996).

In my analysis, I have decided to focus on all of those cultural items which have created some barriers for the translator, therefore requiring the adoption of a strategy named 'translation by cultural substitution', thanks to which it is possible to replace the culture-specific elements of the source text with ones that do not have the same 'propositional meaning' in the target language, but which are believed to have an identical impact on the receiving culture (Baker, 2011). In *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* most of the cultural elements that might have misled the child's understanding have been adapted in accordance with the conventions of the Italian culture, while others have been left unaltered. Such a decision might have been suggested by the belief that these elements would not pose any problems for the conveyance of the message, since nowadays children, both through comics and cartoons, are very close to the American culture. Indeed, as underlined by Aixelá (1996), we are now immersed in a process of internationalisation with a main focus on the Anglo-Saxon pole: more and more cultural items are continuously imported from the English-speaking America and slowly accepted and integrated in many societies, both through literature and the most popular media channels. This inevitably results in an increasing familiarity with the Anglo-Saxon culture, which is not seen as a distant culture anymore but rather as part of one's culture. In addition to this, the presumed age of the future readers (from 9 to 11 years old), and thus their ability to understand such references, is another important factor that might have suggested that such items should be left as in the original.

First of all, I have decided to focus on food, which no doubt is one of the main elements that characterize a culture. Indeed different flavours, usually associated also with the products

that are cultivated in a specific area, can let people travel and cross boundaries even while staying at home. Even though the American cousin and bakery are now quite popular in Italy as well, the translator has decided to replace quintessentially American dishes and ingredients with more traditional Italian ones. This may have been suggested by the important role played by food in reminding people of their origin and of their home. Secondly, I shifted my attention to names, which again are truly representative of one's origins. As for them, the translator has adopted different strategies: with regard to the names of the main characters, they have been left as in the original, while young readers have been provided with a translation in all of those instances where the name conveyed some of the features of the character or carried some connotations. The same can be said for nicknames as well.

While reading, I also found several references to diverse units of measurements, such as inches or miles, and to dollar, the American currency. As far as the translation of dollar is concerned, it has always been left as in the original, given the supposed familiarity of target readers with it. With regard to the other units, on the contrary, they have been replaced with their Italian equivalents. The same happened with the translation of all the cultural elements that made a clear reference to the American school system. In this case the grading system, the lecture lengths and the periods in which a school year is divided have been substituted according to the corresponding Italian conventions.

As for the translation of customs and practices, it is possible to notice the adoption of two different strategies: with regard the celebration of Halloween, which is now fully integrated in the Italian culture, where children have adopted all the practices related to it, the translator has decided to leave it as in the source text. The situation is different when it comes to Thanksgiving, for instance. In this case, Rossella Bernascone has decided to look for an Italian festivity whose importance could mirror that of the American one, that is Christmas in the given example. Indeed, though the majority of people are expected to know what Thanksgiving is, the presumed young age of the readership has suggested that it should be

replaced, believing that target readers might fail to understand the connotations a source reader would attach to it. The same strategy that has been used as far as the translation of Thanksgiving is concerned has been adopted for the translation of TV programmes and videogames, too. Indeed, in such instances the translator has opted for finding items that could have the same effect the source ones had on the source readers. The search for an equivalent effect has been fundamental when choosing the strategy for the translation of nursery rhymes: given their role in reminding of one's infancy, Rossella Bernascone apparently had no choice but seeking for typical Italian nursery rhymes, since the American ones would not have aroused any emotions on target readers due to their presumed unfamiliarity with them.

Finally, I decided to analyse also those linguistic elements that carry some cultural connotations, too: idiomatic expressions and onomatopoeias. Due to their fixed nature, the meaning an idiom carries cannot be inferred from the meaning of its single components. Moreover, idioms often carry some cultural connotations as well, which most likely are not going to be transparent to the target reader. Hence the need to look for equivalent expressions in the target language, that is expressions that, even though different in form, still carry the same meaning of the source ones and have the same function. As for onomatopoeias, on the other hand, they generally differ from one language to another. Indeed, sounds are usually indicated in different ways, therefore the translator had to look for the Italian equivalents in order to make young readers understand the sound the onomatopoeia was referring to.

The comparative analysis that follows is based on the first nine books of the series of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and is divided into ten sections, each of them presenting a different culture-specific element. Every section will then present the main features of the culture-specific item under examination and the possible difficulties a translator may encounter when having to transfer it to a different language and culture. In addition to the translation strategies presented above, translators often have to recur to additional strategies when dealing with

specific cultural references, which will be outlined when the item in question is analysed. After the cultural reference has been presented, I will provide some examples from the texts that will help me analyse the method adopted by the translator of the series in each circumstance.

4.2.1. Food

According to Wendy Katz, "food may be the sex of children's literature". Food, indeed, is often represented as an object of desire which may even have some magical features for the child reader. Some of the most traditional and national dishes – for example pizza for Italy or sushi for Japan – are quite well-known to any child, while others necessarily require the search for an equivalent in the target culture in order to have same impact of the original on the child's taste buds (Lathey, 2016, p.40). This view is supported by Oittinen (2000), who also suggests that children should not be exposed to all of those culture-specific elements that may pose some barriers in the understanding of the message.

On the contrary, Klingberg (1986) affirms that the elements that characterise the culture of the source text should be preserved in the translation, since they will enhance the child's ability to appreciate diversity as well as increase his or her curiosity. These two opposing views mirror one of the main points of contention in translation studies, that is whether the translated work should sound like an original one – thus belonging to the new reader's language and culture – or whether it should convey the essence of the source text (Paruolo, 2010).

In the translation of the series of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, the translator Rossella Bernascone seems to opt for adaptations, thus showing a preference for the theoretical approach proposed by Oittinen. Here are some examples that I have found in the texts:

Table 2. Food names in the source texts and their adaptations in their respective translations

'brownies'	'torta al cioccolato'
'root beer'	'chinotto'
'cheesecake'	'millefoglie'
'peanut butter'	'marmellata'
'pretzels'	'biscotti'
'applesauce'	'crostata'

In the examples above, the translator has decided to replace the typically American items with more traditional Italian dishes or ingredients, as the ones presented in the source text may be unknown to the majority of young readers. Indeed, a literal translation of the American dishes, for example 'burro d'arachidi' for 'peanut butter' or 'torta al formaggio' for 'cheesecake' would not have the same effect on the target reader since such dishes and ingredients are not as popular amongst Italian children and thus may not sound particularly appealing to them.

However, I have also found some instances where the translator has decided to leave the typical American element unaltered, not providing the target reader with the closest Italian food or beverage:

Table 3. Food names in the source texts and their literal translations in the respective target texts

'mead'	'idromele'
'watercress salad'	'insalata di crescione'

As far as the translation of 'mead' is concerned, though the drink is not very popular in Italy, the translator might have chosen to translate it literally since after mentioning the element, a comment from which the reader can get a general idea of what the drink is follows:

> At this point our characters were hanging out in a tavern waiting for a spy to arrive, and my dwarf, and my dwarf, Grimlon, ordered a pint of mead. Mead is sort of like beer in Magick and Monsters, and I guess Mom didn't approve of that (Kinney, 2008, p.121).

> A un certo punto i nostri personaggi erano in una taverna ad aspettare l'arrivo di una spia, e il mio nano, Grimlon, ha ordinato una pinta di idromele. In Magick & Monsters l'idromele è una specie di birra e credo che mamma non approvi (Kinney, 2008. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2009, p.121).

In the example above there has not been any adaptation, since both the source and the target text include an explanation of what 'mead' is. Though the beverage is possibly more popular in America than in Italy, even in the source text the author decided to clarify what kind of drink it is, since, due to its alcoholic nature, it might be unknown to the majority of young readers.

