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Retranslating the classics: a comparison of three Italian translations of *Little Women*

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Some books are so familiar that reading them
is like being home again.
Louisa May Alcott

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Abbreviations

RH: The Retranslation Hypothesis

SL: Source Language

ST: Source Text

TL: Target Language

TT: Target Text

TT1: Target text 1

TT2: Target text 2

TT3: Target text 3

Introduction

When, in 1867, American writer Louisa Alcott was asked to write a "girl's book", she was very sceptical about the success her novel *Little Women* would have. Surely, she could not have imagined that, over 150 years after the first publication (1868), her "little women" would continue to be read and be the subject of new screen and stage adaptations. In her book "Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy: The Story of Little Women and Why It Still Matters" (2018), writer Anne Rioux argues that *Little Women* is a "worldwide phenomenon" and "a story that has translated across time and space in a way that few books have" (Smithsonian Magazine, 2018). If the success of this classic has managed to cross the border of American culture, it means that it became of interest to the discipline of translation: by the end of the 19th century, *Little Women* "was translated into German, Dutch, French, Swedish, Danish, Greek, as well as, apparently, Russian and Japanese" (Clark, 2014:16), and today it counts translations in over fifty languages (Rioux, 2018). But if the legacy of the book remains contemporary after 150 years, it also means that *Little Women* has become of interest to the field of retranslation.

The practice of translation is as ancient as the II millennium B.C. For centuries, it has been the object of study and reflections of the most disparate fields of research, especially the religious (Biblical translations), literary, philosophical and linguistic ones; but it was not until the 1970s that translation was finally recognised as a discipline on its own. In 1972, scholar James S. Holmes declared the end of translation as a branch of already existing fields of study and suggested the birth of a new academic discipline: Translation Studies (TS). If Translation Studies is a quite recent academic field demanding further research, the studies in one of its sub-fields, that of retranslation, are even more recent. In Translation Studies encyclopaedias, retranslation is defined as the act of translating a work that has previously been translated into the same language. The phenomenon of retranslation so far has mainly been investigated with regard to literary material; indeed, to these days, sacred texts, canonical literary works and dramatic texts seems to be the most frequently retranslated works (Gürçağlar, 2009). The first organised discourse on retranslation dates back to 1990 with Antoine Berman's "Retranslation Hypothesis" (1990). After this contribution, the phenomenon of retranslation experienced little development both in theoretical and empirical studies until the beginning of the 21st

century (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010), when some scholars started to take an increasing interest in the similarities and differences between first translations and retranslations and, in particular, in the reasons behind retranslation.

Thesis statement and research objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate the phenomenon of retranslation through the empirical comparison of three Italian translations of the novel *Little Women*, written by Louisa May Alcott and first published by Roberts Brothers in 1868. The objective of this thesis is to understand what the main reasons for retranslation in the case of literary classics may be. The choice of the classic *Little Women* derives firstly from a personal appreciation of the novel, and secondly as a consequence of the most recent return of interest in retelling this story with new translations and screen and stage adaptations. As for the Italian versions, the analysis will be conducted on the first Italian translation of the book by Ciro and Michelina Trabalza, published in 1908 by Carabba; on the 2011 reprinted version published by Newton Compton of the 1953 translation by Anna Maria Speckel, first published by Ape, Artistiche Propaganda Editoriali; and the 2018 translation by Stella Sacchini, published by Feltrinelli. The three Italian versions are all unabridged editions of the original and show no explicit mention of particular adaptations or changes to the original text to meet the requirements of a specific reading age. The comparison of the three versions aims both at discovering the characteristics of each translation with reference to the most relevant issues in Translation Studies – equivalence in translation, the relation between translation and culture, ethics of translation, faithfulness to the source text, etc. – and at analysing the similarities and differences with regard to the rendition of the ST's features.

The analysis will be conducted bearing in mind the most relevant assumptions that have been made on retranslation, to be precise: Berman's Retranslation Hypothesis (1990) and André Topia's (1990) claims about the ageing of translations as opposed to their originals; Yves Gambier's (1994) suggestions on shifting the focus from the sole relation (re)translations establish with the STs to the social status of retranslation, and how the characteristics of a certain society influence its nature and features; Venuti's (2004) views on retranslations as being reflective of social and linguistic changes over time, translators'

intentionality and new perspectives on translation standards of accuracy; Collombat's (2004) reflections on non-linguistic reasons for retranslation, including shifts in translators' attitude and translation approaches, readers' accessibility and new insights from the developments of an author's criticism.

Thesis structure

The thesis consists of five chapters. The First Chapter will provide an overview on translation history and theory. The chapter begins by mentioning the first historical records of translation practice. It then focuses on the history of translation in the Western world, discussing the developments brought to this field by Biblical translation and the main theoretical contributions – mainly focused on the issues of translations' faithfulness and accuracy – from the English, French and German traditions between the 16th and 19th centuries. It then analyses the major turning points and new approaches to translation from the 20th century up to present times. To be precise, it will give an overview of the philosophical and linguistic-oriented approaches, the issue of equivalence in translation, the birth of translation as an academic discipline ("Translation Studies") on its own, the cultural turn Translation Studies experienced in the 1990s and the main discourses around the ethics of translation. The chapter will also briefly examine how technological development has influenced the field of translation, and what seem to be the future perspectives in Translation Studies.

The Second Chapter will discuss the phenomenon of retranslation. It begins by analysing the first theoretical discussions around retranslation which emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, including the famous issue of translations' "ageing". The chapter will then present the most recent studies around retranslation, published from the beginning of the 21st century, exploring both the relation (re)translations establish with their STs and with the space and historical time in which they were produced. These observations will also reveal what the reasons behind retranslation may be. The chapter will also discuss the issue of drawing a precise line between retranslations and revisions, and how the advent of digital reproduction has influenced the phenomenon of retranslation.

The Third Chapter will give an overview of the novel *Little Women* and explore its status as a literary classic. In this light, the chapter will discuss the main characteristics attributed to literary classics in general, and the double nature assigned to *Little Women* as a children's literary classic and a classic *tout court*. Some biographical information on the author of the book will also be provided, in order to understand the mind and context which produced the novel. Finally, the chapter will examine the history of the Italian translations of *Little Women* and explain the reasons behind the choice of the three Italian translations to compare.

The Fourth Chapter will focus on the empirical comparison of the three Italian translations of the book. The chapter will be divided into six sections, each one discussing how certain characteristics of the original book – language, style, lexicon, tone etc – were rendered in the three Italian editions, and which were the main translation strategies, foreignization vs domestication, literal vs free approach, etc., adopted by the three translators. For each section, several passages of the original and their respective Italian translations will be provided as practical examples.

The Fifth Chapter will report on an interview I carried out with the translator of the 2018 Italian edition of the novel, Stella Sacchini. The questions of the interview are based on the topics analysed in the comparison of Chapter 4. The answers of the translator will offer the chance to obtain a closer analysis of some of the translation strategies she adopted for specific passages of the book.

1. Translation History and Theory

This first chapter will explore translation history (section 1.1) and theory (section 1.2) from the Western perspective. In both sections only part of the numerous events and contributions to the fields will be discussed. The selection was made after consulting the most quoted reference manuals, which revealed what are considered to be the main turning points in translation history and theory, who are the most influencing theorists and which models they proposed.

1.1. Translation history before the 20th century

1.1.1. First evidence

The practice of translation is deeply rooted in history: the first records of translation dates to the II millennium B.C. with the populations of Anatolia (Hittites, Babylonians and Assyrians) (Mounin, 1965: 29). However, translation history drew little interest until recent times and to these days remains a field that demands further exploration. Scholars (Mounin, 1965; Munday, 2016; Nergaard, 1993; etc) agree on attributing the first systematic and reasoned reflection on translation to Cicero, who in his work *De Optimo Genere Oratorum* (On The Best Kind of Orators) (46 B.C) comments his translation of Demosthenes and Aeschines speeches. He questions whether it is more appropriate to produce a literal ('word-for-word') translation, more faithful to the SL syntax, or a free ('sense-for-sense') translation, more faithful to the sense of the ST, a dilemma resonating in translators' conscience to these days. Cicero reaches the following conclusion:

> I did not translate them as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and forms, or as one might say, the "figures" of thought, but in language which conforms to our usage. And in so doing, I did not hold it necessary to render word for word. But I preserved the general style and force of the language.[1](Cicero,46 BC, as translated in Munday, 2016: 31)

Such reasoning could easily belong to present times. Cicero's distinction between an interpreter (*interpres*) and an orator corresponds to the one existing between a literal

[1] 'Nec converti ut interpres, sed ut orator, sententiis isdem et earum formis tamquam figuris, verbis ad nostrum consuetudinem aptis. In quibus non verbum pro verbo necesse habui reddere, sed genus omne verborum vimque servavi. Non enim ea me adnumerare lectori putavi, oportere, sed tamquam appendere.'
(De Optimo Genere Oratorum, Cicero, v. 14)

translation, performed by the first one, and a free translation, typical of the latter (Nergaard, 1993: 28).

1.1.2. Biblical Translation

Biblical translation has played a major role in the development of Western translation. It is believed that most Western translation practice and theory derives from the necessity of spreading the Holy Scripture among diverse groups of believers (Steiner, 1975/1998). It is not without reason that the Bible is the most translated text in the world. Up to the Middle Ages, translations of religious texts were characterised by an excessive adherence to the syntax and the words of the source text. This was viewed as the most appropriate method for preserving the accuracy of God's word and avoiding personal interpretations (Mounin, 1965:39). In accordance with this belief, attempts were even made to maintain the same number of words in the TL. In this context, a significant and revolutionary contribution came from St. Jerome. At the end of the 4th century, Jerome concluded his translation into Latin, known as *Vulgata*, of the Old Testament and was deeply criticised for not being faithful to the original (Nergaard, 1993:29). However, Jerome was of the opinion "*non verbum de verbo reddere sed sensum"* ("do not translate word by word, but rather according to the sense"), a thesis in contrast with the unwritten law of that time favouring literal translation. Moreover, it was Jerome's desire that foreign cultural references found in the Bible were to be kept in the translation and not be absorbed by the target culture (Osimo, 2002:16), which is another example of his thinking ahead of time.

These principles do not differ much from those of Martin Luther, renowned for the central role he played in the Church Reformation and in laying the foundations for the creation of a German national identity through the language he used in his translations of the New Testament (1522) and the Old Testament (1534) into East Central German (Munday, 2016:39). Luther's opinion on the "literal vs free" debate mirrors that of St. Jerome: a good translation is one that first and foremost concentrates on conveying the sense, even if it slightly alters the ST by changing the syntax or adding words to better explain a concept. In contrast with the general opinion, Luther strongly believed in a "democratic" participation to the Holy Scriptures, and for this reason he refused to translate the Bible into a language shaped on Latin, which would have been too complex

for the Germans. As he himself explains in his *Sendbrief von Dolmetschen* ('Circular Letter on Translation'), for the language of his translations he took inspiration from

> […] the mother at home, the children in the street, the ordinary man in the market and look at their mouths, how they speak, and translate that way; then they'll understand and see that you're speaking to them in German. (Luther, 1530 as translated in Munday, 2016:40)

Luther's translations represented a pivotal moment not only for religious faith, but also for the emergence of a clear and strong national language for Germans (Munday, 2016:40).

1.1.3. Early translation theory: Dolet, Dryden, Tytler

Leaving aside religious discourse and entering into literary translation, in 1540 Etienne Dolet wrote *La Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* ('The way of translating well form one language into another'), in which he states five principles summarised by Osimo (2002:26) and Mounin (1965:42) as follows:

a) The translator must perfectly understand the sense of the original text and, if necessary, clarify obscure passages;
b) The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both the source and target language;
c) The translator should follow the syntax of the target language;
d) The translator should use the ordinary language and avoid Latin forms;
e) The translator should produce a pleasant and elegant text to read, balancing the phonic and syntactic dimensions.

Here again, it is suggested that word-for-word translation should be avoided. Emphasis is placed on producing a natural and pleasant text to read in the "ordinary" language, as a result of the newly interest and dignity national languages were beginning to acquire after being always considered "vulgar" compared to Latin. This short manuscript represents one of the first attempts of the time at a prescriptive translation theory. Other similar works followed that of Dolet. In 1680 English poet and translator John Dryden wrote a preface to his translation of Ovid's *Epistles,* in which he establishes three different types of translations: *metaphrase*, corresponding to literal translation; *paraphrase*, more or less corresponding to sense-for-sense translation, where "the author is […] never to be lost by the translator, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense"; *imitation*, a

term used by Cowley to indicate his translation of *Pindaric Odes* (1640), for which he has "taken, left out and added what I please" (Cowley, as quoted in Munday, 2016:43). Dryden aligns with the paraphrase, condemning both metaphrase and imitation, the latter being

> 'the most advantageous way for a translator to show himself, but the greatest wrong […] to the memory and reputation of the dead' (Dryden as quoted in Osimo, 2002: 32).

Dryden's brief analysis of translation processes had an enormous impact on subsequent translation practice and theory (Munday, 2016:43) and represents a fresh contribution to a century mainly dominated by the so-called *belles infedèles,* an expression Voltaire coined for Perrot d'Ablancourt's translations and later used to indicate all similar translations of the time that robbed the original text of passages and expressions considered to be too "vulgar" for the refined French manner. The result was an aesthetically and linguistically elegant translation that bore little resemblance to the form and content of the ST (Mounin, 1965: 49). Another contribution to the prescriptive theory trend is that of Alexander Fraser Tytler who, in 1790, published his *Essay on the principles of translation,* where he proposes three general rules to observe when translating, which repeat the importance of having a perfect knowledge of the ST's sense and meaning and the ability of recreating the style of the source text, this being, according to Tytler, the most difficult task (Munday, 2016:46). It is interesting the shift of Tytler's perspective from author-oriented to reader-oriented with a "good translation" being one in which

> the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language as to be as distinctly apprehended, and as strongly felt, by a native of the country to which that language belongs as it is by those who speak the language of the original work. (Tytler, 1797 as cited in Munday, 2016:45)

1.1.4. The German experience

German Romanticism led to interesting contributions to translation from figures such as Schleiermacher, Goethe and Von Humboldt. Their reflections were inspired by the work of philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder and his investigation of the mutual influence between thought and language (Munday, 2016:47; Nergaard, 1993:41,44). Translation represented the ground where different cultures and languages could meet and, most

importantly, a chance for the improvement of German language and culture through the acceptance of the foreign (Nergaard, 1993:40). With his seminal lecture *Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens* (On The Different Methods of Translating) (1813), Schleiermacher offered new perspectives on translation. He distinguished between a *Dolmetscher*, a translator of commercial texts, and a Ü*bersetzer*, who translates scholarly and artistic texts, in whom resides the opportunity to enrich language, as said above (Munday, 2016:47). Indeed, in artistic texts language does not simply express a thought, it contributes to its shaping (Osimo, 2002:45). Here is where, according to the Romantics, lies the complexity of translation and the consequent discourse on translatability/untranslatability origins. In Schleiermacher's view, the central aspect of translation is bringing together the author and the reader, which can be done in two ways

> Either the translator leaves the writer in peace as much as possible and moves the reader towards him, or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer towards him. (Schleiermacher, 1813, as translated in Munday, 2016:48)

Schleiermacher prefers the first solution. He believes that moving the writer towards the reader would prove unsuccessful because, by trying to adapt the author's world to that of the reader, the result would be a falsification of the ST. His aim is to give the reader "the impression he would have received as a German reading the work in the original language" (cited in Munday, 2016:48).

1.2. Translation from the 20th century onwards

As we have seen, up to the beginning of 20th century the discourse on translation revolved mostly around the same issues – literal vs free, faithfulness, accuracy, etc - and, despite interesting reflections on the subject, little progress was made towards a more systematic translation theory (Morini, 2007:17). The turning point was the year 1972, when James S. Holmes published the paper marking the birth of "translation studies" as an academic discipline representing more than a mere tool for language-learning (Munday, 2012:14), as it had been up to that point. This section will describe major turning points, approaches and debates in the field of translation from the twentieth century up to present times.

1.2.1. Philosophical approach

The 20th century was far more fertile than all previous ones. As for the first decades, approaches to translation were still influenced by German Romanticism (see section 1.1.4) and are referred to as philosophical-oriented. A representative contribution for this period is Walter Benjamin's 1923 essay '*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*' (The task of the translator), in which he further explores Schleiermacher's ideas of translation as a creative force and the value of the foreign with his concept of "pure language", that is "the ultimate essence", enclosed in every language, that "no longer means or expresses anything, but is […] that which is meant in all languages" (Benjamin, 1923, as translated by Zohn in Venuti, 2000:22). In Benjamin's view, the translator's task is to "release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another" by re-creating (translating) the ST. In this sense, translation is capable of revealing links between languages, moving past their apparent incompatibility (Venuti, 2000:11; Munday, 2016:261). The philosophical perspective came up with other important contributions in the 1960s and 1970s, including George Steiner's "hermeneutic motion" and the deconstruction theory, whose most influential supporter is philosopher Jacques Derrida. Steiner's hermeneutic motion, discussed in his seminal work *After Babel* (1975/1998), explains in four moves how a translator deals with the understanding and rendering of ST meaning during the translation process. These moves involve: an initial trust that the ST has something worth of understanding and communicating; the "aggressive" (as defined by Steiner) extraction of meaning from the ST; its incorporation into the TL and, finally, the enhancement of the ST through its translation for another culture (Hermans, 2009; Stolze, 2010). As for deconstruction, it was Derrida who coined the term in the late 1960s to refer to the will of deconstructing the main bases of traditional Western thought about translation, addressing in particular the view of meaning as a presence existing outside or before language (Davis, 2009)[2].