Also with regard to 'watercress salad' Bernascone has decided not to look for a better known vegetable in Italy, since the whole point here is to convey that children do not usually like vegetables, so there was no need to look for an equivalent, as vegetables in general are not appealing to children:

> Granpa made us dinner. Grandpa makes this awful thing called 'watercress salad', and it's the worst thing you ever tasted (Kinney, 2008, p.164).

> Nonno ci ha fatto la cena. Prepara questa cosa terribile che chiama 'insalata di crescione', la cosa più schifosa che abbia mai mangiato (Kinney, 2008. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2009, p.164).

This analysis seems to confirm the increasing tendency to adapt, explain or generalise the kind of food and beverage presented in a source text, given the importance of food in emphasising affinity and creating a link back home, thus representing what is most familiar to the reader (Cascallana, 2006; Nikolaeva, 2000). However, some elements have not been adapted according to the Italian tradition perhaps to remind children of the foreign setting of the story or simply because the connotations attached to them did not need any adaptation.

4.2.2. Names

At first glance, names seem to be used only to designate an object, however sometimes they also convey something more about the thing they label, such as religion, ethnicity or gender. Especially in fiction, authors have particular reasons that encourage them to choose certain names for their characters, so as to convey the character's personality and thus raise certain expectations in the reader. Names, indeed, "amuse the reader, impart knowledge or evoke

emotions", although it is important to underline that not all of the people that have the same name necessarily share other personality features (Epstein, 2012; Van Collie, 2006, p.123). Names can thus have several functions, which can be classified as follows:

informative: names call on the readers' knowledge or teaches them something;

formative: names confront the reader with standard values and provide them with a moral compass;

emotional: names appeal to the reader's emotions;

creative: names stimulate the reader's imagination;

divertive: names entertain the reader;

aesthetic: names provide readers with pleasure (Van Collie, 2006).

As far as children's literature is concerned, writers tend to convey certain aspects of the characters' personality through their names, at the same time running the risk that children might fail to understand the connotations attached to the name itself. But if writers successfully convey the meaning they intend to convey, then readers can fully enjoy the reading experience (Epstein, 2012).

The question regarding the translation of names is rather controversial: it is usually said that all of the names that contain relevant information for the conveyance of the message should be translated, while those which do not bring any particular connotations should be left unaltered (Epstein, 2012). However, the translation of names might at same time lead to several incongruities between the names and the setting, while the non-translation could be useful to remind readers that the book they are enjoying is about another culture and it is set in a different country (Lathey, 2016). Therefore, it seems that before translating the name, translators should recognize the meaning and functions of the name itself, understand its references and then eventually look for a suitable equivalent in the target language. For example, a historical figure that merely serves to convey some traits of the character's

personality might be replaced or omitted if the translator feels that it might disturb the target reader's comprehension. When translating for children, translators also have to take into account the child's presumed ability to understand as well as the cultural differences between the source culture and the target one (Epstein, 2012; Van Collie, 2006).

Names generally pose additional problems compared to the translation of culture-specific items, that is why translators dispose of more strategies in order to translate them correctly. In addition to the ones presented in the section 4.2 it is possible to find:

- replacement of a personal name by a common noun: this strategy is usually used when translators transfer the whole context but cannot find the right equivalent for the name in the target language, so they have to recur to a common noun that best characterises the person;

- phonetic or morphologic adaptation to the target language: translators often recur to the phonetic translation of names when they are faced with both fictional and real names, so as to reproduce the musicality of the original;

- replacement by a counterpart in the target language (exonym): when it comes to translating very popular names, names of well-known historical people or names of famous places, translators can easily recur to this strategy, also reproducing the function the name had in the target text;

- translation (of names with a particular connotation): this strategy is used when the name carries a particular meaning which necessarily has to be reproduced in the target language in order to have the same emotional or humorous effect even on the target readership. Thus, the function of the original is kept also in the translated text and the name retains the same denotation and connotation (Van Collie, 2006).

In the books of *Diario di una Schiappa*, most of the names of the characters have been left unaltered: Greg Heffley, Rodrick Heffley, Rowley Jefferson, Fregley, Manny Heffley and Holly Hills for example have the same names that we can find in the source text in English.

The translator might have opted for keeping the original names in order to remind young readers that what they are reading is a story about children who live in another country, despite the fact that this may limit identification with the characters. Though the names might carry some connotations in the source language, this aspect cannot be understood by the target reader, since he or she is not provided with an equivalent name that would better suit the Italian scenario. Such a choice might have been suggested by the fact that the connotations do not express any particular feature of the character's personality or physical aspect, hence the decision to leave them in their original form.

The scenario changes when it comes to names that convey some features of the character's personality. Bernascone has indeed decided to translate all of those names which have strong connotations that cannot be understood by the target reader unless translated. Here are a few examples:

Table 4. Characters' original names and their translations

'Nasty Pants'	'Braghe Sporche'
'Johnny Cheddar'	'Johnny Ricotta'
'Snarl Carl'	'Ringhio'
'Stewart Pid' also known as 'Stew Pid'	'Stuart Pid' oppure 'Stu Pid'
'Turtle' or 'Turd' for short	'Struzzo' o 'Truzzo' per gli amici
'Demon Dawgs'	'Kani Indiavolati'
'Ploopy'	'Caccolo'
'Mortie's'	'Billie's'

In the case of 'Nasty Pants', 'Johnny Cheddar' and 'Snarl Carl' the translation is rather straightforward. The first two names clearly refer to the fact the first character still wets himself, while the second one stinks like a piece of cheese. Here a substitution for the type of cheese was required, since cheddar is not so popular in Italy while ricotta is definitely well-known to a child reader. The third name, on the other hand, may refer to the stubborn personality of the character.

As for 'Stewart Pid' and 'Turtle', the translator had to look for an equivalent in the target language which could reproduce the pun of the source text:

'Hi, my name is Creighton'.
'No, it isn't. Your name is Stewart Pid'.
'Ops. Hi, I'm Stew Pid' (Kinney, 2007, p.171).

'Ciao, mi chiamo Creighton'.
'Ma va'! Ti chiami Stuart Pid'.
'Ups. Ciao, io sono Stu Pid' (Kinney, 2007. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2008, p.171).

In the example above the author is playing on the spelling of 'Stew Pid', which has the same pronunciation as 'stupid'. In order to have the same effect also on the target readership, the translator had to change the spelling of the word into 'Stu Pid', since a child reader may be unfamiliar with the pronunciation of 'ew', thus possibly failing to understand the pun.

In the following example, the writer is playing on the fact that the short form for 'Turtle', 'Turd' also means 'excrement' in English.

Rodrick really liked the animal name idea, and he said we should call the dog Turtle.
'Turd for short' (Kinney, 2009, p.119)

A Rodrick è piaciuta l'idea del nome di animale e ha detto che avremmo dovuto chiamarlo Struzzo.
'Truzzo per gli amici!' (Kinney, 2009. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2011, p.119).

The same effect can be achieved in Italian only by changing the name of the animal into 'Struzzo', whose short form 'Truzzo' in the Italian slang conveys the idea of an uncouth and ungraceful person. In this case the pun is the element that needed to be conveyed, not the content or the references of the pun itself, so even though the semantics of the two names differ, the translator successfully manages to produce the same effect the source pun had on the source readers.

Another play can be found in the name 'Demon Dawgs':

Red Socks goalie Greg Heffley takes a break from the action as a fifty-yard kick by Demon Dawgs midfielder James Byron rolls in (Kinney, 2009, p.152).

Il portiere degli All Blax, George Heffley, si riposa mentre da 50 metri James Byron, il centrocampista dei Kani Indiavolati, segna interrompendo la serie positiva dei Blax (Kinney, 2009. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2010, p.152).

In this example, the author is playing on the fact that different spellings can have the same pronunciation; indeed 'Dawgs' is pronounced in the same way as 'dog'. Young Italian readers might have failed to understand such wordplay, given their presumed difficulty in perceiving a similarity in the pronunciation of the two words. Hence the decision to substitute it with 'Kani', which has the same pronunciation as 'cani', that is dogs. No doubt an Italian reader can understand the pun now, due to the increasing tendency among children and teenagers to substitute 'c's with 'k's in informal texting.