1.2.2. The Science of Translation: linguistic-oriented theory

Around mid-century, researchers began to adopt Bea more scientific approach to translation based on the rules of linguistics. Their intention was to develop linguistic

[2] See Derrida, J. (1985) 'Des tours de Babel', in J. F. Graham (ed.), French original pp. 209– 48. For a general overview of Deconstruction theory see Davis, K. (2011). Deconstruction. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies, London and New York: Routledge*, 74-77.

models defining rules to use in translation (Morini, 2007:18). In 1964 Eugene Nida wrote *Toward a science of translation*, where he tries to find a systematic procedure for translation based on concepts from semantics, pragmatics and Chomsky's studies on syntax. As explained in Munday (2016:62–3), with his study on phrase structure, Chomsky was able to identify a "deep structure" comprised of basic structural elements ('kernel sentences') which, in turn, compose a "surface structure". According to Chomsky, this model is universally held by all languages. Nida used Chomsky's work to develop an exact procedure to use during translation, involving the analysis of deep structure's basic elements, which are transferred into the other language through translation and ultimately reconstructed semantically and stylistically to compose the surface structure of the target text. Nida proposed a model that could be used universally and, for this reason, it was considered more advantageous compared to finding equivalences between specific language pairs (Munday, 2016: 62-64).

Further contributions to the scientific approach involve that of the German school of *Ubersetzungswissenschaft* (Science of Translation), with figures such as Otto Kade and Albrecht Neubert from the Leipzig school, as well as Werner Koller and Wolfram Wilss (Morini, 2007:19; Munday, 2016:16). Their method was eventually found to be defective because it excluded extra-lingual factors from the translation process. In general, this scientific approach proved to be unsuccessful because it could not describe translation in all its aspects and complexity, more specifically literary and poetic translation. Indeed, literary and poetic language was considered too irregular and atypical to fall under prescriptive, linguistic models (Morini, 2007:56) and, for this reason, researchers adopting the scientific approach opted for its exclusion from their analysis. Morini (2007: 18) gives the example of Wilss (1977), who explains how, when it comes to literary translation, creativity substitutes the innate neutrality of translation. Therefore, it is better to restrict research to the scientific, economic and legal fields, which are characterised by specific terminology with few variations of language. This logic was criticised by later scholar (Snell-Hornby, 1989) for its overly generalising and simplistic view of non-literary language compared to the literary one, which in turn did not always escape linguistic rules. The scientific approach views translation as an exercise of mere linguistic transcoding at word-level (Morini, 2007). However, as later cultural and ideological

approaches will demonstrate, it is impossible to prescind from extra lingual factors, especially when dealing with literary translation.

1.2.3. Literature and translation

Literature was, and partly still is, considered one of the highest forms of culture. It is capable of experimenting all the potentialities of language both stylistically and structurally (Delabastita, 2010): it can play with various styles other than the standard (e.g. slang, archaism) and take advantage of the wide variety of language and vocabulary in order to fulfil its aim of "provok[ing] emotions and/or entertain rather than influence or inform" (Jones, 2009:157). With all these peculiar characteristics, it was believed that any translation theory successfully responding to literature could be applied to translation in general. As Delabastita (2010:199) argues, "in the recent history of the discipline [translation studies] there is little to differentiate the study of *literary* translation from the study of translation *tout court*". Compared to other fields, the literary one was particularly profitable for translation to analyse as it offered "classics" (canonised texts) surviving the passing of time and therefore ideal for comparisons between retranslations or translations in different languages and target cultures (Delabastita, 2010). The picture has slightly changed in recent years (from the 1980s onwards) with the development of translation research in fields such as "advertising, children's literature, comics, science fiction and all manner of audiovisual texts and media-based communication (see Journalism and translation; Subtitling; Voiceover and dubbing)", which started to gain dignity alongside the more canonical types of literature (Delabastita, 2010: 200).

When it comes to literary translation, one of the main concerns represents the translation of style, which can either be the result of the writer's cultural space-time or a deliberate choice of the writer (Jones, 2009:153). It is always the translators' responsibility to decide how to deal with the ST style, bearing in mind that they in turn are influenced (more or less consciously) by their own cultural space-time. They can decide to calque the ST style, thus replicating the source reader's experience, use a stylistic option that can signal the difference from the standard (e.g. formal language for archaism) or favour semantic content at the expense of style, thus "normalizing" the text. This last option, however, jeopardises the textual function of style. A characteristic of literary translation is also the presence of a paratext, described by Venuti as

"supplementary material that may include introductions and afterwords, annotations and commentaries" (Venuti, 2004: 33). The use of paratext, especially translator's notes, is more typical of foreignizing translations (see section 1.2.7) because it helps in explaining the references of the ST.

Of the various types of translation, literary translation is the most permissive in terms of adherence to the original text. Indeed, "the complexity of many literary messages means that literary translators are conventionally allowed a wide range of text-transformation options" (Jones, 2009:154). The frequency of such transformations usually depends on the translator's will of finding a "balance between ST loyalty and TT effectiveness" (Jones, 2009:154). It is fair to deduce that literary translation never ceases to draw interest thanks to the many challenges it involves, the peculiarities of literary language in itself and the relation literature establishes with the contingencies of history.

1.2.4. Equivalence in translation

Around the 1960s, the debate on equivalence in translation outpaced the ever existing one on "literal vs free" translation. Scholars knew that source text and target text "share[d] some kind of sameness" (Panou, 2013:2). Their objective was to define exactly what were the type and level of that sameness. This question raised various theories at the time, but also more recently, with several contributions, including those from Jakobson (1959), Nida (1964), Catford (1965), Koller (1979) and Newmark (1981). Jakobson's premise for his discourse on equivalence is that "there is ordinarily no full equivalence" between words or idiomatic phrase-word in different languages (Jakobson, 1959: 114). However, instead of focusing on the apparent untranslatability, he finds that equivalence is subjected to the different structures and terminologies languages use to convey a message. In his view, "languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey" (Jakobson, 1959: 116). Therefore, they are all able to express the full semantic meaning of a message, but each with its own "tools".

In his *Principles of correspondence* (1964), Nida proposes two basic orientations in translation: formal and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence "focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content. […] the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language" (Nida, 1964:129). With formal equivalence, one bears in mind the principles of accuracy and

correctness of the message in the receptor culture (Nida, 1964). Dynamic equivalence, later referred as functional, "aims at complete naturalness of expression and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture" (Nida, 1964). Dynamic equivalence is based on what Nida calls "equivalent effect", that is the similar effect a text should produce on two different cultures (Munday, 2016:68). Regardless of his merit for introducing a receptor-based orientation to translation (Munday, 2016:69), Nida's theory has been criticised by various scholars: Lefevere (1993) found it too dependent on the word level, while Van den Broeck (1978) and Larose (1989) regarded equivalent effect a parameter too subjective to be taken into consideration (Munday, 2016:69; Panou, 2013:2). Newmark's concepts of communicative and semantic translation are not too distant respectively from those of Nida's dynamic and formal equivalence. Semantic translations focus on the meaning of the ST. To preserve the original text's features they might be characterised by a tendency to over-translate, which usually generates a more complex and detailed text. Communicative translation, on the other hand, concentrates on the effect on the addressees, therefore it is usually smoother, more direct and easier to read, with a tendency to under-translate. Newmark points out that the two methods are not mutually exclusive and may both be employed in the same text (Panou, 2013:4). Catford, in *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965), proposes the concepts of formal correspondence and textual equivalence. The former involves a correspondence between languages and their systems, therefore it cannot be significant for assessing equivalence between ST and TT, which can be better addressed by textual equivalence, concerning any TL text or portion of text which is "observed on a particular occasion [...] to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text." (Catford, as cited in Aslan, 2016). Equivalence, for Catford, must go through "translation shifts", defined as deviations that can occur in several linguistic levels and categories between SL texts and TL texts. These shifts help to obtain a translation that is "pragmatic, functional, communicative" and, as Popovič (1970) explains, they "do not occur because the translator wishes to 'change' a work, but because he strives to reproduce it as faithfully as possible." (cited in Venuti, 2000:122). Catford's model was further explored by Koller (1979), who proposed the concepts of correspondence and equivalence, roughly reflecting those of Catford's, but produced a more comprehensive model defining five types of equivalence relations and ways in

which it could be achieved (Panou, 2013:4).[3] For decades, the concept of equivalence was mainly seen as source and linguistic oriented. However, later scholars claimed that any model ignoring the influence of cultural factors in equivalence was bound to be deficient. In accordance with this thinking, Baker (2011) described equivalence as a relative notion, varying according to extratextual factors, hence difficult to explain with prescriptive, linguistic-based models. This focus on cultural influences in translation, as we will see, will become central at the end of the century.

1.2.4. Holmes and the birth of Translation Studies

In 1972 James S. Holmes published *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,* a paper in which he points out how the subject of translation required the development of a discipline of its own. For centuries, translation was treated as a secondary discipline. Researchers from areas adjacent to that of translation, such as "linguistics, linguistic philosophy, and literary studies", but also from more remote ones, such as "information theory, logic and mathematics", had tried to apply their models to translation in an attempt to identify it as a branch of an already existing field of study (Holmes, 1972). However, especially after Second World War, a new group of researchers began sharing "a marked and constant increase in interest" for translation, favouring its development as an independent discipline (Holmes, 1972). With this paper, Holmes was the first scholar to suggest an organic and comprehensive map of the discipline. Firstly, he ends the discussion around the name, excluding the already suggested *translation theory*, or *translation science*, and proposing *Translation Studies* (henceforth TS), to affiliate the discipline to the arts and humanities. Holmes defines TS as an empirical discipline aiming at both describing "the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience" and establishing "general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted" (Holmes, 1972). Consequently, TS can be descriptive (DTS), if dealing with the first objective, or theoretical (ThTS), if concerning the second. Holmes then proceeds to further subdivide the two branches (figure 1) to illustrate the various research fields they can specialise in. As shown in figure 1, Holmes defines ThTS and DTS as "pure" because they are fields of "pure" research. The absolute novelty of Holmes' programme is the introduction of

[3]See Munday, 2016: 74-77 for more details on Koller's types of equivalence.

"applied" TS, a branch which is, in Bacon's words, "of use" rather than "of light" and investigates the application of TS (Holmes, 1972). This branch is concerned with: *translator training*, in which translation is finally freed from being simply a tool for foreign-language learning and becomes a subject taught in schools or courses that form professional translators; *translation aids*, which has to do with aids that can be used in translator training and by practising translators; *translation policy*, which deals with "defining the place and role of translators, translating, and translations in society at large" (Holmes, 1972); and finally *translation criticism,* the evaluation and interpretation of translations. Holmes clarifies that the three branches (descriptive, theoretical and applied TS) are in a dialectical relation to one another, each of them supplying materials for the other two.

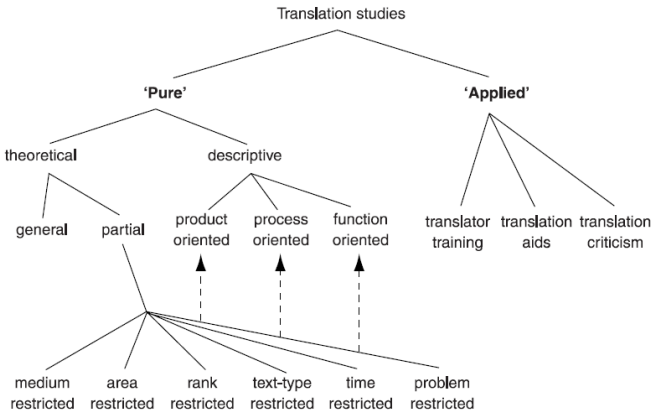

Figure 1. Map of Translation Studies (Toury 1995: 10)

1.2.5. Toury and Descriptive Translation Studies

Holmes concludes his paper (1972) with the statement "Let the meta-discussion begin", and indeed research on translation studies has certainly developed ever since, further exploring previous discourses and introducing new ones. The 1970s saw the rise of the descriptive approach to TS, following the development of Even-Zohar's polysystem theory to explain the complexity of culture and how literature and translation are correlated to other sociocultural factors (Chang, 2010). Taking inspiration from Russian Formalism, this theory views constituents of culture (language, literature, technology, etc) as systems of elements inter-related. These systems "intersect with each other and partly overlap" but function as "one structured whole", which Even-Zohar calls polysystem

(Even-Zohar, 1990, as cited in Chang, 2010). Even-Zohar argues that the polysystem's structure is not static, as the systems interact with one another differently: according to the historical moment, some may occupy a more central position compared to others (Munday, 2016:171). The researcher explains how translated literature can be considered a system of the TL culture and proceeds to explore the role and position it can have in the literary polysystem[4]. With this theory, translation started to be observed in the literary and cultural systems in which it operates. Moreover, the theory supported the relativity of equivalence according to the social, historical and cultural context of the text (Munday, 2016:173-174).

In concordance with the polysystem theory, Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) are based on the premise that "translations are facts of target cultures" (Toury, 1995:29): they "occupy a position in the social and literary systems of the target culture" (Munday, 2016:175). Consequently, Toury's approach to translation is target-oriented, placing emphasis on the cultural context of the translation rather than linguistic items of the ST. Toury's translation studies are "descriptive" in the sense that they are designed to describe what translation "proves to be *in reality"* (Toury, 1995:32). In so doing, Toury aims at establishing a link between regularities found in translations and features of the TL sociocultural context in order to formulate theoretical laws and predict "what translation may be under a given set of circumstances" (Rosa, 2010: 98). Toury provides DTS with a three-stage methodology: identify and describe texts that are considered translations in the target culture; undertake a textual analysis of the ST and TT by mapping TT segments onto ST segments, thus identifying possible translation shifts; analyse translation shifts, identify regularities and formulate generalisations about norms of translational equivalence, which Toury, in disagreement with the traditional view, sees as a historical concept varying according to the target context's characteristics (Rosa, 2010:97; Munday, 2016).

Through the repetition of this methodology with other text pairs, Toury aims at creating a corpus of categorised translations with their corresponding norms and ultimately propose a series of general laws of translational behaviour (Brownlie, 2009:78). The norms Toury refers to are subjected to sociocultural constraints typical of

[4] For a more detailed descriprion of the polystsem theory cfr Even-Zohar, I. (1990). Polysystem Studies [=Poetics Today 11: 1]. Durham: Duke University. For its reception, see Chang, N. F. (2010). Polysystem theory and translation (257 – 263) in Handbook of Translation Studies

a certain society, culture and time. They are defined as "the translation of general values or ideas shared by a community […] into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations" (Toury, 1995:54–5). Translators can either be fully aware they are writing under the influence of these norms, or they can comply with them unconsciously (Morini, 2007: 35-6; Munday, 2016: 177). DTS has been criticized for several reasons, including: its semi-scientific approach in the establishment of laws applicable to translation in general and the adequacy of such an approach for a non-scientific field such as translation (Hermans, 1999); for underestimating the influence power relations and ideologies have on translation, as well as the role translation might play in enforcing them (Lefevere, 1992a); for being strictly target-oriented and ignoring relevant aspects related to source texts and cultures (Pym, 1998; Hermans 1995); for the difficulties in maintaining an objective perspective and the lack of self-criticism in not recognising that researchers are influenced both by personal and society-induced conceptions (Hermans, 1999; Chesterman and Arrojo 2000).

1.2.6. The "cultural turn" in Translation Studies

In the 1990s, translation experienced a 'cultural turn', carrying on Toury's target oriented approach while exploring other aspects that, according to some scholars, made his model deficient. The expression "cultural turn" was first introduced by Snell-Hornby (1990) and strongly promoted by Lefevere & Bassnett (1990), who describe it as the abandonment of the 'scientistic' linguistic approach and the move from translation as a simple written text to translation as reflecting and shaping culture and politics (Snell-Hornby, 2006:50). Compared to Toury's, the term culture here bears a more concrete meaning and addresses the relations translation establishes with colonialism, gender studies, power relations and ideologies (Snell-Hornby, 2006: 50). The new field of research[5] arising from the analysis of translation in relation to colonialism investigates how translation of Third World literature into the European languages of colonizers often falsified the image of colonised people in the Western world, so as to meet colonizers' interest in perpetrating relations of power, prejudice and domination (Snell-Hornby, 2006:94). Research based on the intersection between gender studies and translation pertains to the influence of the patriarchal hegemony on translation practice and how the male gaze has permeated

[5] Significant contributions on the subject came from Niranjana (1992), Simon (1996) and Spivak (1993/2012).

translation (Snell-Hornby, 2006:100).[6] Translation studies' interest in ideology is linked to the realisation that, when translating, we instinctively take a position (Penrod, 1993, cited in Fawcett and Munday, 2009). With regard to ideology and power relations, TS research focuses on manipulations of the ST that might be dictated by the translator's conscious ideology or external pressures placed on him/her by commissioners, editors or institutional/governmental circles[7] (Munday, 2016:214).

1.2.7. Ethics of translation

In the field of translation, ethics refers to moral rules or principles of behaviour establishing what is right and wrong when translating[8]. For centuries, translation ethics was mainly associated with the idea of fidelity towards the original and its author, expressed by the concept of 'translator invisibility' (Wyke, 2010). There are many contributions, some of which we have already discussed in Chapter 1 (cfr. Dolet, 1540; Dryden, 1697 in Osimo, 2002), stating that a good translator is someone who that has a good knowledge of both source and target languages and cultures, which enables him/her to understand the sense of the ST and generate a TT as faithful as possible to the original, with nothing added or subtracted (Wyke, 2010). This thinking remained roughly unchanged until the last decades of the 20th century, when the traditional paradigm was challenged by new theories, such as Vermeer's *skopos* theory in the 1970s, suggesting that translators should primarily focus on the translation's purpose in the TL culture (Morini, 2007:88), or Derrida's deconstruction theory, claiming that the meaning of a text does not reside in the text itself, but in the interpretations the text is given. From this reasoning there stems the belief that translation ethics, as well as a text's meaning, are relative elements. But this does not imply that anything is permitted, but rather that translators must be even more responsible in sorting through difficult decisions and being ready to defend and justify them (Wyke, 2010). Consequently, in recent years translation ethics has begun to be concerned with topics such as the agency and subjectivity of translators, together with the role they play in cultural relations (Wyke, 2010).

[6] Relevant contribution on the subject came from Simon (1996), von Flotow (1997); Messner and Wolf (2001); Santaemilia (2005)

[7] To further explore this theme, see von Flotow (2000), Gentzler and Tymoczko (2002), Calzada Pérez (2003) and Cunico and Munday (2007).

[8] Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Ethics. https://www.ldoceonline.com/. Accessed: October 30, 2020.

In this respect, Venuti (1995; 1998) brought interesting contributions to the topic of translator's invisibility, which he discusses in terms of *foreignization* and *domestication*[9], two terms he coined to identify two opposing translation methods. Schleiermacher (see section 1) had already discussed these two approaches in general terms, but Venuti further analysed them in their social and cultural effects (Paloposki, 2011). Domestication is defined by Venuti as the "ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values", while foreignization as the "ethnodeviant pressure on those [target-language culture] values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad" (Venuti, 1995:20 in Yang, 2010). A domesticated translation is typically characterised by a transparent and fluent style that minimises the strangeness of the foreign text, while a foreignized translation purposely maintains it (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997:59 in Yang, 2010). If the famous literal vs free debate on translation concerns the linguistic aspect of translation, the domesticating vs foreignizing one can be regarded as its corresponding from a cultural and political point of view, originating after the cultural turn translation studies experienced (Wang, 2002: 24 in Yang, 2010).

1.2.8. Translation and technology

Translation studies and practice have been heavily impacted by the emergence of new technologies. As Snell-Hornby (2006) states, "the rapid developments in information technology that took place during the 1990s (and are still continuing today) […] have radically changed the daily life of the translator." The effects of such developments can be most clearly seen in the growth of audiovisual translation, which is defined by Gottlieb (1994, as cited in Munday, 2016) as a form of diagonal translation, involving the transformation of a SL speech into a TL written text, and "intrasemiotic" translation, with the passage from verbal signs to non-verbal sign systems. Gambier (2003) was the first to systematically identify the various types of audiovisual translation.[10] Advances in technology have also led to the development of computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and machine translation (MT) tools. While the latter generate automatic translations,

[9]For a general overview on the subject see Munday, J. (2016). Introducing translation studies: Theories and applications. Routledge. (223-29) or Paloposki, O. (2011). Domestication and foreignization. Handbook of translation studies, 2, 40-42.

[10] For an extensive description of the types of audiovisual translation see Gambier, Y. (2003). Screen translation [Special issue]. The Translator, 9(2).

constituting a draft to be later edited by a human translator, the former consist of softwares with functions simplifying the translation process for a human translator (Munday, 2016:289).

1.2.9. Future perspectives

With the turn of the millennium, research has mainly focused on the social nature of translation and the role and status of translators (Munday, 2016:236). Translation sociology had already been introduced by Holmes (1988) and was later investigated by various scholars (Chesterman, 2006, 2007; Heilbron, 1999; Heilbron and Sapiro, 2007; Wolf, 1999; Wolf and Fukari, 2007), inspired by the work of sociologists, most notably Bourdieu (1977, 1991). As Snell-Hornby (2006:172) claims, translation sociology could be viewed as a valid alternative to the most predominantly linguistic approach. Chesterman (2006) values the emphasis the approach lays on translation practice, more specifically on the various agents taking part in the translation process, including first and foremost translators with their responsibilities, role and status they have in society (Munday, 2016:238; Snell-Hornby, 2006:172). As little research has been conducted on these themes, translation sociology represents a fertile ground for future studies (Snell-Hornby, 2006:172). Moreover, given our increasingly globalised world, it is a field surely requiring constant exploration.

2. Retranslation

This chapter will provide an overview on the phenomenon of retranslation. It will look at the first theoretical assumptions on retranslation, as well as discuss recent studies published in the first decades of the 21st century and focused on finding the main reasons behind the phenomenon and the reciprocal influences between retranslation and the TL culture.

2.1. Early theoretical assumptions on retranslation

The first theoretical discourse on retranslation dates back to 1990, when the French translation journal *Palimpsestes* published its 4th issue specifically dedicated to retranslation. The issue featured six contributions, from Bensimon (1990), Berman (1990), Benhamou (1990), Gresset (1990), Topia (1990) and Rodriguez (1990). In the introduction, Bensimon establishes that the objectives of this fourth issue are "to identify the complex problem of retranslation, to explore its vast territory and establish a certain number of guidelines" (Bensimon,1990,online). Berman and Topia's articles are particularly interesting as they discuss important themes that remain central these days: how first and subsequent translations differ from one another and the "ageing" of translations. Before proceeding any further into exploring the phenomenon of retranslation, it must be specified that research conducted on the subject has mainly focused on literary material (Gürçağlar, 2009). To these days, sacred texts, canonical literary works and dramatic texts remain the most frequently retranslated works (Brownlie, 2006; Aaltonen, 2003 in Gürçağlar, 2009). However, interesting studies have also been conducted on non-literary retranslation, including scientific texts (Jianzhong 2003; Brisset 2004) and texts produced in the context of EU institutions (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003).

2.1.1. Berman's Retranslation hypothesis

Berman's article (1990), *La retraduction comme espace de la traduction*, has the merit of presenting the very first theoretical formulation on retranslation, later referred as "retranslation hypothesis" (henceforth RH) (Koskinen and Paloposki 2003; Brownlie 2006). The article begins by explaining word *espace* used in the title, which stands for *espace d'accomplissement* (space of fulfilment), referring to the fact that it is only through

retranslation that the field of translation, essentially unfulfilled, finds its accomplishment. In accordance with Topia (1990), Berman claims that retranslation is the natural consequence of translations' "ageing". While the originals remain *éternellement jeunes* (eternally young), translations *vieillissent* (age). As they correspond to a "[…] given state of language, literature and culture, it happens, often quickly, that they are no longer suitable for the next state" (Berman, 1990, online). Moreover, since no translation can claim to be 'the' translation, the necessity for retranslation is inherent to the very act of translating. Therefore, Berman attributes *caducité et inachèvement* (Berman, 1990, online) (obsolescence and incompleteness) to translation. He also introduces the concept of "great translations" (*grandes traductions*), with which he identifies those translations that, escaping the general process of ageing, "last as long as the originals and sometimes are remembered even more" (Berman, 1990, online). Among the examples, he mentions Saint Jerome's Vulgata and Luther's translation of the Bible, both discussed in chapter 1. He lists several features great translations have in common, including the facts that they are perceived as an "event" by the target culture, they set a precedence for contemporary or subsequent translation activity and they are all retranslations. To justify his last statement, Berman cites Goethe who in his *West-Eastern Divan* (1819) claimed that every time a culture embarks on the activity of translation, it starts with word-for-word translations that give an approximate idea of the original, and only later embraces a method that is more careful with rendering the true nature of the ST. According to Berman, first translations cannot obviously be "great": it is only through experience and repetition that a first blind and hesitant translation finds its fulfilment. He believes that every translation is essentially defective, but first translations are particularly affected by failure and hence the necessity for retranslation to at least reduce the structural *défaillance (*failure*)*. When a great translation emerges from the multitude of new ones, it reduces for a period the need for retranslation. Berman clarifies that great translations are still affected by failure, but this is balanced by the "richness in language and the relationship to the language of the original", by "textual richness and richness in meaning" (Berman, 1990). Therefore, great translations are no longer filtered through the discourse of "loss", but rather through that of "abundance". Berman holds that these translations can only result from *kairos*, which in Greek stands for "the right moment". In Berman's opinion, *kairos* is the combination of a *grand traducteur* (great translator) and a time in history when, for

a culture, "the translation of a work becomes vital for its essence and history" (Berman, 1990, online). A translator becomes great when dominated by what Berman calls a *pulsion traduisante* (translating impulse), whose features he does not specify at length. From Berman's analysis, retranslation represents a way of reconnecting with an original work that has been overshadowed by its first translations, which he calls "introductions" as opposed to the thoroughness of great translations, so that the meaning of the original work is, if not totally, at least partially restored.

2.2. Critism of RH

After Berman's RH and until the beginning of the 21st century, there was little development both in theoretical studies and empirical research on retranslation (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010). In 1994, Yves Gambier only went as far as suggesting a series of elements that, if adequately explored, could have helped understanding the retranslation phenomenon[11]. In evaluating RH, Gambier (1994) agrees with Berman, claiming that to meet editorial and cultural requirements, first translations diverge from the originals, featuring cuts and changes in favour of higher readability. However, when discussing retranslation as a "return" to the original text, he warns that this thinking is partly based on an illusion of "immanent meaning" contained in the original text. In this scenario, subsequent translators would have the task of reducing the blindness of first translators and, through their retranslations, restore the meaning of the source text. This leads to a historically marked model of retranslation: new translations of the same text can only emerge after a period of assimilation revealing the unacceptability and incorrectness of a previous translation (Gambier, 1994). Here history is synonym of "progress", leading to the creation of a better translation, which is more source-oriented and reflective of the singularity of the original (Gürçağlar, 2009). This notion of history as progress has been examined by other scholars, who questioned its accuracy (Brisset, 2004; Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003, 2004; Susam-Sarajeva, 2003). Gambier (1994) wishes for future research to move beyond the sole relation between retranslations and their source texts and rather to explore the social status of retranslation, together with how a society's literary tradition, economy and ideology influence its nature and features.

[11] The list of questions concerning retranslation posed by Gambier can be found in Gambier (1994). La retraduction, retour et détour. Meta, 39(3), 413-17.

Berman's theory of domesticating first translations and progressively more foreignizing retranslations has collected evidence both in concordance and opposition (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010; Gürçağlar, 2009). Koskinen and Paloposki conducted a study (2004) on first and subsequent Finnish translations of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* precisely to assess the accuracy of RH. The researchers found that, in contrast with RH, the first translation (1859) of *The Vicar of Wakefield* was more foreignizing than the second one (1905). Indeed, the first was the one closer the ST for syntax, structure and lexicon. The second, instead, favoured more fluent and idiomatic expressions. In some cases, entire passages containing unfamiliar concepts or words not existent in Finnish were omitted in the second translation, while the first resorted to the use of borrowings. With *Alice's adventures*, though the three translations into Finnish published in the 19th century complied with the RH model (Oittinen, 1997), a new translation published in 2000 featured more traditionally recognised domesticating strategies than the previous one (1995) (e.g. the name Alice was Finnisized as Liisa). In proving that the RH logic cannot be applied to every case of first and subsequent translations, the two researchers suggested a so-called "alternative new hypothesis", stating that domestication "may be a feature of a first phase in literature, not of first translations as such" (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2004: 31)[12]. They also propose that the domesticating or foreignizing nature of retranslations may have little to do with the progress inherent in history or the greater abilities of subsequent translator, but is instead subjected to a time in history when a certain type of audience demands domesticating translations instead of foreignizing ones and vice versa (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010).

2.3. Modern views: retranslations or revisions?

The first encyclopaedic definitions of retranslation can be found in the 2009 *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies* (henceforth RETS) and 2010 *Handbook of Translation Studies* (henceforth HTS). They both denote retranslation as the act of translating a work that has previously been translated into the same language, or the result of such an act. Both the RETS and the HTS clarify that the term retranslation may also be used to indicate an indirect, intermediate or relayed translation, that is "a text that is

[12] To further explore this concept, see Paloposki, O., & Koskinen, K. (2004). A thousand and one translations: Revisiting retranslation. Benjamins Translation Library, 50, 27 -38.

translated through a mediating source language", for instance a text in Arabic translated into Portuguese via English. However, both referenced books decide not to deal with this meaning of retranslation. As Koskinen and Paloposki (2010a:294) highlight in the HTS, several issues arise when trying to categorise retranslation, relating to the changing over time of the source text, the element of different markets sharing the same language (e.g. the Canadian and French market), and the difficulty in drawing boundaries between retranslations and adaptations or revisions. The field of revision in relation to retranslation, in turn, has generally attracted few researchers (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010b). Vanderschelden (2000) defined revision as "the first step towards retranslation", involving "making changes to an existing TT whilst retaining the major part […]". Koskinen and Paloposki's case study (2010b) on "the fine line between retranslating and revising" showed that such a definition could be imprecise, as "most revised works have not been retranslated, and retranslation does not often presuppose revising". In their study, the two researchers point out that changes in revision may vary from "simple copy-editing" to extensive rewriting. It is precisely in this last case that drawing an exact line between the two types of text is particularly difficult (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010b). No matter how much researchers desire to formulate a neat theoretical categorization, when it comes to revision and retranslation such categorizations "do not arise out of reality" (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010b: 47). Therefore, Koskinen and Paloposki only went as far as defining revision as a process often involving few orthographic improvements and "minor linguistic amendments to keep up with the standardization of a language without changing the idiosyncratic expressions of the first translator". (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2010b:47).

2.3.1. Reasons for retranslation

Koskinen and Paloposki (2004) hold that RH poses at least two questions to reflect on: the nature of first translations and retranslations, discussed in section 2.2, and the reasons behind retranslation. RH identifies the "ageing" of previous versions as the main reason for retranslation. Topia (1990) also discusses the issue of translation ageing, as opposed to the eternal, unique and *définitive* original texts. He claims that this difference is explained by the fact that while the original text continues to "move" according to the change in perspectives induced by historical evolution, "a translation remains frozen in a

time locked once and for all" (Topia, 1990:online): "While the work establishes multiple connections with the network into which it is integrated, translation remains frozen in a relationship of dependence with respect to the original work of which it is only a version." (Topia, 1990, online). Given the fact that a translation is only one version of the original and the result of the time in which it was written, retranslation appears to be necessary with the passing of time. Other scholars (Benjamin, 1971; Li and Jun, 1997; Rodriguez, 1990) share this view.

Venuti (2004) does not argue against the historicity of a translation, but he brings a different perspective to the discourse. Due to their link with the historical moment they were written in, translations inevitably "age", but this does not necessarily mean a negative connotation of the term. A new translation is published not because previous ones are incorrect and need to be substituted, but rather on the grounds that they do not reflect the changing in cultural values, norms of language or standards of accuracy of a certain historical time (Venuti, 2004:34-5). Although Venuti does not support the notion of history as progress, his view of retranslation partly overlaps with Topia's idea of translations as frozen in time. The 1937 Italian translation of Margaret Mitchell's novel *Gone with the Wind* (1936) is an excellent case to analyse in this respect. This translation by Ada Salvatore and Enrico Piceni was the first and sole to be published (with minor changes here and there) up to 2020, when a new one was commissioned by editor Neri Pozza to Annamaria Biavasco and Valentina Guani. In the note to their translation (2020), Biavasco and Guani explain at length their translating approach. They hold that the previous translators did a remarkable job in a very short time and without the additional tools (computer and the internet) available today. However, they also claim that in the third millennium their translation is almost unreadable, as it is strongly permeated by the fascist ideology of the time. Consequently, Biavasco and Guani adopted a series of fundamentally different translation choices. As opposed to the 1937 version, they translated the original text in its integrity and left the characters' and institutions' names untranslated. But the most important and radical change they brought to their translation concerns how they dealt with racism towards black people in the book, on the basis that the ways we talk about race today have radically changed since the 1930s. Let us take as an example the Italian word *negro*, which today is as offensive and unpronounceable as its English equivalent *nigger*. In Margaret Mitchell's book, there are 104 occurrences of

the word *nigger*. In the 1937 translation, the occurrences of the corresponding Italian word *negro* amount to 469. Such a high frequency makes the use of this term seem ordinary. The large difference in the number of occurrences between the original and the 1937 translation is explained by the fact that Ada Salvatore and Enrico Piceni, in compliance with the trend of their historical times, used the word *negro* for every term Mitchell uses in her book to address black people, even for the "milder" *darkies* and *blacks*. To convey an even more negative connotation of the term *nigger* in comparison to the others, the two translators used expressions such as *negraccio* or *lurido negro*. It would be unthinkable to reproduce such a language today, and indeed in the 2020 translation the occurrences of the word *negro* are less than 50. The same logic was applied for the translation of the way black people speak in the novel. If in the original what was mainly reproduced is the accent and sound of words, in the 1937 translation an actual, almost grotesque language was created. Biavasco and Guani distanced themselves from this practice and decided to reflect these characteristics of black characters' language by making them speak with a less refined Italian, based on the fact that it was unlikely they had received a high education.

In an article published in 2004 Collombat notices that in an initial phase, which roughly corresponds to the last decade of the 20th century, research had identified linguistic factors (e.g. the "ageing" of language and style) as the main reason for retranslation. However, few contributions began to suggest other reasons behind it. Chantre (1997 in Collombat, 2004) mentions a shift in "translators' attitude" as an additional reason for retranslation: "their philosophy and ethics of practice are constantly changing". Benhamou (1990) stresses the role ideologies of a specific historical period play in the interpretation of a text. She affirms that the key to avoid the ageing of a translation is to make it as less interpretative as possible: by respecting the original text's ambiguity, the longevity of a translation is ensured, as the text is left open to the readers' most preferred interpretations. According to Collombat (2004:8), with the turn of the century there began "the age of retranslation", favoured both by the consolidation of a plurality of new translation approaches (see chapter 1) moving beyond the sole concept of fidelity and the willingness of freeing translation from the influences of previous

ideologies[13]. Twenty-first century research started to challenge the accuracy of RH with a number of case studies proving that Berman's hypothesis was defective, as it neglected to mention other factors significantly contributing to the appearance of new translations (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2004). Collombat (2004) illustrates four cases in which different factors convince translators there is a need for retranslation. The discovery of previously unknown sources connected to the authors may open the text to other interpretations, which can only be expressed through a new translation. Moreover, the more an author's criticism is enriched through the years, the more translators will be able to use new insights for their retranslations. Collombat (2004) notices that dominant currents in literary criticism may influence the choice of a certain translation approach. For example, she mentions the habit of interpreting a work according to the author's biography. Hence, the desire for retranslation may emerge as a response to similar practices that subject the interpretations of a text's meaning to a given external factor. Another reason Collombat (2004) attributes to retranslation is what she calls "reader's accessibility". As De Castillo (1997 in Collombat, 2004) claims, translators are interpreters: they translate the words they feel, but also the ones *readers can* feel (italics added). To better understand what Collombat has in mind, let us consider the example she makes of Aline Schulman's translation of *Don Quixote*, which is, in the author's words, as close as possible to the readers' sensitivity of her time, while remaining faithful to the spirit of the original text (Schulman, 1997). In short, she maintains the vocabulary of the original text but modernises the syntax to facilitate the reader. In so doing, she avoids the risk of making another academic translation, accessible only to the highly educated.