As for 'Ploopy', the translator had looked for an equivalent nickname which could express the language of an infant, in this case a word invented by Manny, Greg's younger brother, and which would still carry the same connotations of the original. Indeed, in the English slang the word 'plop' is used with the meaning of 'poo', so young readers could also find it funny when the nickname is used to call other people:

> Manny's been taking his anger out on everyone else, too. Today I was sitting on the couch just minding my own business, and Manny walked up to me and said 'Ploopy!' (Kinney, 2009, p.102)
>
> Manny ha continuato a sfogare la sua rabbia anche su tutti gli altri. Oggi ero sul divano che non davo fastidio a nessuno, e lui è venuto lì e mi ha detto: Caccolo! (Kinney, 2009. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2010, p.102)

The association the name has in English could not be understandable for an Italian reader unless it was translated. Therefore, the translator had to look for a similar nickname in the target language which could still remind of the language of a child and at the same time carry a funny connotations. Hence the decision to replace 'Ploopy' with 'Caccolo', given the associations the Italian nickname has with 'caccola', that is snot.

As far as 'Mortie's' is concerned, Bernascone may have been encouraged to look for a different name in her translation since an Italian reader with no knowledge of English might have attached a negative connotation to such a name. Indeed, 'Mortie's' might have recalled death ('morte' in Italian), since the two names have a similar pronunciation. However, in the source text the name is used to merely indicate a clothing store, with no negative connotation

at all, thus it has to be replaced with a more suitable form. We have previously seen that sometimes writers choose particular names so as to help readers create associations between the name and something that is familiar to them; however, in this case I could not find any particular reasons that might have encouraged the author to choose such a name, since no famous shops or shopping malls have that name in the United States. Moreover, I did not find any particular connotations attached to the name, except for the fact that it is a very old name an almost in disuse nowadays. Therefore, Kinney might have chosen it just to convey the idea of a very old-fashioned shop, whose first owner probably had that name. As for its translation, Bernascone might have then opted for 'Billie's' since even if the reader does not know how to pronounce it correctly, it does not lead to any confusion with regard to the pronunciation of other Italian words. In addition to this, the choice of a foreign name is once again helpful in reminding young readers of the foreign origin of the text.

With regard to the translation of famous historical figures, the translator has decided to look for an internationally known name that could be easily understandable to the target reader. Indeed, when it comes to famous people, if the person in question is believed to be well-known even in the target culture, the name might be left unaltered, otherwise it is going to be modified. If, for instance, the name of a well-known person remains unchanged, it will have a different effect on the target reader if he or she is not familiar with the person in question. The difference in functioning is even greater when the name carries certain connotations, that is when it recalls a person's profession or if its aim is to convey something about the character's personality. (Van Collie, 2006).

> Well, for starters, Abraham Lincoln didn't write *To kill a Mockingbird* (Kinney, 2008, p.47).
>
> Tanto per cominciare l'*Iliade* non l'ha scritta Ulisse (Kinney, 2008. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2009, p.47).

In the substitution, though the semantic traits of two people used for the comparison are very different – Abraham Lincoln was a politician while Ulisse (Ulysses) is the mythological

protagonist of Homer's *Iliad* – the translator still manages to convey the meaning of the message of the source text. This would not have been possible if Abraham Lincoln was retained in the Italian translation, since young target readers might have been unaware of who he was, therefore failing to understand that it was impossible for him to be the writer of *To kill a Mockingbird*. By choosing an internationally-known character such as Ulysses and a famous book such as the *Iliad*, Bernascone brilliantly succeeds in producing the same effect of the original message even on the target readership. This is a convenient strategy if translators want to open up the text to a wider audience, "since it succeeds in conveying the essential characteristics of a referent while avoiding what might be disconcertingly unfamiliar" (Davies, 2003, p.83).

All of the examples provided so far have shown a greater tendency to replace the majority of the names that carry specific connotations and which convey some aspects of the character's personality with an Italian name which could produce the same effect of the source name also on the target readership. However, I have also found one instance in which the translator has decided to leave the name unaltered, but she has also added an explanation in order to make the pun understandable also to the target reader:

> His band is called 'Loaded Deeper' only it is spelled 'Löded Diper' on Rodrick's van (Kinney, 2007, p.30).

> Si chiamano 'Loaded Deeper', che vuol dire 'Pannolino Pieno', solo che sul camioncino Rodrick ha scritto 'Löded Diper' (Kinney, 2007. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2008, p.30).

In the example above, an explanation was necessary in the Italian translation in order to make children understand the pun; without it, the name would not be funny to the target reader, while to a native speaker of English the association with a loaded deeper is quite clear. The decision to leave the name in its English form might again have been suggested by the need to remind Italian readers of the foreign origin of the story.

4.2.3. Titles

As far as titles are concerned, they are generally replaced with what is customary in the target language. In some instances, however, translators can choose to use the source-specific title in the source language if the setting of the original text is important (Epstein, 2012). In the material examined, titles are always translated with the corresponding form in Italian:

> The Magic 8 Ball hit the ground hard, and before I could grab it, it rolled right to Mrs. Merrit (Kinney, 2013, p.184)

> La Palla Magica è caduta con un tonfo e, prima che riuscissi a recuperarla, era già rotolata ai piedi della prof. Merritt (Kinney, 2013. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2014, p.184).

In the example above, the English title 'Mrs.' is replaced by 'prof.', which in this case is the short form for 'professoressa' in Italian. The literal translation for 'Mrs.' would have been 'signorina', but since it is not customary in Italy to refer to teachers or professors in that way, the translator had to look for Italian equivalent form, in order to make the text closer to the Italian convention. The same can be said for the translation of 'Mr.', which is replaced by the corresponding Italian form 'prof.', short for the masculine 'professore' in the following example:

> But Mr. Darnell told us we don't have to build an actual robot. We just need to come up with ideas for what our robot might look like and what kind of things it would be able to do (Kinney, 2007, p.147).

> Ma il Prof Darnell ci ha spiegato che non dobbiamo costruire un robot vero. Dobbiamo soltanto trovare delle idee su come dovrebbe essere fatto il nostro robot e che cosa dovrebbe essere capace di fare (Kinney, 2007. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2008, p.147).

As in the previous example, the literal translation of 'Mr.', which is 'signore' in Italian, would not have sounded appropriate in the Italian context.

4.2.4. Units of measurement and currency

Given the great variety of units of measurement and currency that still exists nowadays, translators often have to face the problem of whether to translate them, substitute them with the equivalent in the target culture or leave them unaltered. According to Klingberg (1986), cultural context adaptations often results in poor translation, however I believe they are necessary when children might otherwise fail to understand the meaning of the message. Klingberg (1986) also argues that source language forms can be kept in the target text when the reader is expected to be familiar with them, and this exactly is what it is possible to notice in the translation of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. As it is possible to read from the examples below, inches, feet, pounds, yards and pennies are replaced with their equivalents in Italian, whereas dollars are always left unaltered:

Table 5. units of measurement and their respective equivalents in the target language

'two miles'	'tre chilometri'
'penny'	'centesimo'
'ten feet'	'un paio di metri'
'200-pound'	'novanta chili'
'a sixteenth o fan inch'	'un millimetro e mezzo'
'twenty bucks'	'venti dollari'
'$'	'$'
'100 yards'	'100 metri'

The adoption of such a strategy may have been suggested by the belief that nowadays, thanks to both cartoons and comics, children are familiar with dollars and even with the symbol that is used to identify them, so there is no need for an adaptation in the target language. However, young readers may not be familiar with other units of measurement, for example inches or pounds, and it is for such instances that the translator has to look for an adaptation. In such examples, even formally incorrect translations of the unit of measurement can be acceptable (Klingberg, 1986), since their main goal is to make the message understandable, not to be precise.

4.2.5. Social institutions: education

"The political and social life of a country is reflected in its institutional terms". When names for example are transparent, that is made up of easily translatable morphemes, they are through-translated, whereas when the translation is not straightforward, a recognized and official translation for administrative and official documents should already exist in the target language (Newmark, 1988, p.99).

If the text aims at giving an insight into the culture of the source text, then references to its historical, political or social background should be kept; however, there are some references which cannot be assumed to be understood by the target reader, especially if he or she is very young and inexperienced. It is in such instances that there is a need for cultural context adaptations (Klingberg, 1986).

In the translation of *Diary of a Wipy Kid*, the translator Rossella Bernascone has decided to adapt to the Italian context all the references to the American educational system, in light of the fact that the target readers might fail to attach to them the right connotation.

Table 6. References to the American school system and their equivalents in the Italian one

'third period'	'terza ora'
'first grader'	'bambino di prima elementare
'fifth grade'	'quinta (elementare)'
'D'	'quasi sufficiente'
'third quarter'	'secondo trimestre'
'C student'	'prende appena sufficiente'
'getting straight A's in the first quarter'	'ha preso tutti 10 in pagella'

Particularly in a book which is meant for children, I believe that adaptations to references to the school system were necessary, otherwise young readers would not have been able to understand whether a student got a good mark or a bad one as well as the age of a student or whether the school day had just started or it was about to end.

4.2.6. Customs and practices

With regard to customs and festivities it is possible to notice the adoption of two different strategies: where children are believed to be able to understand and to identify themselves with the characters of the story, the customs and practices of the source culture should be left unaltered. Such a strategy should be used also when translators aim at stimulating the child's interest in the foreign environment. In this case, in order to help the child in the comprehension, translators may even recur to additional explanations which are not present in the original text. On the contrary, if young readers are believed not to have enough knowledge about the source culture, then an equivalent reference should be found in the target one (Klingberg, 1986).

In *Diario di una Schiappa* it is possible to notice the adoption of diverse strategies: with regard to Thanksgiving, the translator has decided to replace it with Christmas:

> Believe me, I don't need some teacher to tell me it's not cool to smoke. My grandfather convinced me of that last year on Thanksgiving (Kinney, 2010, p.21).

> Credetemi, non ho bisogno che sia una prof a dirmi che fumare è da scemi. Mi ha convinto mio nonno lo scorso Natale (Kinney, 2010. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2012, p.21).

Such a choice might have been suggested by the fact that Thanksgiving is a typical American holiday which is not celebrated in Italy, thus there was the need to look for a feast day which could have the same importance in the target culture, hence the decision to substitute it with Christmas. Though the two celebrations are rather different, being Christmas a religious festivity and Thanksgiving a more historical one, the translator successfully manages to maintain the same associations triggered by Thanksgiving on the American reader.

On the contrary, as far as the celebration of Halloween is concerned, all the connotations attached to it are left unaltered. This is probably due to the fact that nowadays such a feast is celebrated in Italy as well, especially by children, who love disguising as terrifying creatures and trick-or-treating from house to house:

Well, Rowley's grounding is finally over, and just in time for Halloween, too. I went up to his house to check out his costume, and I have to admit, I'm a little jealous. Rowley's Mum got him this knight costume that's way cooler than his costume from last year. His knight outfit came with a helmet and a shield and a real sword and everything.

I've never had a store-bought costume before. I still haven't figured out what I'm gonna go as tomorrow night, so I'll probably just throw something together at the last minute. I figure maybe I'll bring back the Toilet Paper Mummy again (Kinney, 2007, pp.61-62).

Finalmente Rowley non è più in punizione. Appena in tempo per Halloween! Sono andato a casa sua a vedere il suo costume e devo ammettere che sono un po' invidioso. Sua mamma gli ha comprato un costume da cavaliere che è molto più bello di quello dell'anno scorso. Ha l'elmo e una spade vera e tutto il resto.

A me non hanno mai comprato un costume. Non ho ancora deciso da cosa mi maschero domani, metterò qualcosa insieme all'ultimo minuto. Magari resuscito la Mummia di Carta Igienica. (Kinney, 2007. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2008, p.61-62).

The above extract from the text shows that there was not the need for adaptations, since in both the source culture and the target one children are used to buying costumes and disguising in the most diverse ways. The following example, too, demonstrates that the 'trick-or-treat' practice is now popular in Italy as well, where it has been even labelled as 'dolcetto o scherzetto':

About an hour before we were supposed to start trick-or-treating, I still didn't have a costume. At that point I was seriously thinking about going as a cowboy for the second year in a row. But then Mom knocked at my door and handed me a pirate costume, with an eye patch and a hook and everything (Kinney, 2007, p.64).

Mancava un'ora all'appuntamento per il 'dolcetto o scherzetto' e non avevo ancora un costume. A quel punto stavo pensando di rimascherarmi da cowboy per il secondo anno di fila. Ma proprio in quel momento Mamma ha bussato alla porta della mia stanza e mi ha dato un costume da pirata, con la benda sull'occhio, l'uncino e tutto quanto (Kinney, 2007. Transl. into Italian by. Bernascone, 2008, p.64).

So, given the familiarity of the target readers with the celebration of Halloween and with all of its practices, in the present circumstance the translator did not need to look for festivity of equivalent importance, since nowadays the celebration of what used to be a foreign feast is fully integrated in the target culture.

4.2.7. TV programmes and videogames

While reading the series of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* I have noticed other interesting cultural adaptations, particularly with regard to TV programmes:

Table 8. TV Programmes and videogames which might have been unknown to an Italian reader and their translations

'America's funniest families'	'Paperissima'
'Sesame Street'	'Teletubbies'

The TV programme 'America's funniest families' and the videogame 'Sesame Street' may fail to produce amusement in the target reader since they can be known only to an American reader. Hence to decision to look for more suitable items in Italian which could produce the same effect the source ones had on the source reader.

As for 'American funniest families', the translator has replaced it with one of the funniest Italian programmes, so as to keep the associations of the original as well. On the other hand, with regard to 'Sesame Street', the name of the videogame has been replaced with that of an internationally-known cartoon. Even though the reference is quite different, the translator successfully manages to produce the same response on the target readership by bringing back the same recollections of infancy the game used in the source text had on the source reader.

4.2.8. Nursery Rhymes

Sound and rhythm play a fundamental role as children start to appreciate the pleasures of language and narrative, as they help young readers learn to read and talk. Just like wordplays, puns or slightly altered idiomatic expressions, the translation of nursery rhymes requires the translator a great degree of creativity, which can be defined as 'creativity on probation' since it has to follow some translational constraints. Sometimes translators might create a new poem inspired by the source one, they might opt for translating the source rhyme literally or they may decide to keep the rhythm and metre of the original one but to alter its semantic

content. The choice of the strategy is determined by the nature of the text and the relevance of its musicality and meaning (Lathey, 2015; Nasi, 2012).

When it comes to translating for children, translators should first of all start from the constraints posed by the rhythm of the source text, especially when the verses include nonsense, therefore sound and rhythm are the main components. It is thus necessary to start every translation with a hard work on the source text, in order to admire it, to question it and to fully comprehend it, so as to understand the so-called 'intratextual constraints'. Addressing both the form and the rhythm of the source verses is rather difficult, since languages usually dispose of different metric systems and rhyme schemes, and that is why it would be preferable to have the collaboration and negotiation between a poet and a translator in the translation of verses in rhyme. The task becomes even more challenging when the narrative is accompanied by images, indeed in such cases translators have to make sure that the content of the translated verse matches the corresponding illustrations (Lathey, 2015; Nasi, 2012).