In 2004, Venuti published an article in which he examines the phenomenon of retranslation in its relation to intertextuality, history and translator's agency. Venuti (2004) believes that retranslation originates from the will of reinterpreting canonical texts holding a significant cultural authority in a society, according to the different values of a diverse domestic readership. These new interpretations are usually justified by claims of "greater adequacy, completeness, or accuracy" (Venuti, 2004:26), but Venuti warns that

[13]Collombat (2004: 8) notices that it cannot be a coincidence that retranslation research and practice has substantially increased in the last decade of the 20th century, which also corresponds with the end of a long period dominated by strong ideologies, starting with the First World War (1917) and ending with the fall of the Soviet regime (1991).

such categories are void per se. They carry a meaning only when related to another category, referred to as "competing interpretation", which constitutes an implicit basis of comparison establishing the insufficiency of a previous version and serving as a standard of judgment (Venuti, 2004). Let us consider social institutions (e.g. religious institutions), where translation contributes to the identity formation of the agents who function within. In this context, retranslation can have the task of maintaining the authority of a social institution by reinforcing the traditional interpretation of a canonical text, or it may change the status of an institution by putting forward a new interpretation.

Retranslation, therefore, is clearly subject to the changes in a society's trends of thought. In this sense, it may help in spreading an emerging ideology by inscribing a new interpretation of a text showing values in line with the said ideology (e.g. retranslations of Grazia Deledda's novels from a feminist perspective). Venuti (2004) also filters retranslation through the concept of translators' agency. There is always a certain intention behind a translator's work, influenced by language use, literary canons, translation traditions and the commissioning institution (Venuti, 2004:28). These factors contribute to the more or less conscious decisions translators make, on which the (sometimes unpredictable) appreciation or refusal from certain types of audience depend. When it comes to retranslation, however, the translator's intentionality is conscious and inherent in the very nature of retranslation itself as a practice designed to make a clear difference compared to previous version(s) (Venuti, 2004:29). Thus, apart from the commercial reasons for retranslations dictated by commissioning institutions (see the next section), retranslations may simply be motivated by "the retranslator's personal appreciation or understanding of the foreign text" (Venuti, 2004:30).

2.3.2. Retranslation in the digital age of reproduction

In 2003 Koskinen and Paloposki published an article discussing retranslation in the age of digital reproduction. Their objective was to understand how the status of retranslation in the publishing industry has shifted in the digital age of new technologies. It has been noted that, today, the financial interests of the publishing industry seem to increasingly dictate book publishing decisions at the expense of a loss in cultural values (Lehtonen, 2001 in Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003). One might wonder what the future holds for retranslation when reprinting is often cheaper than commissioning a new translation, and

digitalization makes reprinting an existing text even cheaper and faster (Lehtonen, 2001:26). Koskinen and Paloposki (2003) analyse the titles of fiction translated into Finnish and published in the year 2000. Though such an analysis cannot give universal answers to an ongoing, diachronic phenomenon like the one considered, it still helps to give a view of the forces at work. The data showed that all retranslations were of classics, but classics were also reprinted in earlier translations (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003:28). The number of reprints was far above that of retranslations, and the smaller and newer the publishing house, the less likely it was to use reprints and vice versa (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003:30), which seems to fall in line with the goal of maximum financial profit typical of larger publishing houses. But once again, the study showed that, in this field, it is impossible to find a regular and predictable pattern: the choice of reprinting was not merely financial (for instance, classics reprinted in paperback series or in earlier translations to 'pay homage to the past') and big publishers also commission new translations (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003:31). As a possible explanation, the two researchers mention the higher attention new translations receive from the media, attention that is generally positive, with praise for the supposed improvements the new version brings (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003:32). When considering retranslation and reprinting from the perspective of the publishing industry, one must also consider the element of copyrighting. Commissioning a new translation of canonical texts is usually cheaper than publishing a copyrighted translation, which requires the purchase of translation rights (Venuti, 2004:30). This might represent an additional reason for retranslation.

The picture we obtain from this overview on retranslation reveals that, even though it has existed for centuries, retranslation has been the object of systematic study only in recent years. Just as happened with translation, retranslation has often been studied for the purpose of translational research and not as a phenomenon in its own right. (Susam-Saraeja, 2006). Moreover, research and publications on the subject mainly consist of single case studies, while very few contributions (most notably Brownlie, 2006) address retranslation in theoretical terms (Koskinen and Paloposki, 2003). As for the reasons, it is hard to find a precise model to explain scientifically the reasons why retranslation occurs. As Collombat (2004) affirms, the reasons behind retranslation are various and

contradictory, but all justifiable. The purpose of retranslation and the way its study should be undertaken is effectively summarized in the conclusion of Venuti's article (2004):

> To study retranslations is to realize that translating can't be viewed as a simple act of communication because it creates values in social formations at specific historical moments, and these values redefine the foreign text and culture from moment to moment. To retranslate is to confront anew…the translator's ethical responsibility to prevent the translating language and culture from effacing the foreignness of the foreign text. The lesson of retranslation is that this responsibility can be met more effectively by allowing the retranslator's situation…to open up new paths of invention so as to inscribe a competing interpretation. (Venuti, 2004:36)

3. *Little Women*: a literary classic

This third chapter is dedicated to our case study, the novel *Little Women*. It will give detailed information about the characteristics of the novel, its status of a literary classic and its relation to children's literature. It will also discuss the life of the author and show how it constituted the greatest inspiration for the novel. Finally, it will give a brief overview of the Italian translation history of the book and explain the reasons behind the choice of the three translations to compare.

3.1. What is a classic?

Koskinen and Paloposki (2010) explain how, in order to be retranslated or reprinted, a "work typically needs to have acquired the status of classic". Collombat (2004:3) thinks that any translation of a classic is destined to be eventually substituted by a new one. It appears that retranslation in literature is a phenomenon concerning the so-called "classics". But what does the word "classic" indicate in literature?

The modern use of the term "classic" derives from Latin culture. In his *Noctes Atticae* (159 A.C.) Aulo Gellio, a writer from the 2nd century A.C., explains that the term *classicus* designated Roman citizens belonging to the highest *classis* (social class), as opposed to the *proletarius* (Citroni, 2007). Gellio also informs us that Frontone was the first to apply these two terms to literature with a metaphorical sense: the *scriptor classicus* was a high-level writer, whose works were believed to have aesthetic and literary value, and constituted the model to imitate; the *scriptor proletarius*, on the contrary, was a popular, successful writer appealing to the "mass", but whose works were considered of a lower level (Illuminati, 2017).

Over time, this idea of excellence has remained a constant for the notion of "classic", which is used to refer to a written work of high quality that does not wear off through time. A-temporality is another characteristic attributed to classics. According to Kermode (1975 in Illuminati, 2017), a-temporality is linked to the fact that a classic does not have a fixed interpretation; it can be read in multiple ways throughout time because, as Kermode (1975) claims, it is designed to be "capable of saying more than its author meant" (1975:80). The text of classics is characterised by ambiguities and indeterminacies of meaning which allow readers of different historical times to interpret

the text as they please (Kermode, 1975). In this light, classics represent the common ground between past and present.

In the introduction to his book *Perché leggere i classici?* (Why reading classics?) (1991), Italian writer Italo Calvino, in accordance with Kermode, identifies classics as "books that never cease to say what they have to say" (Calvino 1991:13). They can communicate on various levels: they are formative if read when young, because they help "shape future experiences by providing models, benchmarks, classification schemes or scales of values" (1991:12), but, if read when mature, classics can speak to readers with more details and meanings than before. Therefore, when it comes to classics, using the verb read or re-read makes no difference because every re-reading of a classic is a "reading of discovery" like the first one (1991:13), because we readers change over time, as do the classics, as a consequence of historically mutated perspectives. Calvino (1991) addresses the educational function most typically associated to classics. It is true that for many the first encounter with classics happens at school, but he warns that this is the only context in which reading a classic is a "duty". In all other cases, classics should be read only out of love, so that a personal bond is created between the reader and the books, which ultimately help us understand "who we are and where we have arrived" (1991:19).

3.1.1. Little Women: a children's literary classic or a classic *tout court*?

With regard to *Little Women*, the pedagogical function discussed by Calvino (1991) becomes particularly relevant because the book is not simply considered a classic, but a *children's* literary classic and, as we will also discuss in section 3.2.2.1, educating has always been one of the main, if not the primary, purpose of children's literature, at least until the end of the 19th century (Sarland, 1999:40 in Hunt, 1999). From the 20th century onwards, the educational function of children's literature has not been completely ignored, but attempts have been made at finding a balance between education and entertainment, knowing that "while the reader is being entertained, he can also be warned, persuaded, or educated" (Seuling, 2005:92). *Little Women* was originally conceived by its author as a children book but when it came out it quickly became popular not only with boys and girls, but also with men and women (Clark, 2014:11). Therefore, the book may be referred to as a children's literary classic on paper, but one can argue that in practice it has also earned the classification of a classic *tout court* (Sacchini, 2018). There

is no doubt that the book greatly appeals to children. However, as we will see in detail in Chapter 4, the writing style and stratification of characters' language, behaviour and attitude enables *Little Women* to successfully speak to a more mature public as well. The book perfectly fits Viala's definition of a classic as a written work with formal and semantic qualities allowing it to address a multitude of different readers (Viala, 1992 in Illuminati, 2017).

3.1.2. Children's literary classics

There is an inner contradiction in the notion of "children's literary classic" and it lies in the fact that this status is granted according to adults' criteria. In this light, Peter Hunt (2011) highlights that the quality of a book is not something that can be objectively evaluated; it relies on who is reading, when and why and, since it is adults who confer the status of "classic", it is only reasonable to wonder if "a "children's classic" has nothing to do with real children today" (2011:45). Any definition of a children's classic derives from an adult's judgement which, like any other judgment, is obviously subjective and influenced by external factors (when, where and why the book is read). This is especially true when children's classics are defined in qualitative terms, according to aesthetic and literary values. In this light, Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer's (2003) defines children's classics as those texts that constitute a model in terms of genre, themes and style and therefore inspire and influence subsequent books (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2003 in Illuminati, 2017).

An alternative approach to define children's classics in terms of readers' reception has also been proposed and it may be more reflective of children's preferences rather than adults'. Indeed, as English author Victor Watson (1991) affirms, even though it is adults who have the final say in establishing the status of classic, it is also true that it is the "commitment of children" that make it possible in the first place. A reception-based perspective takes into consideration the popularity of a book and the role publishing firms and media play in gaining, maintaining or enhancing it. In 1991 Watson wrote that a children's classic is a book "whose popularity has survived the age in which it was written". It always remains contemporary because it is "constantly re-made and improvised upon" thanks to its capacity of offering "new meanings and fresh emphases while retaining its original integrity" (Watson, 1991). In this way, classics become

significant not only for their readers, but for a culture as a whole: they are "part of our national vocabulary – metaphors, perhaps – reverberating the wider cultural language which we all share" (Watson, 1991). To better explain this concept, he takes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as an example and argues that, whether or not they have read the books, "all children who have access to the full cultural possibilities of the varieties of language in our country" will be familiar with images such as the "Mad Hatter's tea-party, the Queen of Hearts and Tweedledum and Tweedledee".

The capacity of classics for maintaining their popularity over time is linked to various factors: the primary concerns the intrinsic qualities of the text, but an equally important role, in the case of children's literary classics in particular, is played by publishing firms and the media. Indeed, the way the books are advertised and continually re-made in visual (film, cartoons, television series, etc) or written adaptations and retranslations helps in consolidating their canonicity (Cabaret, 2014 in Illuminati, 2017). Publishing firms invest in classics because they are often cheaper to produce, as the copyright has usually run out, and they are frequently recommended by schoolteachers or librarians (Illuminati, 2017:45). Moreover, investing in children's classics appears to be safe because backed up not only by the above-said visual adaptations, but also by intensive marketing campaigns (Illuminati, 2017:45) which, when it comes to children, can be particularly successful. According to O'Sullivan (2005), the criteria of reception for defining classics is especially significant in the case of children's literary classics because there exists a "body of allegedly international classic children's books, of "popular" classics, present in actual fact (on the market and in public awareness), which have been handed down over a long period" that do not necessarily meet the criteria of aesthetic and literary excellence.

3.2. *Little Women*

Besides a personal appreciation of the novel, *Little Women* represents an interesting case to study for a number of reasons. One need only think that 150 years has passed since its publication, but the novel still inspires numerous stage, television, film and literary adaptations[14]. The same can be said of its Italian translations. The Italian Online Public

[14]The following list is to give an idea of the number of English-language adaptions produced.
Stage adaptations: 1912, 1919, 2009, 2011, 2014, 2018.
Film adaptations: 1917, 1918, 1933, 1949, 1994, 2019.
Television adaptations: 1938, 1946, 1949, 1950, 1958, 1970, 1978, 2012.
Musicals and opera: 1964, 1998, 2005, 2009.

Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the National Library Service, which keeps track of the Italian editions of *Little Women*, reveals a long history of retranslations, reprints of earlier translations, revisions and reductions of the book. This section will briefly look at the life of Louisa May Alcott and her family, on which the author admittedly based the novel, the genesis and general characteristics of the book and the history of its Italian translations.

3.2.1. The author: Louisa May Alcott

Though the habit of interpreting a work according to the author's biography and ideology has been questioned by some scholars, I believe that in the case of *Little Women* these elements need to be taken into account since, on the admission of the author herself, the novel is very much based on the real life of Louisa and her sisters[15]. The following biography does not aim at covering the author's life in its entirety, but to mention what I believe are the elements that might have contributed to the choice of writing *Little Women* and dealing with certain topics with a colourful style and tone. Biographical information is taken from the section dedicated to the author's life in the 2018 Italian edition (Feltrinelli) of the novel and the book *Louisa May Alcott: her Life, Letters and Journal* (1898) edited by Ednah D. Cheney.

The second of four daughters, Louisa May Alcott was born November 29, 1832 in Germantown (Pennsylvania). Her mother, Abigail May, belonged to the prominent Quincy family and was a suffragette and activist for several social causes. Her father, Amos Bronson, was an educator and, like his wife, an abolitionist and advocate for women's rights. Louisa and her sisters lined up alongside their parents on these issues.[16] As an educator, Amos Bronson was famous for supporting revolutionary ideas that failed to be accepted[17]. If the initiatives of the father provided stimulating contexts to grow up

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Source: Masterpiece (n.d.). *All the Little Women: The (Mostly) Definitive List of Little Women Adaptations*. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/specialfeatures/little-women-adaptations/. Accessed:December 19, 2020; Wikipedia (n.d.). *Little Women*. *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Women#Adaptations*. Accessed: December 19, 2020

[15] '...[the book is] not a bit sensational, but simple and true, for we really lived most of it'. (Cheney, 1898: 200) 0

[16] I became an Abolitionist at a very early age, but have never been able to decide whether I was made so by seeing the portrait of George Thompson hidden under a bed in our house during the Garrison riot, and going to comfort "the poor man who had been good to the slaves," or because I was saved from drowning in the Frog Pond some years later by a colored boy. However that may be, the conversion was genuine; and my greatest pride is in the fact that I lived to know the brave men and women who did so much for the cause. (Cheney, 1898: 28-9)

[17] Based on the examples of Socrates and the Gospels, Amos Bronson Alcott teaching theories aimed at "stimulat[ing] thought and "awaken the soul"; his method was conversational, courteous, and gentle". He was against corporal punishment and never refused to teach black kids, which was one of the reasons why his schools often had a short life. Source: Encyclopædia Britannica (2020, November). *Bronson Alcott*. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bronson-Alcott. Accessed: December 18, 2020.

in for Louisa and her sisters, it also placed them in challenging situations. After Mr. Alcott's school in Germantown proved unsuccessful, the family moved to Boston (1834), where Mr. Alcott opened his famous school in Masonic Temple, which he had to close in 1840. Consequently, the Alcotts settled in Concord, where Mr. Alcott's fellow transcendentalists (Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Ralph Waldo Emerson) lived. In 1843 the family moved again, this time to Harvard, Massachusetts, where Mr. Alcott together with British reformer Charles Lane established the utopian agrarian community of Fruitlands. Based on transcendentalist principles[18], life at Fruitlands proved to be too challenging even for its founders and the experiment only lasted seven months. After the failure of Fruitlands, the Alcotts "struggled with the poverty which Louisa for the first time fully realized" (Cheney, 1898:49). In 1845 they returned to Concord, where Mrs. Alcott managed to buy a house with the money her father had left her after his death and the help of Emerson. Despite the material struggles, Louisa recalls these days in Concord as the happiest of her life[19]. While Mr. Alcott's innovative methods failed to succeed in academic environment, he was able to at least conduct the education of his own children as he pleased, and he did it "with the most tender devotion"[20]. The children's education is described as

> […] desultory and insufficient; but it was inspiring, and brought out their powers. They learned to feel and to think justly, and to express their thoughts and feelings freely and forcibly[…] Mr. Alcott made great use of the study of language in his teaching, and often employed the definition of a word to convey a lesson or a rebuke. The children were encouraged, and even required, to keep their journals regularly, and to write letters. Their efforts at poetry or the drama were not laughed at, but treasured by their parents as indications of progress. […] The girls had full freedom to act out their natures, with little fear of ridicule or criticism. (Cheney, 1898:50)

[18] The members of Fruitlands community, or 'the consociate family' as they liked to call themselves, set the goal of living off what they produced and refrained from trade and the logic of profit. They pursued equality for all members and a life of frugality. They believed that body and soul were interrelated and that spiritual regeneration could not be accomplished without physical health. In the light of such philosophy, they adopted a vegan diet and, as Louisa writes in her journal, they began their days with a purifying cold-water shower (Sacchini, 2018; Cheney, 1898)

[19] 'My wise mother, anxious to give me a strong body to support a lively brain, turned me loose in the country and let me run wild, learning of Nature what no books can teach. […] Those Concord days were the happiest of my life, for we had charming playmates in the little Emersons, Channings, Hawthornes, and Goodwins, with the illustrious parents and their friends to enjoy our pranks and share our excursions. Plays in the barn were a favorite amusement, and we dramatized the fairy tales in great style.' (Cheney, 1898: 30-31)

[20] 'Even when they were infants he [Mr. Alcott] took a great deal of personal care of them, and loved to put the little ones to bed and use the "children's hour" to instil into their hearts lessons of love and wisdom. He was full of fun too, and would lie on the floor…making compasses of his long legs with which to draw letters and diagrams.' (Cheney, 1898: 21)

Mrs. Alcott's role in the education of Louisa and her sisters was equal to that of her husband. She had a "watchful care over their moral growth": she would constantly encourage and nurture her daughters' passions[21], read them books and

> write little notes when she wished to call their attention to any fault or peculiarity[22.] Louisa preserved many of them […] to show the ever tender, watchful help she gave to the child who caused her the most anxiety, yet seemed to be the nearest to her heart till the end. (Cheney, 1898:23)

During these years in Concord Louisa started to systematically write newspaper articles, poems, stories and plays. Thanks to Emerson's library she was able to read various literary classics by Dickens, Goethe, Shakespeare, Dante and others.