In rarer circumstances, translators are faced with the references a text might make to other literary works, also known as 'intertextual constraints'. In such cases, the task of the translator is very demanding, since every text usually alludes to other works that were produced in the same culture. It is in such circumstances that translators have to use all the imagination they have alongside the translational norms they must to follow in order to both render the verses comprehensible and at the same time let their young readers enjoy the magic of language (Nasi, 2012).

> I'm a little teapot short and stout.. Here is my handle and here is my spout! Just tip me over and pour me out! (Kinney, 2010, p.33).

> Il caffé della Peppina non si beve di mattina… Né col latte né col tè… Ma perché perché perché (Kinney, 2010. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2012, p.33).

The example above shows that the translator has preferred to evoke the same emotions of the source nursery rhyme rather than focusing on the rhythm. Indeed, Bernascone has looked for

a nursery rhyme in Italian which could have an equivalent function of the source one. The same can be said with reagard to the following example:

> Rockabye baby on the treetop (Kinney, 2011, p.41)
>
> Ninna nanna, ninna oh questo bimbo a chi lo do (Kinney, 2011. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2013, p.41).

Even in this case, the translator has replaced the source nursery rhyme with one that is well-known and popular in the Italian culture. However, the function the source nursery rhyme has in the source culture, that is it is usually sung to lull babies, is kept even in the translation. In the following example, too, the translator had to look for a more-common reference in the Italian culture:

> Eight times for is thirty-two, thirty-two, thirty-two!
> Eight times for is thirty-two, and now you know it's true!
> (To the tune of 'Mary had a little lamb') (Kinney, 2011, p.29)
>
> Tre per otto ventiquattro, ventiquattro, ventiquattro!
> Tre per otto ventiquattro e non lo scordi più!
> (Sulla musica di 'Siam tre piccoli porcellin') (Kinney, 2011. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2013, p.29).

In this example the translator has translated the nursery rhyme form the source text literally; what changes here is the rhythm the nursery rhyme has to follow. Indeed, young readers or parents that might read the story aloud are advised that they should follow the rhythm of 'Mary had a little lamb' in the source culture and of 'Siam tre piccoli porcellin' in the target one. Such a substitution was necessary in order to make the nursery rhyme closer to the target audience.

4.2.9. Idiomatic expressions

Idioms are fixed patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and often carry a meaning which cannot be deduced from the meaning of their single components (Baker, 2011). Idiomatic expressions can be used to set the scene or to portray a character,

they can be used to teach readers a particular expression as well as to make the audience think about the diverse uses of language. If idioms are used in a creative way, they can be humorous or entertaining, and given their subtle nature, idioms can also help writers hide behind set phrases (Epstein, 2012).

The use of figurative language in texts which are meant for children mainly aims at stimulating the child's creativity, making the reading experience even more challenging. Even though there are conflicting opinions as to the age at which children can really appreciate such wordplays, there is no doubt that even younger children can recall the idiomatic expressions they can hear from their parents (Lathey, 2016). Indeed, although it is true that children have less exposure to language and culture than most adults – this is why it might be harder for them to understand and appreciate the meaning of idiomatic expressions or even to recognize them – it is shown that children actually try to learn and understand idioms from an early age, especially when they recognize some incongruity between the contextual information and the literal analysis of the idiomatic expression. Children thus have to be instructed otherwise they might take idiomatic expressions literally, and it will be only around the age of eight or nine that they will fully understand the figurative meaning attached to idiomatic expressions (Epstein, 2012).

Therefore, it seems that writers have to be careful when choosing idioms for a text which is meant for children, and perhaps they would better opt for simpler and more transparent ones or they may decide to use them when talking about taboos or difficult topics, thus mitigating the seriousness of the content. The use of idioms in children's literature can also serve to make children reflect about language and help them understand the difference between literal and figurative meaning. Other times, instead of being used for pedagogical reasons, idioms can be used just for their naturalness and closeness to spoken language (Epstein, 2012).

The main problems idiomatic expressions pose in translation relate to the ability to correctly recognize and interpret an idiom and to render its various aspects in the target

language. The first difficulty a translator can encounter is then being able to recognize that he or she is dealing with an idiom, since it is not always so obvious. Generally speaking, the more difficult an expression is to translate, the more likely it is that it is going to be recognized as an idiomatic expression by the translator. An idiom can be misinterpreted in mainly two circumstances. First of all, when the idiomatic expression has both a literal and a figurative meaning, with which speakers and writers can play. In such a situation, if the translator is not familiar with the idiomatic meaning then he or she might take the literal one for granted. Here the context in which the expression is used might help the translator understand the meaning implied by the author in that circumstance. Secondly, the idiom used in the source text may have a close equivalent in the target language which looks very similar on the surface but which in reality has a totally or partially different meaning. In addition to these problems, translators also have to recognize the collocational environment surrounding the idiomatic expression, since the components of the expression itself form collocations with one another as single units, whose meaning cannot be understood if they are taken singularly (Baker, 2011). Moreover, it is important to underline that not only idioms vary from one language to another, but they can also be different throughout the same language, where in different dialects or varieties the same idiom can have a different meaning or it may even not exist (Epstein, 2012; Lathey, 2016). Translators should therefore understand the meaning of the idiomatic expression in the source text first and then try reproducing it in the target one.

Once the idiomatic expression has been recognized, translators have to understand its meaning and why it is used, then they will have to decide how to translate it into the target language. The process, however, is not straightforward and translators may encounter some difficulties. Indeed, the idiom may not have an equivalent in the target language, as the target language may make use of a different way to convey the same meaning. Idioms, in fact, can be culture-specific. On the contrary, an idiom may have a counterpart in the target language but the contexts in which they are used might differ; indeed, the two expressions may have

different connotations or they may not be pragmatically transferrable. In addition to the difficulties explored above, an idiom may be used in a text with both its literal and figurative meaning, and unless the equivalent in the target language corresponds to the source one both in form and in meaning, the play cannot be successfully recreated in the translation. Finally, the convention of using idioms, the contexts in which can occur and their frequency of usage may also vary from one language to another, thus rendering the translation even more challenging (Baker, 2011).

The way an idiom can be translated depends on several factors, among which the availability of an equivalent expression in the target language, the meaning of the single components of the idiom and the tolerance of use of idiomatic expressions in the target language. The choice for the appropriate strategy is thus suggested by the context in which the idiom is used. Here follows a list of the strategies translators dispose of when having to translate an idiomatic expression.

- Replacement: here translators should look for an idiom of similar form and meaning in the target language; since this is quite hard to achieve, translators may decide to use an idiom which has a similar meaning but which is different in form;

- literal translation can be used when an author has been particularly creative in using an idiomatic expression or when the translator wants readers to fully appreciate the pun of the source language. The idiom is then translated word by word, since it did not exist in the target language before this translation, and this process may contribute to the enrichment of the language, as well as open up the translation to a new culture while adapting the foreign element to what is more familiar. At the end of the process, the idiom is fully domesticated in the target language and young readers, who may fail to recognize the foreign origin of the expression, may start using it in their everyday language and even start to spread it. It is at this point that readers cannot be said to be

totally passive, given the contribution they may give to the expansion of their language;

- paraphrase: one of the most common ways of translating idioms, even though it may lead to a loss of the metaphorical meaning of the expression. Indeed, translators can use this strategy when it is not possible to find an equivalent expression in the target language or when it seems inappropriate to use the idiomatic expression of the source text, possibly due to stylistic differences between the two languages;

- deletion: generally used when the idiom has no correspondent in the target language, when it is not possible to paraphrase it or for stylistic reasons;

- explanation: here the idiomatic expression of the source text is maintained and an explanation is added either in a footnote or in the text itself. Despite its utility, this strategy may distract the reader from the story, but translators necessarily have to use it when an explanation is already present in the source text;

- retention is used when an idiom in foreign language is used in the source text, so it is likely to be kept even in the translation. However, retention is quite rare, and it is mainly used with very famous Latin expressions;

- compensation is one last strategy translators can recur to when having to deal with idiomatic expressions. According to this method, any loss of meaning which cannot be reproduced directly at a given point in the target text can be introduced elsewhere in the text (Baker, 2011; Epstein, 2012).

Here are some examples that I have found in the books of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*:

You know, maybe it wouldn't be so bad if Mom and Dad found out about the party. Rodrick would get grounded, which would be awesome. So if I can find a way to spill the beans without Rodrick finding out, I'm gonna go for it (Kinney, 2008, p.112).

Certo, se papà e mamma scoprissero della festa, Rodrick finirebbe in castigo. Geniale! Quindi se trovo un modo di farglielo sapere senza che lui se ne accorga, lo faccio (Kinney, 2008. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2009, p.112).

The saying 'to spill the beans' – literally to give away a secret – has very ancient origins: Pythagoras was said to have forbidden the use of beans to his disciples (not the use of beans as food but only as political election), since magistrates and other public figures in ancient Greece were elected by casting beans into a helmet by the voters. Hence his advice not to interfere with political affairs (Brewer, 1953).

> In health class Nurse Powell told us we were going to be starting a new unit about parenting. She said that being a mother or a father is a big responsibility and that in this unit we were gonna learn that taking care of a baby is no piece of cake (Kinney, 2010, p.98).
>
> Nell'ora di educazione alla salute la signorina Powell ha detto che ci aspettava una lezione sulla 'genitorialità': ha detto che essere genitori è una grande responsabilità e che con lei avremmo imparato che allevare un bebè non è un gioco da ragazzi (Kinney, 2010. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2012, p.98).

The word 'cake' is used here to refer to a prize. The reference is to the 'cake walk', where people had to walk in pairs round the prize cake, then the umpires decided which couple had walked the most gracefully. A dance later developed from this, which was popular in the early 20th century before the introduction of Jazz. In addition to this tradition, in ancient Greece, too, a cake was the award of the toper who held out the longest, and in Ireland a cake used to be the prize for the best dancer in a dancing competition (Brewer, 1953).

> I started looking for way to entertain myself but there's nothing in Grandpa's condo that's fun to do, so I just sat down with him and watched TV. But Grandpa doesn't even watch real shows. He just keeps his TV tuned to the security camera that's in front lobby of his building. And after a few hours of that, you start to go a little nuts (Kinney, 2008, pp.163-164).
>
> Ho cercato qualcosa per passare il tempo, ma a casa di Nonno non c'è niente di divertente da fare, così sono rimasto con lui a guardare la TV. Ma Nonno non guarda neanche la TV vera. La tiene sintonizzata sulla telecamera della sicurezza che riprende quel che succede nell'androne. Dopo qualche ora così, si comincia a dare i numeri (Kinney, 2008. Transl. into Italian by Bernascone, 2009, pp.163-164).

The expression 'to go nut' of the idiom above derives from the English slang where 'nut' means 'head', probably due to its resemblance to a nut (Brewer, 1953).

For the translation of the idiomatic expressions above, Bernascone has decided to look for equivalent idioms, that is ones that would carry the same meaning, in the target language. In all of the examples, indeed, she has replaced the source expressions with the corresponding

ones in the target language. By doing so, even though the idioms are different in form, the translator still conveys the meaning of the original.

A paraphrase of the idiomatic expressions would not have worked in the present context since the elements of the English idioms are not used with the same connotations in Italian. Specifically, the word 'bean' in Italian is not used with reference to a secret, as well as the word 'cake' is not used to refer to a prize. Similarly, nuts are not generally used to indicate the shape of a head.

4.2.10. Onomatopoeias

A common strategy when translating for children is that of reading passages aloud, so as to find the appropriate rhythm or syntactic structure even in the target language, in order to give young listeners full aesthetic pleasure. Translators, indeed, may decide to record themselves while reading aloud the passages they have translated and then listen to them, and only in this way they will find out the disharmonies that might go unnoticed on the written page. In addition to this technique, drafts of translations may be read aloud to children themselves in order to evaluate their responses as well as translating aloud by using a voice-activated software. The translator Sarah Ardizzone also suggests that if the source text presents a lot of alliteration or assonance or soft rhymes, the same pattern should be reproduced in the target language, at the same time avoiding being too literal. And if the same rhyme scheme or if the same rhythm cannot be reproduced in the same place as they occur in the source text, still translators should be able to introduce that effect later on in the text. However this is not enough; indeed, in addition to the demands of reading aloud, some children's writers have to achieve a degree of linguistic inventiveness that necessarily demands a level of creativity similar to that required to translators of poetry, so as to enhance both humour and rhythm (Lathey, 2016).

As for onomatopoeias, it is preferable not to keep the original expression but to opt for the textual conventions of the receiving culture, in order to help young readers or listeners establish a link between the onomatopoeia and the original sound (Pascua-Febles, 2006). Translators have indeed to switch from the phonological system of the source text to that of the target one, since conventions for representing sounds, exclamations or animal cries generally differ from culture to culture. Though a more playful approach might stimulate the reader or listener's imagination even more, it may compromise the understanding of the connotation attached to the sound (Lathey, 2016).

In the translation of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Bernascone has decided to replace the English forms with their equivalents in Italian:

Table 7. Typical English onomatopoeias and their equivalents in Italian

'punch'	'sbong'
'groan'	'sigh'
'chew'	'chomp'

Table 7 shows the source English onomatopoeias in the column on the left and their corresponding forms in Italian in the column on the right. Specifically, 'punch' and its correspondent form 'sbong' are used to indicate a hard hit; 'groan' and 'sigh' are used to refer to a sound of grief or pain and 'chew' and 'chomp' are used to recall the noise of chewing.

The analysis shows that not all of the elements that belong to the American culture have been adapted to the Italian reality, probably because children are believed to be able to cope with stories that are set in a different country and which contain some elements that may sound unfamiliar to them. At the same time, however, translators have to make some transformations and adapt the text to the needs of the target readership in order to make the text itself more accessible (Davies, 2003). As for *Diario di una Schiappa*, the translator Rossella Bernascone seems to want children to taste and appreciate some authentic American

flavour by leaving some elements unaltered from the original, while at the same time she does not want to overwhelm child readers with too much that is unfamiliar to them.

CONCLUSIONS

The present dissertation aims at outlining the strategies translators can use when having to deal with culture-related items and to explore how they are applied with reference to the Italian translation of the American novel for children *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. The choice of the topic has been suggested by a particular interest for the field of translation and a great curiosity for its dynamic nature. Despite the low status usually attached to children's literature, numerous scholars have devoted their works to such a topic, thus rendering my research rich and vary. The analysis would not have been possible without understanding the role played by children's literature in the process of education and in broadening children's knowledge of the world; hence, the need for translations and translators, whose contribution to the enrichment of one's cultural heritage has proved to be fundamental. Indeed, without the incredible work carried out by translators, children would not be able to enjoy a huge variety of stories from all over the world. Exactly for the fact that the story is set in a foreign country which I am familiar with only thanks to the media and my studies, I often encountered some obstacles as I lacked comprehension of some of the cultural references to the country. Moreover, after reading the books of the series and their translations, I was also faced with the challenge of giving possible explanations to the choices of the translator by only basing my suppositions on the theories I have studied and on my intuition.

Though the question whether translators of children's literature should leave the cultural elements of a text unaltered or whether they should adopt a domesticating strategy is rather controversial, the present analysis shows that it is sometimes inevitable for translators to look for an equivalent in the target language and culture in order to make the text comprehensible. Children, indeed, are often not believed to possess the knowledge that would help them understand the connotations attached to highly cultural items. However, it is also demonstrated how sometimes cultural references are left as in the original, only where

children are believed to be familiar with the foreign element. Even though the adoption of the domesticating strategy inevitably brings the text closer to target culture, possibly distancing it from the cultural context in which it was created, young readers are continuously reminded of the foreign origin of the story thanks to the use of elements that recall the American setting. This may also enhance their curiosity in the foreign and will perhaps encourage them to learn even more about it, until they will be so fully immersed in the foreign culture that they will not need adaptations anymore.