In 1848 the Alcotts moved back to Boston, where it was easier to find employment. From here on out Louisa's adult life would mainly consist of work, social activism (in support of the abolition of African-Americans' slavery and women's civil rights) and writing. From 1848 to 1856 she was employed as a housemaid, preceptor, schoolteacher and occasionally as an actress. She would never cease to write in between. Some of her stories and poems were published under pseudonym. She also wrote articles in support of the abolition of slavery for the magazine *Atlantic Monthly*. In 1854 she took part with her family in the Underground Railroad network, favouring the escape of enslaved African-Americans with secret routes and safe houses.

The year 1857 was a tough one for Louisa: she had difficulties in finding a job and her younger sister Elisabeth ("Lizzie") was in a precarious state of health. Louisa started to suffer from severe depression, which dramatically worsened in 1858, when Lizzie died and Anna got engaged to John Bridge Pratt. Louisa decided to include these events in *Little Women* and made Jo, the character shaped on herself, experience them as the rupture of the "sisterhood agreement" she and her sisters had, very much reflecting how she felt in reality. Afterwards Louisa moved back to Boston, where she found a job as a teacher and preceptor. In 1861, with the outbreak of the American Civil War, Louisa felt an urgent need to be of some help, the exact same one Jo feels throughout *Little Women*. In a letter

[21] "I give you the pencil-case I promised, for I have observed that you are fond of writing, and wish to encourage the habit." (Cheney, 1898: 23)

[22] "Dear Louy, – Your handwriting improves very fast. Take pains and do not be in a hurry. I like to have you make observations about our conversations and your own thoughts. It helps you to express them and to understand your little self […] Write me always when you feel that I can help you; for, though God is near, Mother never forgets you, and your refuge is her arms." (Cheney, 1898: 38)

to Thomas Wentworth Higginson[23] Louisa wrote "Don't you want a cook, nurse, or somewhat venerable "Child" for your regiment? I am willing to enlist in any capacity […] and anxious to be busied in some more loyal labor than sitting quietly at home spinning fictions"[24]. For months Louisa studied gunshot wounds in manuals and in December of the same year she began to work at the Union Hotel Hospital in Germantown, where she assisted the injured of the war. Her contribution only lasted six months because she contracted typhus. Her father brought her back to Concord where she had to go through a long recovery.

In the following years many of her novels and stories inspired by her feminist side and revealing her desire to put an end to male supremacy were published (*Pauline's Passion and Punishment* in 1863, *Moods* in 1864, *Behind Mask, or a Woman's Power*, in 1866). Between 1868 and 1869 Louisa wrote the story of *Little Women,* divided in two books, for the Roberts Brothers publishing house of Boston. She very much based the main character of the story, Jo, on her life and thoughts, with only one major difference: as opposed to Jo, Louisa never got married[25]. Louisa's sisters provided the base for the other main characters of Meg, Beth and Amy, but the similarities were less accurate, with each character embodying a mix of her sister's personalities. After *Little Women* she wrote several other works that were soon afterwards published, including *Little Men* (1871), the sequel of the *Little Women* saga. In 1877, together with Anna, she bought Thoreau House in Concord, where all the family moved and Mrs. Alcott, already in precarious health conditions, died shortly after. While in Europe pursuing a career as a painter, in 1878 May, the youngest of the sisters, married Ernst Nieriker and, a year later, gave birth to Louise Marie "Lulu", but died only two weeks later. May wanted Louisa to take care of her baby, and so she did. From 1884, Louisa's health conditions considerably worsened. Her health was never the same after contracting typhus, but it came to the point where she had to stop writing for a while. In spite of her disease, in 1886 she managed to finish another sequel to Little Women, *Jo's Boys,* which was published in the same year.

[23] Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911) was an American politician and patriot. He was part of the American Abolitionism movement and served as a colonel in the American Civil War. Source: Encyclopædia Britannica (2020, December). *Thomas Wentworth Higginson*. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Wentworth-Higginson. Accessed: December 20, 2020

[24] Excerpt from Alcott, L. M. (1995). *The Selected Letters of Louisa May Alcott*. University of Georgia Press, pp. 96-97

[25] In an interview with Louise Chandler Moulton she explains she never got married "because I have fallen in love with so many pretty girls and never once the least bit with any man." (Moulton, 1884)

Meanwhile she sought the help of Doctor Rhoda Ashley Lawrence to find a cure, but she never fully recovered and in March 6, 1888 she died, two days after her father. She was buried in the Sleepy Hollow cemetery of Concord, together with her father, mother and sister Lizzie.

3.2.2. Children literature

As already discussed in section 3.1.1, *Little Women* is quite a versatile book. Even though it is viewed by many as a classic *tout court* easily fitting in the category of classics for adults, no one argues against the fact that it is primarily addressed to children.

Finding a comprehensive definition for children literature is not an easy task, especially if we consider that at its base lies the necessity of defining the concepts of "child" and "childhood", which have differed throughout history and from culture to culture (Hunt, 1999: 17). In this light, there exist various interpretations of what children's literature is, each more focused on a certain feature. However, it is possible to identify common elements recurring in every definition. We can safely say that critics who use the term "children's literature" have in mind books which are "good for children", especially in terms of emotional and moral values (Hunt, 1999:16).

Another element on which critics agree is the exclusion of books used for didactic or educational purposes from "children's literature"

> by "children's books" I mean printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure (italics mine) and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet. (Darton 1932/1982: 1 in Hunt, 1999)

Books with didactic purposes come out as dull and, most importantly, coercive. Swedish critic Boel Westin extended this idea and held that, with this differentiation in objectives (teaching/educating vs entertaining/pleasing), children's literature finally ceased to respond to adults' needs and started to concentrate on children's[26].

Critics have recognised "identification" as another characteristic of children's literature: children should be able to identify themselves in the books they read (Inokuma, 1987 in Hunt, 1999), as well as participating in and relating to them (Cohen, 1988).

[26] "Well into the nineteenth century, [Swedish] children's books sought primarily to impress upon their young readers good morals, proper manners, and a sense of religion. In Sweden it was not until the turn of the twentieth century that children's literature began to respond to the needs of children rather than adults" (Westin, 1991:7 in Hunt, 1999)

However, Leeson (1977 in Hunt, 1999) argues that children may not only feel the need for identification, but also for escape from their reality, and in this regard children's literature can be an equally valid ally. *Little Women* perfectly fits into the picture given so far: according to Clark (2014),

> The novel signaled a departure from previous moralizing in juvenile literature - the kind in which all the naughty boys were "eaten by bears, or tossed by mad bulls, because they did not go to a particular Sabbath-school," and "all the good infants who did go" were of course "rewarded by every kind of bliss […]. It [the novel] can be seen as inaugurating a new genre for children, as it melded some aspects of the sentimental novel popular in the 1860s—the emphasis on sisterliness, perhaps the importance of motherhood—with the domestic fiction long a staple of juvenile literature. It was perhaps the first American book explicitly directed to girls as an audience, offering four models of girlhood. (10-11)

As Seuling (2005:13) affirms, children's literature is a field "vast and diverse in its range". Therefore, when discussing books for children, one must bear in mind that there are many kinds of them. Seuling (2005:13-20) attempts at making a classification mostly based on reading age and genre (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, plays, etc). As already said, Alcott was asked to write a "girl's book" and she thought that the story of four sisters aged sixteen, fifteen, thirteen and twelve would have met the requirement. *Little Women* is generally classified as a "coming of age" story, that is a story relating to or describing the time when someone changes from a child into an adult[27], while its reading age ranges from 8+ to 12+ [28]. If we go back to Seuling classification, *Little Women* falls into what she classifies as "Middle-Grade Fiction (8 to 12 years)" and "Teenage or Young Adult Fiction (12 years and up)". Seuling (2005) identifies the characteristics of these two groups of children's literature as the following: the need for action and a "solid story with good tension and a logical development of events"(2005:17); great attention paid to details and characters; introspective narrative involving more complicated relationships, values and emotions than the ones in literature for younger readers. Children and teenagers of such groups are more attracted to these two genres because they can usually read the story of protagonists of their own age with whom they can identify and that share their concerns and experiences (Seuling, 2005:18).

[27]Cambridge Dictionary. Coming-of-age. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/coming-of-age. Accessed: December 31, 2020.

[28] These figures are based on the reading age suggested by the main American, English and Italian publishing houses for the unabridged version. With regard to the Italian translations, it would be interesting to analyse if this five-year span influences the choices of translations when a translator is required to produce a text appropriate for 8- rather than 12-year-old readers and vice versa.

3.2.3. The making of Little Women

The novel was originally brought out by the publishing firm Roberts Brothers in two volumes: the first in October 1868, entitled *Little Women – Part 1*, and the second in April 1869, entitled *Little Women –Part 2*. From what Alcott wrote on her journal in September 1867, we discover that it was Niles, partner of Roberts, who first asked her to write a "girl's book". In May 1868 Alcott wrote in the same journal

> I begin "Little Women." Marmee, Anna, and May all approve my plan. So I plod away, though I don't enjoy this sort of thing. Never liked girls or knew many, except my sisters; but our queer plays and experiences may prove interesting, though I doubt it. (Cheney, 1898:199)

A month later she sent the first twelve chapters of the book to Niles. She did not receive the ideal response ("He thought it *dull*; so do I"), but still continued to write "for lively, simple books are very much needed for girls, and perhaps I can supply the need" (Cheney, 1898:199). A month later the book was finished, "402 pages", and in August 1868 Roberts Brothers made an offer for the story "but at the same time advised me [Alcott] to keep the copyright" (Cheney, 1898:199). In her journal on August 26th she wrote

> It [the book] reads better than I expected. Not a bit sensational, but simple and true, for we really lived most of it; and if it succeeds that will be the reason of it. Mr. N. likes it better now, and says some girls who have read the manuscripts say it is "splendid!" As it is for them, they are the best critics, so I should be satisfied. (Cheney, 1898:200)

By the end of October 1868, the book had already achieved considerable success: "an order from London for an edition came in. First edition gone and more called for. Expects to sell three or four thousand before the New Year" (Cheney, 1898:201). In 1885 Alcott commented in hindsight: "An honest publisher and a lucky author, for the copyright made her fortune, and the "dull book" was the first golden egg of the ugly duckling" (Cheney, 1898:199). On the heels of the first book's success, Alcott was asked to write a sequel to the story, which she began in November

> I can do a chapter a day, and in a month I mean to be done. A little success is so inspiring that I now find my "Marches" sober, nice people, and as I can launch into the future, my fancy has more play. Girls write to ask who the little women marry, as if that was the only end and aim of a woman's life. I won't marry Jo to Laurie to please any one. (Cheney, 1898:201)

She wrote "like a steam engine" and was "so full of [my] work, I can't stop to eat or sleep, or for anything but a daily run" (Cheney, 1898:201) She kept her promise and in January 1869 she sent the sequel of *Little Women* to Roberts, which was later published in April 1869.

3.2.4. Who are the "little women"?

Little Women tells the "simple and true" story of the March family from one Christmas to another (Cheney, 1898:200). Alcott never explicitly says where the events take place, but critics have agreed on New England, most probably Massachusetts, where Louisa grew up. When the story begins Mr March is serving as a chaplain in the American Civil War, while Mrs March provides for their four daughters Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy. After the father loses all his money in "trying to help an unfortunate friend", the family started to struggle with poverty. Sixteen-year-old Meg and fifteen-year-old Jo, being the oldest of the four sisters, begged to play their part in the family's finances and therefore began to work, the former as a governess, the latter waiting upon their wealthy aunt. Beth and Amy, thirteen and twelve years old respectively, kept studying, Amy in a public school, while Beth at home with the help of Jo. The Marches are the main protagonists of the novel, but they will soon be joined by other characters: their neighbours Mr Laurence and his niece Laurie, a boy the same age as Jo, who will enter the sisters' circle and almost be considered as a fifth brother; Mr Brooke, Laurie's tutor; and Hannah, who started working for the Marches when Meg was born and, after all these years, was seen more as part of the family rather than a servant.

Through daily joys, struggles and fun, the book explores the sisters' personal strengths and weaknesses: kind, beautiful and caring Meg is sometimes blinded by the desire to be wealthy and not have to work or renounce life's pleasures; helpful, creative and dynamic Jo has trouble controlling her temper and impatience; Beth, or *Little Tranquillity*, as her father calls her, is an altruistic, loyal and genuine girl who tries to overcome her shy personality; affectionate, talented and funny Amy, the youngest of the four, needs to learn how to balance her conceited nature. Their mother is a constant presence in their lives, a precious guidance and a source of endless love and wisdom. The book can be defined as a coming-of-age story: at the end of the novel the sisters have made some progress towards conquering their weaknesses and being the best "little women" possible. This

metaphorical journey the girls embark on echoes John Bunyan's novel *The Pilgrim Progress*, which is frequently mentioned in the book as an inspiration for the girls. Almost as a reward for the difficult year they have gone through, the novel ends with the family reunited on Christmas Day after Mr March returns from the war. The book represents a useful historical record of the role of women and society's impositions on them, and sets the goal of presenting alternative views and models for young girls of that time with the characters of Mrs March, Meg, Beth, Amy and especially Jo, who is not afraid of having big dreams and high hopes for her future

> I want to do something splendid […] – something heroic, or wonderful, - that won't be forgotten after I'm dead. I don't know what, but I'm on the watch for it, and mean to astonish you all, some day. I think I shall write books (1868/2012:245)

3.3. *Piccole Donne:* an overview of Italian translations of the book

The Online Public Access Catalogue of the Italian Library System (Sistema Bibliotecario Nazionale) keeps track of the Italian translations of *Little Women* published overtime and helps in reconstructing the history of *Little Women* in Italy. However, given the fact that various people have worked on it over the years, one must bear in mind that the catalogue is not always infallible, especially when it comes to translators: their names can be misspelled during transcription, they might be mistakenly listed as editors instead of translators or might not be shown at all. Therefore, one has to consider that if a perfectly clear track of the translation history of a book is required, further research might be needed[29].

The first Italian translation of *Little Women* by Ciro and Michelina Trabalza was published in 1908 under the title *Piccole donne: da un Natale all'altro* (Little Women: from one Christmas to another) and recommended for "young readers" ("narrativa per giovani"). According to OPAC, for almost 30 years only two translations alternated: the one by Ciro and Michelina Trabalza and a "new Italian translation" (no translator is specified) published by the firm Bemporad & Figlio. From 1935 new translations were published with higher frequency, in particular between the 1950s and 1960s with the translations by Tito Diambra, Berto Minozzi, Maria Agosti, Maria Parisi, Dina Uccelli,

[29] For the current thesis this factor did not pose any relevant problem and no further research was conducted on such issues since they were not regarded as relevant for the scope of this thesis.

Assunta Mazzoni, Anna Maria Poluzzi, Anna Maria Speckel, E. Agostini, Mariagrazia Leopizzi, Maria Banti, Maria Silvi, Luisa Ghini, Maria Sembeni, Laura Guicciardi and Giulia Malesani. In the following decades new translations were considerably less in number: in the 1970s by A. Tosi and N. Rimini, Fausta Cialente and Stefania Laura Palazzi; in the 1980s by Gianni Pilone Colombo, Rossana Guarnieri, Maria Adelaide Castelli, Valentina Beggio and Manuela Lazzara Pittoni; in the 1990s by Luciana Travaini, C. Calcagno, Luca Malavasi and Chiara Spallino Rocca; in the 2000s by Luca Michelini and Luca Lamberti; in the 2010s Laura Cangemi, Stella Sacchini and Alba Bariffi.[30] From the 1970s, fewer and fewer new translations were commissioned because the dominant trend has been to reprint previous ones. The text might have been edited here and there, but the main body was left unchanged. For example, the translation by Tito Diambra, which according to OPAC was first published in 1941, continued to be reprinted for several years up to the mid-1980s. Moreover, after the numerous translations of the 1950s and 1960s, reductions and rewritings for younger children became increasingly popular in Italy, reducing the interest in commissioning unabridged translations (Sacchini, 2018).