Translation thus seems to be the perfect tool that provides people with access to new worlds, that helps readers overcome the fear for 'otherness', for diversity, through a process which slowly accompanies people from the discovery of such different and distant worlds to an intimate familiarity with them.

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RIASSUNTO

La mobilità e il contatto tra popoli diversi sono tra i fenomeni che caratterizzano maggiormente il mondo in cui viviamo al giorno d'oggi. Sempre più spesso, sia per ragioni professionali, religiose o anche solo per piacere, un numero crescente di individui si trova a contatto con persone che vengono da altri paesi, che parlano una lingua diversa e i cui usi e costumi differiscono da quelli riconosciuti come propri. Diventa perciò difficile parlare di un'unica cultura, di un insieme omogeneo di quei tratti che possono definirsi peculiari di un popolo che vive in un determinato paese, ma dovremmo piuttosto parlare di 'intercultura', di quel qualcosa di miscellaneo ed eterogeneo che nasce quando gli usi, i costumi e le abitudini di individui provenienti da paesi diverse cominciano a interagire tra loro.

C'è quindi il bisogno di conoscere, di aprirsi 'all'altro', a ciò che fino a poco prima veniva considerato come un qualcosa di estraneo e distante ma che a poco a poco è entrato a far parte della nostra quotidianità. E come è possibile che tutto questo accada se non attraverso l'informazione? Se non attraverso una crescente curiosità che può essere soddisfatta solo dalla lettura e dall'istruzione? C'è perciò bisogno di testi che ci parlino 'dell'altro', che ci informino sulle sue abitudini, affinché si possa arrivare a riconoscere un qualcosa di familiare anche nella diversità.

Non esiste miglior modo di apprendere ciò che è proprio di altre culture se non attraverso la lettura di ciò che è stato creato in quella cultura stessa, così da poterne apprezzare a fondo tutte le sfumature. C'è perciò bisogno di traduzioni, e soprattutto di traduttori, che facciano sì che questo non rimanga solo un'utopia ma che diventi la realtà, mediando non solo tra lingue ma soprattutto tra culture e rendendo accessibile a tutti l'ingresso a nuovi mondi. Non solo gli adulti, ma soprattutto i bambini devono poter imparare a conoscere e ad apprezzare, e la loro curiosità potrà essere incrementata grazie a storie di altri bambini lontani, apparentemente diversi da loro ma fondamentalmente uguali, nei quali finiranno per riconoscersi solo dopo

avere imparato ad accettare quella diversità che in realtà è solo superficiale. È questo uno dei compiti più recenti della letteratura per l'infanzia, che, nonostante sia spesso rilegata ai margini della letteratura per adulti, ricopre in realtà un ruolo fondamentale nello sviluppo di ogni bambino.

Questa tesi si occuperà di analizzare le strategie di cui dispongono i traduttori per trasferire un messaggio intriso di connotazioni culturali da una lingua all'altra, in particolare facendo riferimento a quella che, al giorno d'oggi, è una delle serie per bambini più vendute, il *Diario di una Schiappa*. Grazie al suo essere 'normale', goffo, alla sua vicinanza con la realtà di tutti i giorni, Greg, il protagonista della fortunata serie, è riuscito a far breccia nel cuore di centinaia di migliaia di bambini, insegnando loro ad affrontare i piccoli problemi che si possono incontrare in giovane età in modo simpatico e divertente. Nato in America e scritto dall'americano Jeff Kinney, il libro in fumetti fa spesso riferimento a quelli che sono gli usi e i costumi degli Stati Uniti, che vengono adattati alla realtà italiana in modo da permettere ai giovani lettori di riconoscersi nelle avventure del protagonista. Ad ogni modo, ai bambini viene anche costantemente ricordato che quella che stanno leggendo è una storia che è ambientata in un altro paese attraverso il riferimento a una moneta diversa, ma anche solo grazie ai nomi dei protagonisti, che sono invariati rispetto all'originale.

Ma andiamo per ordine. La letteratura per l'infanzia ha origini lontane, sia nel tempo che nello spazio. È infatti possibile trovare alcuni frammenti di testi scritti per bambini già nell'epoca classica, quando sia i greci che i romani si impegnavo per insegnare ai propri figli maschi come riuscire a ottenere una posizione di rilievo nella società. Ai bambini veniva richiesto di imparare a memoria i versi dei più grandi scrittori e poi recitarli: Omero e Virgilio erano tra gli autori più gettonati, a cui i giovani greci e romani dovevano ispirarsi anche per apprendere i comportamenti da adottare in determinate circostanze. Un tale insegnamento mirava a formare il bambino in modo che diventasse un buon oratore, un politico, un senatore ma anche un semplice padre o marito. Appare perciò chiaro che l'intento principale di questi

manuali era di istruire i giovani lettori, e la letteratura per l'infanzia veniva considerata come mero strumento d'istruzione piuttosto che di piacere.

La situazione non è poi così diversa nel Medioevo, dove i manuali per bambini si concentravano soprattutto sulla buona condotta e sulle buone maniere. In questo periodo, infatti, coloro che provenivano da famiglie aristocratiche venivano spesso mandati nelle corti per completare la loro educazione, ed è proprio lì che dovevano mettere in pratica tutto ciò che avevano appreso dai cosiddetti 'courtesy books'.

La cura e le attenzioni che venivano rivolte ai bambini in questo periodo dimostrano il riconoscimento, da parte degli adulti, delle potenzialità di questi, e da qui il bisogno di investire ulteriormente nella loro educazione. È proprio nel Medioevo infatti che nascono le prime scuole, le cosiddette 'Grammar Schools', generalmente site nei pressi di cattedrali. Scuole femminili, al contrario, si potevano trovare all'interno dei monasteri, e miravano soprattutto ad avvicinare le giovani donne e i giovani uomini alla carriera ecclesiastica.

La letteratura in prosa di questo periodo, prevalentemente scritta in latino, era affiancata da una vasta produzione poetica e da nuove forme come gli abbecedari, libricini di preghiere il cui compito era quello di avvicinare i bambini alla lettura. Il messaggio cristiano era al centro di tali manuali, infatti le lettere erano spesso presentate in modo che creassero una croce e la fine di ogni lista era spesso segnata dalla parola 'amen'. La religione, in epoca medievale, permeava ogni cosa: molto spesso ai bambini veniva infatti richiesto di guardare oltre le cose e di individuarne il vero significato, che poteva essere svelato solo facendo riferimento alla realtà ultraterrena. Per questo veniva solitamente vietata la lettura di romanzi cavallereschi o di ballate, ad esempio quelle sulla vita di Robin Hood, in quanto ritenute fonte di pura distrazione.

La religione rimase centrale anche per tutta l'epoca puritana, dove lo scopo principale della letteratura per l'infanzia era quello di rendere i bambini partecipi del cammino verso l'ascesa in Paradiso. Tuttavia, la situazione ebbe una svolta decisiva nel diciottesimo secolo, quando

numerose scrittrici come Sarah Fielding o Mary Wollstonecraft decisero di permettere ai bambini di sognare di nuovo grazie all'inserimento di elementi magici nei loro testi. Secondo le autrici di questo periodo è solo grazie al confronto tra il mondo fantastico e la realtà quotidiana che i bambini riusciranno a comprendere il vero significato della vita, senza dover fare riferimento al messaggio religioso. È da sottolineare anche che è proprio grazie a queste audaci scribacchine che la letteratura per l'infanzia sarà ora accessibile anche a un pubblico prettamente femminile.