As already mentioned, the focus of this thesis is the comparison of three Italian translations of *Little Women*. Among the various translations mentioned above, the first to be chosen was the 2018 one by Stella Sacchini, published by the publishing company Feltrinelli. This seemed to be an interesting option because the translator herself explicitly affirms that the aim of her translation is to restore "Alcott's vibrant and dense writing, the dialogues' rhythm and the audacity in the variation of registers" as well as the "incredible variety of the spoken language", which is different for each character (Sacchini, 2020). As we will see in the Chapter 4 with more practical examples, Alcott reveals much of the characters' personality by the way they communicate. Therefore, while it is certainly a complex challenge for a translator, maintaining the variety of the spoken language is fundamental in order to preserve the very soul of the book. In her reading experience of *Little Women* in Italian, Sacchini was not able to find such features, hence the desire to propose her own interpretation of the book. The choice of the second translation to compare was likewise immediate. As Sacchini's translation was one of the latest to be

[30] These names refer to the authors of Italian unabridged translations of *Little Women* attested by the OPAC of the Italian Library System. Several editions not mentioning the name of the translator appear on the online catalogue, but for this list of translators only the entries explicitly indicating who the translator was were taken into account.

published, it was decided to analyse the very first one by Ciro and Michelina Trabalza, which came out in 1908. As for the third and last translation to choose, I wanted to find one that came out around the middle of the 20th century, in order to obtain a somewhat complete picture of the translation history of the book so far. While looking at the numerous translations first published in that period I noticed that, according to the online catalogue, only two of them were reprinted over the last ten years: one by Fausta Cialente (first published in 1976 by Giunti-Marzocco and reprinted in 2010, 2012, 2016, 2018 by Giunti) and the other by Anna Maria Speckel (first published by Ape, Artistiche Propaganda Editoriali in 1953 and reprinted in 2011 by Newton Compton). I decided to narrow down the options to Cialente's and Speckel's translations because they could allow me to discover if such early translations can still fit our times. Anna Maria Speckel's one seemed to be the best choice with its history of over 50 years of reprints.

Before proceeding to compare these three translations, I made sure that Anna Maria Speckel's 1953 translation did not undergo severe revision in the 2011 edition. Overall, most of the text was left unchanged and the revisions were minor. The only substantial difference was the complete absence in 1953 of what could be referred to as practical examples of the creative side of the March sisters: small compositions of rhymed lines, for instance two small pieces that are part of the sisters' Christmas play (Chapter 2, pp. 34-5[31]), "A Song From the Suds" written for Mrs. March (chapter 16, pp. 293) and "The Jungfrau to Beth" (Chapter 22, pp. 372); the Pickwick newspapers with the articles written by the sisters (chapter 10, pp. 171-9) and the "Rigmarole" in Chapter 12 (pp. 218-224), a game consisting in a sequence of stories invented by each player that eventually form a single tale. These omissions can be justified perhaps in terms of space available for the Italian edition of the book. If something needed to be cut, it may as well be these "additional" parts that do not contribute to the course of events. Moreover, it was not an easy task translating this kind of creative writing with the tools and knowledge of the time.

Except for these specific cases, the changes from one edition to the other are minor. The syntax was rarely altered and never in a radical way. As for vocabulary, the main

[31] Henceforth, any cited page of the original book will refer to the following English edition: Alcott, L. M. (1868/2012). *Little Women*. London: Vintage.

revisions concern the correction of misinterpretations or grammatical mistakes that led to a wrong rendition of the original text's sense. The following are some examples:

> […] all their gilding could not quite conceal the ordinary material of which they were made. (p. 146)
> *[…] tutta la loro vernice non poteva nascondere del tutto la loro natura materiale*. (1953)
> **a malapena riuscivano a nascondere con tutti quegli ornamenti le loro origini più che modeste. (2011)**
>
> It seems as if I could do anything when I'm in passion. (p.136)
> *Mi sembra di dover fare qualche cosa quando sono in collera* (1953)
> **Mi sembra di poter fare qualsiasi cosa quando sono in collera (2011)**
>
> What do you amuse yourself with? (p.83)
> *Che cosa fai? Ti diverti? (1953)*
> **Che cosa fai per divertirti? (2011)**
>
> Do you think Meg cares for him? (p.344)
> *Credi che Meg si occupi di lui? (1953)*
> **Credi che Meg tenga a lui? (2011)**
>
> "What richness!" sighed Jo (p. 90)
> *"Che sciocchezze!" sospirò Jo (1953)*
> **"Che ricchezza!", sospirò Jo (2011)**

Another relevant error in the 1953 translation is the age of Amy: in one of her letters to her mother she lets us know she is almost in her "teens", which was translated into Italian as eleven years old, and later corrected with thirteen.

There were also cases in which words were substituted by synonyms probably regarded as more appropriate and accurate. The *old-fashioned pearl set* (p.143) of Mrs. March, for instance, was first translated as "finimento antico in perle" (1953) and then changed to "parure antica di perle" (2011); the expression *fare sumptuously* (p.146) from "nutrirsi bene" (1953) was changed to "fare pranzi prelibati" (2011), a longer but better rendering translation for the word sumptuously. When Laurie is said to be *old for his age* (p.347), the adjective old was first rendered with the overly literal "vecchio" (1953) and then changed to "maturo" (2011), which sounds more natural to Italian readers. Jo's expression *what a blunderbuss I am* (p.56) was first translated with "Che stordita!" (1953) but later changed to "Che sbadata!" (2011), which is more appropriate for the context. The revised translation eliminated the parts that were not in the original English text and

were added from scratch in the 1953 version. Moreover, it shed light on the inconsistencies of the characters' names. Even though the general trend of the 1953 translation is to leave the names untranslated, the reader stumbles upon Italian names (e.g. Giorgio for George). In some cases the same name (e.g. Grace) appeared in the 1953 translation both in its original form and in its Italian version (Grazia). The 2011 revised version opted for the English version of the name for every character. Overall, I found that the 2011 translation had not been extensively revised and, even if reprinted in recent years, could still be considered a product of the 1950s. Therefore, I decided to use this latest version of Anna Maria Speckel's translation for my comparison with the other two translations.

4. Comparison of the three translations

As a premise for this chapter, I wish to clarify that every time a work of comparison is involved, one must keep in mind that subjectivity influences the choices or observations made. My aim with this analysis was to give a personal view on the subject as a person in her twenties living in the 21st century, but at the same time make observations that, even if not shared by everyone, no one could condemn for being nonsensical or irrelevant. The purpose of this comparison was not to ultimately establish which of the three translations best reproduces the essence of the original text, but rather to analyse the strategies adopted in each translation to render the book's characteristics (style, register, terminology, content, etc) in relation to the time of publication. The significant time distance separating the three Italian versions allowed me to investigate the phenomenon of retranslation and its relation to the passing of time, the changes in the cultural and linguistic norms of the Italian target language and culture and the developments and changes in the fields of TS, which clearly affected the translation choices made in the three target texts. An especially interesting case to analyse was Anna Maria Speckel's translation: in addition to the observations made on the basis of its year of publication (1953), I also needed to question whether the language and style still met the expectations of Italian readers today, given the fact that the translation was republished with minor changes (cfr. Chapter Three, section three) sixty-three years later. This chapter will offer a series of practical examples I selected to discuss the topics presented in the previous chapters, to be precise: the literal vs free and foreignizing vs domesticating debates; linguistic vs cultural faithfulness to the original text; the ambiguity of the English language compared to Italian; the responsibility translators take when deciding to make explicit one the possible interpretations; and, finally, the issue of transposing into Italian the distinctive characteristics of Alcott's narrative style and language.

Before going into further details with the analysis, I wish to point out the possibility that, for the 1953 translation, the ST consulted might be a mixture of the first edition (1868) of *Little Women* and a second, revised edition originally published in 1880. This second edition is also referred to as "regular", because it was mostly revised from a linguistic point of view: the grammar was standardised and the use of punctuation was modernised (Shealy, 2013). These types of revisions were the most numerous; however, few changes were also made in the attempt "to "correct" Alcott's language, especially her

use of slang[32]" – for example, *ain't* was changed to *are not*, *guess* to *think* or *fancy*, *pa* to *papa* or *father*, *ma* to *mamma* or *mother*, etc. (Shealy, 2013: ix). While most of these changes are impossible to perceive in translation, I was able to detect some of them which involve a more evident alteration of the original – for example, the expression "box her ears" changed to "cry", or "stout" to "tall". From the comparison between the 1953 translation and the revised passages of the 1880 English edition of the novel, it seems that the 1953 translation features only some of the changes made in the revised edition. On the basis of these observations, and given the fact that no information is provided as to which English edition was the basis for the 1953 translation, we can suppose that this translation was based on a subsequent edition of the original, combining the first (1868) edition of *Little Women* and some of the revised passages of the second edition (1880).

4.1. Literal vs free debate in Little Women

The evolution of the literal vs free debate in translation matches the translational choices made in the three Italian versions. As we have seen in Chapter One, for this debate, which is as old as Cicero, the general opinion has favoured literal translation on the assumption that it was more faithful to the original text. The consequence of centuries favouring literal translations is the idea that being faithful to the ST means sticking to the original form, words and syntax. In recent years, however, free translations have started to be revalued and accepted. The increasing importance cultural elements have gained in translation since the last decades of 20th century (cfr. Chapter 1 section 2.6) has allowed scholars such as Eco (1995, 2003) and Cavagnoli (2012) to talk about "cultural faithfulness". The two scholars agree that not sticking to the literal form of the ST does not always result in unfaithfulness, as in some cases (e.g. idiomatic expressions, see Chapter 4 section 3.3) minor linguistic infidelities allow the achievement of cultural faithfulness to the original text (Cavagnoli, 2012).

From the comparison of the three translations it seems that Speckel's (1953/2011) and Ciro and Michelina Trabalza's (1908) are more literal than Sacchini's (2018). In the preface to their translation, Ciro and Michelina Trabalza[33] tell the reader that they

[32] For a detailed list of the 1880 revisions minimising the use of slang, see the section "Textual Variants" in Shealy, D (ed.). (2013). Little Women: An Annotated Edition. Cambridge: Belknap Press.

[33] Henceforth I will be referring to the two translators simply as "Trabalza" for convenience, so as to avoid redundant repetitions.

attempted to translate as faithfully as possible, which is an advantage for readers because they will read and know the true *Little Women* story, but at the same time the translators themselves might be harmed by such a choice because the final result may be a language that does not meet critics' expectations in terms of "beauty, elegance and correctness" (Trabalza, C. & M., 1908: VII). Therefore, the two translators hope that readers will try to leave aside the fact that they are reading a translation and will not focus on single words or sentences, but instead try to perceive them as part of a whole, so that they can look past those expressions that, by being faithful to the original text, may sound less Italian. In general, Sacchini (2018) decided to stick less to the English text's syntax, order of words, terminology and linguistic constructions. It is a reasonable choice since, as we will see, excessive adherence to the form of the ST can sometimes result in an unnatural text in Italian and generate ambiguity. One must consider that the register of the book is mostly informal, especially when it comes to direct speech, which means that in many cases the syntax is distinctive of the English language and does not work as well in Italian. In such cases, sticking to the literal form of the original is not advisable. Let us look at some practical examples.

ST	Oh don't I wish I could fix things for you as I do for my heroines! You're pretty enough and good enough already, **so I'd have some rich *relation*** leave you a fortune unexpectedly [...] (p. 270[34])
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Oh, magari potessi disporre le cose per te come faccio per i miei personaggi! Tu sei già abbastanza graziosa e buona, e io **avrei qualche ricca *relazione*** che ti lascerebbe una fortuna inaspettata
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Oh, se potessi cambiare le cose con te come faccio coi miei personaggi! Sei abbastanza graziosa e anche buona e **avrei qualche ricca *conoscente*** che ti lascerebbe una fortuna inattesa
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Oh come vorrei poter aggiustare le cose che non vanno nella tua vita come faccio con le mie eroine! La bellezza e la bontà non ti mancano, per cui mi basterebbe **inventare una *parente* ricca** che ti lascia in eredità una fortuna inaspettata

Both in TT1 and TT2, the translators calqued a typical way of using the verb *to have* in the construction *to have someone do something*. The corresponding verb *avere* (to have) in Italian cannot be used in the same way as in English, and therefore both translations may sound odd for an Italian reader. To effectively translate it into Italian, Sacchini (TT3) interpreted the meaning of the English expression and rendered it in Italian with the verb

[34]Henceforth, any cited page of the original book will refer to the following English edition: Alcott, L. M. (1868/2012). *Little Women*. London: Vintage.

inventare. Even though it is not literal, this translation is still faithful to the original intention of the author and certainly avoids the risk of a reader going back to re-read an unclear passage. As for the translation of *relation, parente* (TT3) is the most straightforward of the three, being a synonym of *relative*. While the English term *relation* is used to refer to a member of your family, its literal translation in Italian *relazione* (TT1) has a more generic meaning and does not convey the same idea, even though the context of the sentence may help in understanding the nuance. The word *conoscente* (TT2), instead, may be misleading because it designates a person one barely knows. In the next example, the verb *to peck*, which refers to a bird hitting, biting, or picking up something with its beak[35], is used in a metaphorical way with the meaning of *reprimanding*.

ST	It won't be dull with me popping in every day to tell you how Beth is, and take you out gallivanting. The old lady likes me, and I'll be as sweet as possible to her, so she won't peck at us, whatever we do (p. 305)
TT1 1908 – Trabalza	Non sarà triste con me che vi capiterò addosso ogni giorno per dirvi come sta Beth, e **a prendervi per condurvi a passeggiare.** La vecchia mi vuol bene, e io sarò più destro che mi sarà possibile con lei; così non ci **beccherà**, qualunque cosa facciamo
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Non sarà triste se ogni giorno mi precipiterò a darti notizie di Beth **e a prenderti** per andare a zonzo. La vecchia signora mi vuol bene e sarò più cortese che posso con lei, così non ci **beccherà**, qualsiasi cosa facciamo
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Non sarà una noia se ogni giorno farò una capatina per dirti come sta Beth, e poi **ce ne andremo un po' a zonzo**. Alla vecchia sto simpatico, e con lei farò il bravo più che posso, almeno non ci **rampognerà**, qualunque cosa facciamo

Here again, Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) chose stick to the literal form of the original and translated the verb *to peck* as the Italian corresponding one *beccare*. I believe that the metaphorical use of *beccare* in Italian does not produce the same effect as it does in English. Indeed, the verb has several meanings in Italian, but in this case the first and only one coming to the mind of a reader will almost certainly correspond to the English expression *to catch someone doing something,* which does not reflect the original intention of the author. Sacchini (TT3), instead, opted for the verb *rampognare,* which conveys the intention of the original. The same passage contains the phrasal verb *to take someone out.* Phrasal verbs are by definition idiomatic phrases; therefore, it is unlikely that a literal translation will work here. In this case, for example, adding *a prendervi/ti,*

[35]Cambridge Dictionary Online. Peck. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/peck. Accessed: February 1, 2021

which is the literal translation of the verb *to take,* is unnecessary in Italian and might create a redundant effect. Sacchini (TT3) opted for a less literal translation (*e poi ce ne andremo un po' a zonzo*) producing a smoother version to read. A similar example concerns the translation of the expression *fly-away look to her clothes*, used when describing Jo. The 1908 and 1953 editions propose a practically identical translation: *le vesti pareva sempre che le volassero via* (1908) and *sembrava che i suoi abiti dovessero sempre volar via* (1953). These translations clearly stick to the literal words of the original, but if this image works in English, it sounds odd for Italian readers, even bizarre, and might leave them uncertain as to what the expression means. With her translation, instead, Sacchini (TT3) leaves no doubt: *una certa trascuratezza nel vestire.* Compared to the last examples, for the following the intention and meaning of the original is maintained in each translation, but I decided to mention the passage to show how sometimes a non-literal translation significantly improves the overall effect of a sentence.

ST	As soon as he had gone, she wished she had been more forgiving, and when Meg and her mother went upstairs, she felt lonely and **longed** for Teddy (p.358)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	[…] e, quando Meg e sua madre salirono di sopra, si sentì sola, e **desiderò** Teddy
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	[…] e quando Meg e sua madre salirono nelle loro stanze, si sentì sola, e **desiderò** Teddy
TT3 2018-Sacchini	[…] e quando Meg e la mamma salirono si sentì sola e le **mancava** Teddy

Even though they are all valid, Sacchini (TT3), on the basis that Jo feels "lonely", allows herself to translate the expression *to long for* more freely with the verb ***mancare***. Compared to the other option, which is faithful to the literal meaning of *to long for/to (=to want something very much)* corresponding to ***desiderare*** in Italian, Sacchini's version sounds more natural for an Italian reader. The same can be said for the following example:

ST	She was 'the sweetest **little thing** she ever saw' (p.149)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	La più dolce **creaturina** che avesse mai visto
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	La più dolce **cosina** che avesse mai visto
TT3 2018-Sacchini	La **creaturina** più dolce che avesse mai visto

Even though each translation of the first sentence conveys the intention of the author, ***cosina*** seems to be a calque of the English ***little thing***. The most familiar collocation in Italian would be dolce ***creaturina,*** today as well as a century ago, as shown by 1908 version.

The lack of equivalence at word-level between two languages can frequently pose problems for translators. It occurs when "the target language has no direct equivalent for a word" of the source text (Baker, 1992/2001: 20). As Baker (1992/2001) highlights, the types of non-equivalence are various, and even though one can find several attested strategies to deal with them, one need also to consider that translation is not a science, and it can be risky to "relate specific types of non-equivalence to specific strategies" (21). Indeed, translation choices can be influenced by a variety of factors, some strictly linguistic, others extra-linguistic; but, in any case, the choice of a certain equivalent will also be partly subjective, as it "will always depend not only on the linguistic system or systems being handled […], but also on the way both the writer of the ST and the producer of the TT, i.e. the translator, choose to manipulate the linguistic systems in question" (Baker, 1992/2001:18). The following passage contains an example that might fall into Baker's category of non-equivalence concerning a "semantically complex source-language word" expressing, with a single morpheme, "a more complex set of meanings" (Baker, 1992/2001:22).

ST	The walk revived her spirits; and, flattering herself that she had made good bargains, she **trudged** home again after buying a very young lobster, some very old asparagus, and two boxes of acid strawberries (p. 195)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	La passeggiata le ridestò gli spiriti; e, lusingandosi d'aver comperato bene, s'incamminò **rassegnata** verso la casa.
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	La passeggiata le ridette il buon umore e lusingandosi di aver fatto buoni acquisti ritornò a casa **affaticata**, dopo aver comprato una giovane aragosta, degli asparagi molto vecchi e due scatole di fragole acide.
TT3 2018-Sacchini	La passeggiata le risollevò il morale; e, congratulandosi con se stessa per gli ottimi acquisiti, **trascinò** fino a casa le **buste con dentro** un'aragosta molto giovane, alcuni asparagi molto vecchi e due scatole di fragole acerbe.

Our focus is the verb *trudge*, which means "to walk slowly with a lot of effort […] while carrying something heavy[36]". Sacchini (TT3) used the verb *trascinare*, which more or

[36]Cambridge Dictionary Online. Trudge. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/trudge. Accessed: February 1, 2021

less incorporates the meaning of doing something with much effort like the verb *trudge*. However, according to the Italian norms of verbal regency, the meaning of the verb is not complete without an object, therefore Sacchini needed to add *le buste* (the shopping bags) to the sentence from scratch. Speckel (TT2), instead, conveyed the idea of effort with the adjective *affaticata*, therefore changing the grammatical category. In the case of Trabalza (TT1), I believe the original intention of the author was lost, as the adjective *rassegnata* belongs to a completely different semantic area. A similar example can be found in the next passage with the verb *reminisce*, which may be attributed to Baker's category of source-language concepts known in the target culture but not "allocated a target language word to express it" (Baker, 1992/2001: 21).

ST	They drank healths, told stories, sang songs, **'reminisced'**, as the old folks say, and had a thoroughly good time (pg. 376)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Brindarono, raccontarono storie, cantarono delle canzoni, "**reminiscenze**", come dicono i vecchi, passarono, insomma, una giornata di completa felicità
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Brindarono, raccontarono storie, cantarono canzoni, "**reminiscenze**", come dicono i vecchi, passarono insomma una giornata di completa felicità.
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Si bevve alla salute degli ammalati, si raccontarono storie, si intonarono canzoni, si **ricordarono "i bei tempi di una volta",** e la serata trascorse in grande allegria.

The verb *reminisce,* indeed*,* is not lexicalized in Italian as it is in English. There exist the noun *reminiscenza* in Italian, but it is not used in the same way as the English verb, as it is quite formal and rarely employed in conversation due to its association with the field of philosophy. Both Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) translated as *reminiscenze***,** which not only sounds odd for the above said reason, but also interrupts the coherence of syntax in a long list of verbs. Sacchini (TT3)'s translation, even though not literal, sounds more spontaneous. She used the Italian idiomatic expression *i bei vecchi tempi* to convey the meaning of the verb *reminisce* and maintained the coherence of syntax with the verb *ricordare***.** In the next example, the author uses an idiomatic expression including the unit of measurement ***inch****,* known as *pollice* in Italy but rarely used.

ST	But the Americans played better, and contested **every inch of the ground** as strongly as if the spirit of '76 inspired them
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Ma le americane giocavano meglio, e contendevano **ogni dito di terreno** con tale accanimento come se lo spirito del 76' le invadesse
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Ma gli Americani giocarono meglio e contesero **il terreno palmo a palmo** con lo stesso spirito combattivo dimostrato nella guerra del '76

TT3 2018-Sacchini	Ma gli americani giocavano meglio, e si guadagnarono **ogni millimetro di campo** con tale fervore che parevano animati dallo spirito del '76

When it comes to the translation of idioms and fixed expressions, Baker (1992/2001) highlights two main challenges: "the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly; and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language" (65). With regard to the first challenge, she discusses the "misleading" nature of some idioms that "seem transparent because they offer a reasonable literal interpretation" (Baker, 1992/2001:66), which might be the case for the idiomatic expression of the passage above. It appears to me that recognising the idiom "every inch of the ground" is not too difficult for an Italian native-speaker, because the Italian language has a similar fixed expression, which is the one used by Sacchini (TT3). An equally valid option is Speckel's (TT2), who used an Italian "idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form" (Baker, 1992/200:74). The choice of translating the English expression literally, as Trabalza (TT1) did, may cause an initial disorientation in readers, especially for those who do not know that *inch* is also used as a unit of measurement in English.

4.1.1. Changes in translation: translation errors, misinterpretations, cut parts and expansions

This section will discuss some passages of the book constituting an example of recurring phenomena in translation, that is translation errors and misinterpretations of a passage or expression; cut parts, which, in the case of our translations, occur only in the 1953 edition; expansions of the ST, a practice that, as we will see, can have different reasons (e.g. clarify an ambiguous passage, enrich the TT, etc.).

With regard to translation errors, they are mostly due to the presence in the ST of ambiguous or peculiar expressions, whose meaning is more difficult to guess; when it cannot be left ambiguous as in the original, translators may run into errors. I will now give some practical examples taken from the text.

ST	Beth kept on, with only slight relapses into idleness or grieving. All the little duties were faithfully done each day, and many of her sisters' also, for they were

	forgetful, **and the house seemed like a clock whose pendulum was gone a–visiting** (p.299)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	[…] la casa pareva un orologio il cui pendolo fosse andato a farsi una visita.
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	[…] la casa sembrava come un orologio **il cui pendolo andasse alla perfezione**.
TT3 2018-Sacchini	[…] la casa sembrava un orologio il cui pendolo era andato a farsi un giro

In this passage Alcott uses a metaphor to say that the house does not function properly without the sisters doing their duties, just as a clock does not work without its pendulum. As we can see, Speckel's translation (TT2) conveys the exact opposite by saying that the pendulum was working perfectly. In the next passage, Alcott uses the noun *head cold*, which designates a cold blocking your nose.

ST	Jo caught a bad cold through neglect to cover the shorn head enough, and was ordered to stay at home till she was better, for Aunt March didn't like to **hear people read with colds in their heads** (p. 299)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	[…] la zia March non amava sentir leggere le persone col **raffreddore di testa**
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	[…] alla zia March non piaceva sentir leggere le persone afflitte da un **raffreddore di testa**
TT3 2018-Sacchini	[…] zia March non sopportava chi leggeva con la **voce nasale**.

Both Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) opted for *raffreddore di testa*, which seems to be a literal translation of the English. This rendition might be confusing for Italian readers, not only because the expression does not exist in Italian, but also because there seems to be no reasonable link with the fact that Aunt March did not want her to read. Sacchini (TT3) was the only one to give a clear and coherent translation based on the sense of the English expression and not on how it is formulated. The next passage contains one of Amy's resolutions for the near future:

ST	I shall learn to make buttonholes, and attend to my parts of speech (p.203)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Io imparerò a fare gli occhielli, e starò attenta **ai miei vocaboli**
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Imparerò a fare le asole e studierò la mia parte
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Io imparerò a fare le asole, e starò attenta alla grammatica quando parlo

Here again the expression highlighted in bold does not have a straightforward meaning. One cannot simply translate it literally into Italian; it has to be rendered in relation to the book's context, in this case Amy's continual vocabulary errors. Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) made the meaning explicit by reformulating the English expression, while Speckel's (TT2) translation, by remaining more literal, proves obscure for Italian readers.

There are cases in which the translation is not completely out of context or non-sensical, but still inaccurate because the translator supplies an incorrect interpretation of a passage. Let us consider the following example:

ST	Let's hear the sound of the **baby pianny** (p. 109)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Il piano della bebè
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Il piano della bambina
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Pianofortino

This passage refers to the part of the book where Beth receives as a present from Mr Laurence the piano which had belonged to his little niece, who died when still a child. This information misled both Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2), who interpreted *baby* as indicating that the piano belonged to the child, and not as a sweet way of calling the little piano. This is, however, a minor misinterpretation, as the translation is still coherent in the context. It must be said, however, that using the word *bebè* sounds odd as it is very specific and usually used to indicate an infant, while Alcott did not specify at what age the niece died.

As already mentioned above, only Speckel in her 1953 edition eliminated parts of the ST, which are shown in the following chart.

ST	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel
And Mr Moffat insisted on dancing with her because she "didn't dawdle, but had some spring in her", as he gracefully expressed it. (p.149)	E il signor Moffat la fece oggetto di particolari attenzioni per tutta la sera.
'Jo wanted me to come, and tell her how you looked, so I did;' answered Laurie, without turning his eyes upon her, though he half smiled at her maternal tone (p.158)	"Jo voleva che venissi per dirle che figura facevi, ecco perché sono qui", rispose Laurie.

Not a bit of it; I'm dying to do it. Come, I'll be good (p.160)	Affatto. Andiamo, sarò buono.
Away they went fleetly and gracefully; for, having practiced at home, they were well matched, and the blithe young couple were a pleasant sight to see, as they twirled merrily round and round, feeling more friendly than ever after their small tiff (p.160)	/
[…] added Jo, as they both laughed, and ate out of one plate, the china having run short (p.217)	Disse Jo, mentre tutti e due scoppiavano a ridere.
I now propose a toast, as "my friend and pardner, Sairey Gamp" says. Fun forever, and no grubbage !" (p.187)	"Vi propongo un brindisi ora", esclamò Jo con il bicchiere in mano mentre veniva servita la limonata: "Sempre divertirsi e niente lavoro"
He that is down need fear no fall, He that is low no pride. He that is humble ever shall Have God to be his guide. I am content with what I have, Little be it, or much. And, Lord! Contentment still I crave, Because Thou savest such. Fulness to them a burden is, That go on pilgrimage. Here little, and hereafter bliss, Is best from age to age! (p.381)	Chi si tien basso cader non potrà Chi è umile evita d'orgoglio il peccato Colui che è modesto di certo avrà Al fianco il buon Dio, quale amico fidato / /

It is not easy to understand why these parts were left out, as they are quite varied, and the translator was not consistent throughout the novel in eliminating other parts equivalent to the ones above. I managed to find possible reasons for this choice only for some of these passages; for example, perhaps it was decided to eliminate the reference to Sarey Gamp, one of Dicken's characters in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843), because it is not relevant to the meaning of the passage and therefore could be removed without any evident repercussion. A translator may also decide to leave out parts of the original text when they feature unconventional words or expressions whose meaning the translator is unsure of, and therefore, as a last resort, s/he decides to completely remove the passage to avoid the risk of giving a wrong or nonsensical interpretation. We can suppose this is what happened with the translation of the first and fifth passage, in which the words *spring* and *china* are used in an unconventional way. This theory might also be supported by the fact that, at that time (1953), the translating tools available were not as many or as exhaustive and detailed as today. As for the other passages, I could not find any element that might have suggested the reasons for removing them, apart from specific guidelines or requests, perhaps from the editor.

The word “expansion”, or clarification, is defined by Cavagnoli (2012) as the practice of expanding the ST in translation for passages that result ambiguous, in order to clarify what they indicate. It is also discussed by Eco in his book *Dire quasi la stessa cosa* (2003) under the section “Evitare di arricchire il testo”, literally to avoid enriching the text. Both Eco (2003) and Cavagnoli (2012) believes this practice is not always advisable, as there are authors who purposely wish for a certain passage to result ambiguous, or ambiguity is in general a recurring feature of the book, and therefore it must be left so to preserve the “dominant”, in Jakobson words, of the text in translation as well. Cavagnoli (2012:127) signals a frequent use of expansion in children’s literature as well, as a consequence of translators imagining children reading the book by themselves and wishing to facilitate them. However, Cavagnoli (2012) warns against an excessive use of expansion for children’s literary classics, considering that they are designed to communicate on more than one level and, consequently, to also be (re-)read by adults. As for *Little Women*, I would not consider ambiguity as one of the novel’s characteristics. I found few passages, summarised in the chart below, in which Alcott purposely remained somewhat ambiguous.

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
[…] “I always spoil everything. I'm so sorry, but the tongs were too hot, and so I've made a mess," groaned poor Jo, **regarding the little black pancakes** with tears of regret. (p. 46) [Jo has burnt Meg’s hair]	Guardando le nere frittelle	Guardando le nere frittelle	Fissando le **ciocche**, che parevano frittelle carbonizzate
"Laurie, I want you to do me a favor, will you?" said Meg, **as he stood fanning her when her breath gave out, which it did very soon though she would not own why.** (p. 160)	[…] Ma ben presto, benché non volesse confessarne la causa, a Meg mancò la lena	Mentre gli le faceva vento perché il respiro le veniva meno, sebbene non volesse confessarne la ragione.	[…] Il che era successo quasi subito, ma non avrebbe mai ammesso il motivo **per la vergogna**
Beth began by rummaging everything out of	Beth cominciò a tirar fuori ogni cosa nel gabinetto	Beth cominciò a frugare fra le cose dello stanzino	Beth cominciò a rovistare nell’ampio ripostiglio dove

the big closet, where her **family** resided (p. 188)	grande, dove dimorava la sua famiglia	dove alloggiava la sua famiglia	alloggiava la sua famiglia **di bambole**
"There's so little of her, I'm afraid to say much, for fear she will slip away altogether (p. 379)	C'è rimasto così poco di lei che io temo di dir troppo, per il timore che scompaia addirittura	C'è rimasto così poco di lei che io temo di dir troppo, per il timore che scompaia addirittura	"Della mia piccola Beth è rimasto così poco, **magrolina com'è**, che se dico troppo temo si scioglierà tutta.

When it comes to literature, one usually expects to find ambiguity to characterise more philosophical passages, or that an author chooses to remain ambiguous when anticipating elements which will be revealed later in the book (Cavagnoli, 2012). As we can see from the chart, these are not the types of ambiguity characterising the novel: Alcott simply wants the reader to read between the lines or interpret metaphors. Only Sacchini (TT3) expanded the ST to leave no doubt as to what the passage indicated. In her translation, one can also find other parts where she expanded the ST, not because it presented some kind of ambiguity, but because she decided to make small additions to the ST or reformulate it. In the following chart I collected some examples of this practice.

ST	TT3 2018-Sacchini	TT2 1953-Speckel
["Scold as much as you like, you'll never see your silly old book again," "Why not?"] "I burned it up" (p.129)	["Sgridami quanto vuoi, il tuo stupido racconto non lo rivedrai mai più," gridò Amy, anche lei furibonda. "E perché non dovrei rivederlo?"] "**Semplice**…l'ho bruciato"	
I told you I'd make you pay for being so cross yesterday (p. 129)	Così impari ad essere sempre tanto irascibile	
What did mother give you out of the treasure-box?" (p.143)	Cosa ti ha dato la mamma? Cosa ha tirato fuori stavolta dallo scrigno del tesoro?	Che ti ha dato la mamma dalla sua scatola di tesori?
She gets prettier every day, and I'm in love with her sometimes (pg.292)	Ogni giorno che passa si fa più carina**, e a volte mi ritrovo a guardarla**, innamorata persa.	Diventa ogni giorno più bella e qualche volta sono proprio innamorata di lei
Won't he shout, when I tell him what those silly things say about us poor children! (p. 165)	Sentirai gli urli quando gli dirò cosa vanno dicendo in giro quelle stupide oche! **Prendersela con quattro povere ragazze come no**i!	Come riderà quando gli racconterò quanto quelle stupide creature hanno raccontato di noi, povere ragazze!

There may be various reasons behind Sacchini's (TT3) translation choices. We have already mentioned Eco's discussion around the practice of enriching the target language

by saying more than the original text did, or in a richer way (Eco, 2003). In the previous section, we have seen how some constructions or ways of formulating sentences may work in English, but do not feel as natural in Italian, and therefore need some adjustments by the translator, in order to make them sound more "Italian". For the passages above, the dividing line between these two phenomena is not easily definable, as it is also a quite subjective judgement. In my opinion, the translation of the first two examples might be more in line with the practice of enriching the target language, or say more than the original did, especially in the case of the second passage. Indeed, even though it is true that a quick temper is one of Jo's traits, Sacchini's choice of generalising and not mentioning the fact that Amy is referring specifically to what happened "yesterday" seems to be unnecessary. For the last three passages, instead, it may be the case of making the text sound more Italian, by distancing from the constructions chosen in English but at the same time remaining totally faithful to the source text. Indeed, if we compare the 2018 versions with those of 1953/2011 (TT2), which are more literal in terms of constructions and terminology, I believe that the 2018 translations of the passages in the chart are likely to sound more natural to contemporary readers.

In other passages, Sacchini (TT3) opted for changing the words of the ST by translating with Italian idiomatic expressions conveying the same idea as the original, as showed in the following chart.

ST	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Her feet chattered on the floor (p.102)	Che le ginocchia presero a "farle giacomo giacomo"
But it will have to do (p.144)	Ma dovrò fare di necessità virtù
I shall tell them, myself, all about it […] so you'll not tell, will you? (p.161)	Racconterò tutto per filo e per segno …per cui tu acqua in bocca, va bene?
"Highty–tighty! Is that the way you take my advice, Miss? You'll be sorry for it by–and–by, when you've tried love in a cottage and found it a failure." (p. 391)	Senti senti! È così che ascolti i miei consigli signorina? Te ne pentirai molto presto, appena avrai capito che "due cuori e una capanna" dopo un po' si trasformano in un vero supplizio

In Chapter Three I discussed how, at least until the end of the 19th century, children's literature was mainly viewed as an additional means of educating children, but from the 20th century onwards critics have agreed on excluding this element from the list of purposes and characteristics of this genre. However, today children's literature still

maintains a pedagogical function - which could be viewed as a fragment of its educating function – related not only to the emotional and moral values typically present in children's books, but also to the role these books can have in enhancing children's knowledge of the language, with a less simple or common lexicon, for example (Cavagnoli, 2012). I believe that the choice of translating the passages above with Italian idiomatic expressions might serve this last function for children reading the book, and make the text dynamic and varied for adults.