In epoca vittoriana la fantasia lascia il posto al realismo, quando autori del calibro di Charles Dickens presentano al pubblico di giovani lettori le condizioni di miseria in cui si trovano a lavorare i bambini che vengono sfruttati nelle fabbriche inglesi. È questo uno dei prezzi da pagare con l'avvento della rivoluzione industriale e con il progresso tecnologico che ne segue, che crea non poco scompiglio nella vita di tutti i giorni. Lo stesso spaesamento, l'insicurezza e la confusione che caratterizzano l'epoca moderna si riflettono anche nel linguaggio e nelle avventure di Lewis Carroll, che con il suo *Alice nel Paese delle Meraviglie* porta i bambini oltre i confini della realtà. Innumerevoli sono i viaggi che i personaggi dei romanzi d'avventura intraprendono in questo periodo, dall'esplorazione della giungla alla navigazione in mari sconosciuti, fino ad arrivare alla 'Terra di Mezzo' del *Signore degli Anelli,* al fantastico mondo di Narnia o alla magica realtà di Hogwarts.

Sebbene grazie alle avventure in questi mondi immaginari la fantasia dei giovani lettori non abbia più freni, ai bambini viene comunque sempre ricordato il legame che queste storie fantastiche hanno con la realtà, ad esempio attraverso il festeggiamento del Natale da parte dei maghi di *Harry Potter* o attraverso il richiamo ai tragici eventi della Seconda Guerra mondiale ne *Le Cronache di Narnia*. È questo costante richiamo al mondo in cui viviamo che fa sì che i bambini non si smarriscano del tutto tra le pagine dei libri, permettendo loro di riconoscere ciò che gli è più familiare in modo da sentirsi ancora più vicini alle avventure dei protagonisti. E questo rispecchia quello che è il ruolo del traduttore, ovvero far conoscere il

diverso attraverso ciò che ci è più noto. Perciò sin dal Medioevo, traduttori e più tardi traduttrici hanno arricchito gli scaffali dei più piccoli di storie di paesi e luoghi lontani, a volte incantati, di creature fantastiche e reali, seppur rimanendo sempre nell'ombra degli autori dell'originale.

Invisibile: è così che Lawrence Venuti descrive l'attività del traduttore, riferendosi all'illusione che si crea quando, andando a leggere un testo tradotto, ci troviamo di fronte a quello che in realtà sembra un'originale, grazie agli adattamenti e alle modifiche che vengono apportate secondo le convenzioni dettate dalla cultura che riceve il testo tradotto. Tutti gli elementi che caratterizzano la cultura in cui il testo originale è stato prodotto vengono perciò sostituiti da quelli che sono i corrispettivi nella cultura d'arrivo, in modo da aiutare il lettore nella comprensione. Sebbene tale pratica si ponga in contrasto con la necessità di una traduzione fedele, è strettamente necessaria laddove un testo è destinato a giovani lettori le cui limitate conoscenze renderebbero la comprensione piuttosto difficile se non impossibile.

Per quanto riguarda la traduzione di testi per l'infanzia, oltre che alle differenze culturali, i traduttori devono prestare particolare attenzione anche all'insegnamento che il testo deve dare nella cultura d'arrivo. Infatti, soprattutto in epoche in cui vigono regimi totalitari o anche per semplici motivi religiosi, i testi devono essere adattati a seconda di ciò che può essere accettato o meno dal paese che riceve il testo tradotto. Da qui il ruolo didattico della traduzione, che si presta quindi anche come strumento di trasmissione di ideologie che andranno a formare il giovane lettore.

Oltre all'ideologia politica e alla religione, i traduttori devono tenere in considerazione anche il pubblico più adulto, quello costituito dai genitori e dagli insegnanti, i quali saranno i primi a scegliere i testi che verranno letti dai propri figli o studenti. Una tale cura deve essere riposta anche nei confronti della presentazione del testo stesso, soprattutto per quanto riguarda la copertina. È infatti l'estetica del libro a catturare inizialmente l'attenzione sia di grandi che piccini. Quando si parla di letteratura per l'infanzia, lo si fa perciò in riferimento a quei testi

che sì vengono scritti principalmente per i bambini ma che vengono letti anche dagli adulti, dai quali devono essere poi approvati, e da quei testi che verranno poi letti ad alta voce. I genitori o gli insegnanti devono infatti essere molto abili nel riprodurre il messaggio scritto, seguendo il ritmo della storia e adattando il tono della voce di conseguenza.

Oltre alla melodia, un altro aspetto rilevante della letteratura per l'infanzia è dato dalla presenza di immagini che accompagnano la narrazione. Talora le immagini possono essere così significative da sostituire persino le parole, e per questo anche esse dovranno essere adattate a seconda delle necessità della cultura d'arrivo.

Non è quindi possibile parlare di traduzione come mero trasferimento di un messaggio da lingua all'altra: come dimostra la presente analisi, c'è infatti bisogno di un contributo maggiore da parte dei traduttori, i quali dovranno fare appello anche alla loro creatività e immaginazione per permettere ai lettori del testo tradotto di assaporare a pieno il significato dell'originale. È perciò richiesta ai traduttori una profonda conoscenza non solo linguistica ma anche culturale sia della lingua di partenza che di quella d'arrivo, che si rivelerà indispensabile per le scelte con cui verranno messi di fronte.

Nell'analisi condotta nel presente elaborato finale sono state rilevate discordanze nel confronto tra il testo in inglese e quello in italiano soprattutto in merito alla traduzione di nomi, di giochi di parole, di cibi e di unità di misura, all'uso di onomatopee ed espressioni idiomatiche, in riferimento al sistema scolastico e per quanto riguarda il richiamo a festività, canzoni, personaggi famosi o giochi strettamente legati alla tradizione di un determinato paese. La maggior parte di questi elementi di disturbo, spesso intraducibili, sono stati sostituiti da quello che il traduttore ha creduto essere il corrispettivo più adatto nella cultura d'arrivo, quello che rispecchiasse maggiormente la tradizione italiana senza allontanarsi troppo dalle connotazioni semantiche dell'originale. Altre volte l'originale è stato mantenuto, ed è stato accompagnato da spiegazioni laddove i bambini avrebbero potuto incontrare delle difficoltà nella comprensione, mentre è stato lasciato invariato per quei casi che si è pensato non

ponessero particolari problemi. Uno di questi esempi è il continuo riferimento al dollaro, con cui si pensa che la maggior parte dei bambini sia familiare grazie alla costante esposizione alla cultura americana, sia attraverso fumetti che cartoni animati. Un'ultima strategia utilizzata da Rossella Bernascone, traduttrice della serie, prevede la sostituzione dell'elemento culturale specifico con uno più generale, che apre perciò il testo a un pubblico internazionale, evitando di limitarlo al solo contesto italiano.

In generale, come dimostra la presente analisi, sembra preferibile adattare tutti gli elementi che potrebbero creare dei problemi nella trasmissione e comprensione del messaggio a ciò che si crede essere più noto ai bambini che riceveranno il testo. Sebbene questo si ponga in contrasto con la necessità di far conoscere e apprezzare nuovi mondi e realtà, risulta essere necessario laddove un'incorretta interpretazione del messaggio comprometterebbe il significato del messaggio stesso. Inoltre, i giovani lettori possono comunque assaporare ciò che è proprio dell'altra cultura grazie a quegli elementi che rimandano costantemente agli usi e alle pratiche del paese di origine del testo.

Diventa perciò difficile considerare la traduzione come 'second best', visto il lavoro che viene richiesto ai traduttori per rendere un testo accessibile a un nuovo pubblico i cui usi e costumi differiscono da quello originale. Inoltre, come già affermato da John Trevisa nel lontano Medioevo, senza traduttori, e quindi senza traduzione, non ci sarebbe comunicazione tra coloro che parlano lingue diverse e che si considerano come estranei, e probabilmente non ci sarebbe tolleranza, accettazione e apertura verso nuovi paesi e nuovi popoli. Da qui l'importanza di conoscere, dapprima se stessi e poi gli altri, fin da bambini.