4.2. Foreignization vs domestication in *Piccole Donne*

Foreignization and domestication are the two opposing translation strategies discussed in Chapter One section 2.7 consisting, in short, in the minimisation (domestication) or preservation (foreignization) of the foreign text's strangeness. These two strategies represent two possible options for dealing with the issue of intertextuality in translation. According to Roux-Faucard (2006), intertextuality refers to the various relations a text establishes not only with its author and readers, but also with other texts. Intertextuality can take the form of in-text allusions, references or quotations, which constitute particularly difficult passages to translate. As Venuti (2004:31) underlines, translating intertextuality means coming to term with the logic of "loss and gain", as the result will never be an "exact […] reproduction of the foreign text": if a literal translation is adopted, the meaning may be lost; if the text is adapted, intertextuality will be completely erased. But if the translator helps the reader by providing explanations, such as periphrasis or translator's notes, the risk is that the overall effect of the text will not be the same (Roux-Faucard, 2006). Among the most immediate forms of intertextuality Venuti (2004) mentions paratexts, which are the combination of "supplementary materials" such as introductions, afterwords, annotations and commentaries to a text. According to Venuti (2004), paratexts are a recurring feature of retranslations as they help in presenting and justifying the competing interpretation offered by a new translation of a book.

The 1908 edition of *Little Women* begins with a preface and a section entitled *Avvertenze e Note* (Instructions before reading and notes), in which the translators list the names of the March Family and the other main characters – merely to show how their names should be pronounced – and explain to the readers, with short notes, specific

references to the SL culture they will encounter in the book. The 1953/2011 edition is accompanied by an introduction to the book, a brief presentation of the author's life and literary works and a description of the main characters of the book. Similarly, the 2018 edition includes a long appendix composed of a section for the text's endnotes, a commentary written by Sacchini about the characteristics of the book and the process of translation, an afterword, quite a detailed biography of Alcott and a bibliography of her works. Only the 1908 and 2018 editions have a section specifically dedicated to translator's notes. In her translation, Speckel (1953/2011) opted, or most probably was asked to opt by the editor, for footnotes, which are much shorter and considerably less in number (14) compared to the 1908 (25) and 2018 (92) editions. Moreover, most of these fourteen notes serve as simple translations into Italian of some passages of the book written in German and French. We can suppose that one of the reasons for including a separate section for translator's notes in the 1908 and 2018 editions is that such a high number of footnotes would have frequently distracted the reader and interrupted the "flow" of reading[37], which is one of the main concerns related to the use of translator's notes (Cavagnoli, 2012/2019). In the light of this, isolating the notes in a section, as done by Ciro and Michelina Trabalza and Sacchini, might be a compromise, as the readers' eyes are not distracted by footnotes, and therefore they have more freedom in the choice of checking the note immediately or waiting for the paragraph to end. Moreover, as the notes are not displayed at the end of the page, translators can include more information without worrying that readers might lose the narrative thread if reading a longer note.

Another issue to consider is that, in the 1908 and 1953/2011 translations, the paratext is at the beginning of the book, before the actual novel, while in the 2018 edition it is at the end of the book. This made me reflect on what Collombat (2004) said about subjecting the interpretation of a text's meaning to external factors. Not only does the 1953/2011 introduction suggest interpretative keys to the book, it also anticipates key passages of the story. Given the fact that it is placed before the novel and is presented as an "introduction", we can suppose that the reader is expected to first read that, and then move to the actual novel. As a result, the reader begins the book with an idea already formed in his/her head about the story. Moreover, unlike the 1908 edition, the characters'

[37]In the preface to the 1908 edition the translators themselves inform the readers that they "did not find it appropriate to interrupt the story with single footnotes" (Trabalza, C. & M., 1908:X) and therefore decided to list the notes in the above-mentioned section *Avvertenze e Note*.

description of the 1953/2011 introduction is quite detailed and reveals much of the characters' personality. As for the 1908's preface, it cannot be placed on the same level as the 1953/2011's introduction to the novel. Indeed, it is aimed at discussing the strategies employed in translation (the choice of adopting foreignization rather than domestication, the difficulties in understanding when the English personal pronoun *you* needed to be translated as *tu, lei* or *voi*, the rendering of names, idiomatic expressions, punctuation and Jo's *slang*), while "what needs to be known and understood of the story is left to the vibrant, genuine and evocative language of the book to tell" (Trabalza, C. & M., 1908: VI). In general, we can say that placing the paratext at the end of the book, as in the 2018 edition, may be the best option as it gives the readers the opportunity of forming their own thoughts about the book first, and only once finished of comparing them.

In terms of foreignization and domestication, we can begin by simply saying that Trabalza's (TT1) and Sacchini's (TT3) translations are the most foreignizing of the three, as we can also deduce from the high number of translator's notes. In the preface to their edition, Ciro and Michelina Trabalza specify that, for their previous translation of *Little Men* into Italian, they adopted a domesticating strategy, because they thought it too daring to transport young Italian readers to a completely different society and space. For *Little Women*, instead, they opted for a foreignizing translation ("we decided to go hand in hand with the original"), except for the use of the Italian personal pronoun *voi* and the translation of English wordplays and slang (Trabalza, C. & M., 1908:VIII). Despite this explicit committment, Sacchini's translation appears to be more foreignizing than Trabalza's, as we can see from the following chart comparing some of the translational choices of the three versions.

ST	TT1 1908 Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011 Speckel	TT3 2018 Sacchini
Mrs/Mr	signora/signor	signora/signor	Mrs/Mr
College	Università	Università	College
Feet (unit of measurement)	Metri	Metri	Piedi

It must be noted that, for the specific examples of the chart above, the choices of adopting a foreignizing or domesticating strategy may be also simply linked to the knowledge Italian readers had of the American and English culture at the time of publication. We can suppose that today, as a consequence of English becoming the lingua franca of an increasingly globalised world, English words indicating such ordinary concepts as the ones above are likely to be known by the majority of the Italian population. Moreover, considering that neither of the three translations is addressed to a specific target audience (e.g. children, young adults, etc.), the translation choices may have also been dictated by the will of meeting the levels of knowledge of every reading age.

Other than these general examples, there are several other passages characterised by cultural references typical of the source culture. As early as the first chapter of the book we are introduced to John Bunyan's novel *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which is a book very close to the hearts of the sisters. Numerous references to this work are scattered throughout *Little Women.* Chapter 8, for example, is entitled *Jo meets Apollyon.* In *The Pilgrim's Progress* Apollyon is described as a monster, God of the City of Destruction from which the pilgrim is escaping in his quest of the Celestial City. The title was translated as *Jo incontra Apollonio* by Trabalza (TT1), *Jo affronta Satana* by Speckel (TT2) and *Jo incontra Apollyon* by Sacchini (TT3). Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) both adopt domesticating strategies: the latter substituted Apollyon with its corresponding figure in the Italian religious tradition, Satana, knowing that everyone would have been familiar with this image; the former "italianised" the name, which is another typical domesticating strategy adopted for other characters as well (George > Giorgio, Hannah > Anna) and for the author of the book (Louisa > Luisa). Sacchini (TT3) decided to leave the name unchanged, accompanied by a translator's note. As for the other references to John Bunyan's novel, Sacchini (TT3) is the only one to signal and explain them with translator's notes, while Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) only translate them literally. Another interesting example concerns the translation of the sisters' newspaper *The Pickwick Portfolio*, read during the meeting of their secret society. Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) both translated as *La Cartella Pickwick,* while Speckel (TT2) as *Lo Zibaldone Pickwick*. The last one seems to be a reference to *Zibaldone di Pensieri,* or simply *Lo Zibaldone,* the famous miscellany of notes, reflections and aphorisms written

between 1817-1832 by Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi and first published in 1898-1900. After the great success of this work, the term "zibaldone" almost lost its generic meaning in Italy and came to be associated with the specific zibaldone written by Leopardi. If the intention of Speckel was to reference this literary work, she did not respect the fictional reality of the novel. Indeed, given the fact that it was published in 1898, it is impossible that the sisters knew about this work in 1861. If she used the term zibaldone with the general meaning of a notebook where one writes down chaotic thoughts, it still would not be appropriate, as *The Pickwick Portfolio* is organised as a newspaper with news articles, letters, advertisements and short stories.

One passage cited in the previous section described how the Americans played croquet "as if the spirit of '76 inspired them". Sacchini (TT3) was the only one to use a note clarifying that the spirit mentioned here is the one of the United States Declaration of Independence signed in July 4th, 1776. As it is a date well-known not just in America, we can presume that Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) did not feel the need to explain the reference. Speckel (TT2) decided to add the word *guerra* in her translation (*con lo stesso spirito* […] *dimostrato nella* ***guerra*** *del '76),* which may help the readers by narrowing the reference down to a war, in this case the War of Independence resulting from the Declaration of Independence.

When Mr Laurence accuses Laurie of being stubborn, Jo replies:

ST	So am I; but a kind word will govern me when **all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't** (p. 375)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Come me; ma una parola affettuosa mi frenerebbe, mentre non lo potrebbe nessuna forza al mondo.
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Come me; ma una parola affettuosa mi frenerebbe, mentre non lo potrebbe nessuna forza al mondo.
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Anch'io ho la testa dura, ma non parola gentile mi porta a più miti consigli quando tutti i cavalli e tutti gli uomini del re non ci riescono.

All the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't is a line from the famous English nursery rhyme about Humpty Dumpty. Both Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) completely removed the reference and conveyed the idea in a more generic way. Sacchini (TT3), instead, kept the reference and explained its origin with a note. This example and the different translation choices adopted offer the chance of reflecting on the issue of

"cultural translation". In this regard, Katan (1999/2004) argues that translating does not simply involve a purely linguistic transfer of meaning, it is also an act of mediation between two cultures. Therefore, the translator may be viewed as a cultural mediator, who needs to recognize the cultural elements of the ST and decide how to translate or mediate them (Katan, 1999/2004). In the following chart I summarised other references to the SL culture present in the book, their translations in each Italian edition and if translator's notes were used.

ST	TT1 1908 Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011 Speckel	TT3 2018 Sacchini
Dr. Blimber (character of Dicken's *Dombey & Son*)	**Dr. Blimber** + note	Removed	**Dottor Blimber** + note
(Rotten) Row (track along the Southside of Hyde Park)	**Row** + note	**Row**	**Row** + note
Authors (game)	**Autori** + note	**Autori**	**Autori** + note
Buzz (game)	**Gioco di società**	**Gioco**	**Buzz** + note
Rigmarole (game)	**Filastrocca**	**Seguito**	**Tiritera** + note
John Bull (United Kingdom's national personification)	**John Bull** + note	**John Bull**	**John Bull** + note
Flora McFlimsey **(**from Butler's poem *Nothing to Wear***)**	**Flora McFlimsey** + note	**Flora McFlimsey**	**Flora McFlimsey** + note
Sarey Gamp (1868)/Sairy Gamp (1880) (nurse of Dicken's 1843 novel *Martin Chuzzlewit***)**	**Sarey Gamp** + note	Removed	**Sarey Gamp** + note
Hornpipe (dance from Britain and Ireland)	**Hornpipe**	**Tarantella**	**Hornpipe** + note
Yankee (People of the United states of America)	**Yankee** + note	**Yankee**	**Yankee**
Rappahannock **(**river in eastern Virginia)	Removed	**Rappahannock**	**Rappahannock +** note

The chart shows that Speckel (TT2) was the only one to never use translator's notes in these cases. In one case, she adopted the same domesticating strategy employed for the translation of Apollyon by substituting *hornpipe* with *tarantella,* indicating traditional folk dances of Southern Italy. However, when another foreign dance of Czech origin is mentioned in Chapter 3 of the book, the *redowa*, she "italianised" the name (*redova*) and added a translator's note to explain the reference. The reason for this choice may be that she did not find a similar Italian dance to substitute it with. As for the games, the strategies adopted are various. Sacchini (TT3) left the name *Buzz* unchanged and explained how the

game works in a note, while for the other two (*Authors* and *Rigmarole*) she opted for a literal translation accompanied by translator's notes. Trabalza (TT1) did the same but decided to add a translator's note only for *Authors* perhaps because, unlike *Rigmarole*, whose rules are explained by a character of the novel, *Authors* is merely mentioned in the book, with no explanation given as to how it works. As for *Buzz*, both Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) adopted one of the most common strategy for dealing with various types of non-equivalence (Baker, 1992/2001:26) by rendering the hyponym *Buzz* with a hypernym, or superordinate (*gioco di società*/*gioco*). In our case, the hyponym referred to a "culture-specific concept" (Baker, 1992/2001: 21) not existing in the TL, and therefore rendered with a more general word.

4.3. Language and style

This section aims at comparing how Alcott's language, style and register were transposed into Italian in the three translations. As the story is mostly comprised of scenes from the everyday life of boys and girls aged twelve to sixteen, the register of the novel is mainly informal, with frequent contractions in direct speech (I'll, I've, don't, it's, I'm, isn't, etc). The text is characterised by a well-structured prose, the vocabulary is vivid, idiomatic and easily accessible. Therefore, when the register is more formal than usual in the original, this must be made evident in translation as well. As for the writing style, Alcott is very direct, her descriptions are succinct, without excessive embellishments, but extremely expressive. This section will provide several practical examples of passages taken from the text showing all the above said characteristics and will discuss the translation strategies chose in each Italian version.

4.3.1. Language and characterisation in *Little Women*

From the very first pages of the book any reader can guess much about the sisters' personalities just by seeing how they speak and interact with each other. This section will provide some examples showing how the author characterised the protagonists through language stratification and discuss if the Italian renditions maintain the same function. It is no surprise that Amy and Jo have the most marked ways of expressing themselves given their outstanding personalities. Most of the examples will relate to them, not because Meg

and Beth are less characterised, but rather because Amy's and Jo's language poses a greater challenge in translating terms.

One of Amy's salient characteristics is her continual efforts at trying to look and sound like an elegant, grown-up lady even though she is still a child. This trait is reflected in her attempts at using French expressions or words that are usually beyond her knowledge of English, and in the pride she takes in succeeding:

ST	'I never, never should have got over such an **agonizing mortification;'** and Amy went on with her work, in the proud consciousness of virtue, and the successful utterance of two long words in a breath (p. 75)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	"Mai, mai avrei potuto sopravvivere a tale **dolorosissima mortificazione**"
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	"Mai e poi mai sarei riuscita a sopportare una **simile prova**", e Amy si rimise al lavoro gonfia d'orgoglio per la consapevolezza della propria virtù e del fatto che le era riuscito di pronunciar bene due parole difficili tutte d'un fiato.
TT3 2018-Sacchini	"Mai e poi mai riuscirei a mandar giù una **mortificazione così agghiacciante**"

It is fundamental here to maintain the same type of vocabulary as the original, which Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) do. Speckel (TT2), instead, translated *agonizing mortification* with two common words, *simile prova*, which makes the subsequent part concerning the utterance of two long words (*pronunciar bene due parole difficili*) seem nonsensical. If in this case Amy managed to successfully use more complex words, she usually mispronounces them, or mistakenly uses an incorrect term in place of another with a similar sound – a phenomenon called malapropism – with comical effects. The following chart collects some examples from the text and how they are rendered in Italian.

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
When I think of this **deggerredation** (p. 71)	Quando penso a questa *digradazione*	Quando penso a questa degradazione	Quando penso a questa *umilliazione*
He was *parry*lized with fright, but she went (italics not mine) (p. 75)	Essa era *parrilizzata* dallo spavento, ma c'è andata.	Lei poverina era del tutto paralizzata	Lei era *parralizzata* dalla paura, ma è andata lo stesso
"Aunt March is a regular **samphire**, is she not? " "She means vampire, not sea-weed" (p. 186)	La zia March è proprio un **sampiero**, non vi pare?" "Vuol dire vampiro, mica quella sorta di fichi?!"	Zia March è un vero…**samphire** non è vero? "Amy vuol dire "vampiro", ma non importa"	Zia March è proprio una **sanguisorba**, vero? "Voleva dire "sanguisuga", non la pianta con i fiori viola"

You needn't be so rude, it's only a "lapse of lingy" (p. 112)	Non occorre che tu sii tanto sgarbata, è stato solamente un "lipsus languae,"	Non occorre far la sgarbata, si tratta soltanto di un *lapsus linguae*	Non c'è bisogno di fare l'antipatica, è soltanto un *raptus*
I think being disgraced in school is a great deal *tryinger* than anything bad boys can do (p.74)	Io dico che aver il disonore d'esser castigati a scuola sia una cosa *più peggiore* di ogni altra che possa capitare a un cattivo ragazzo	Quanto a me credo che l'esser messa nei guai a scuola è di gran lunga più *insopportabile* di ciò che possano fare i ragazzacci	"Io penso che una brutta figura a scuola sia molto più vergognoso della *nefandaggine* d'un ragazzaccio qualunque
That's a "label" on my "sect", answered Laurie, quoting Amy (p. 369)	"Questo è un 'libellulo' sul mio sesso," rispose Laurie, nella lingua di Amy.	"Questa è un'accusa al mio "sesso"", rispose Laurie, nella lingua di Amy.	Quanto vi piace a voi donne 'etichettare'," rispose Laurie citando Amy.
My sister Beth is a very fastidious girl, when she likes to be" said Amy […]. She meant fascinating (p. 234)	Mia sorella Beth è proprio una ragazza schizzinosa, quando vuole," disse Amy. Essa voleva dir "affascinante"	Mia sorella Beth è una ragazza molto "fastidiosa" quando lo vuole essere", disse Amy […]. Essa voleva dire fascinosa.	Mia sorella Beth è una ragazza davvero incontentabile quando ci si mette," disse Amy […]. Intendeva dire incantevole

The first thing to notice is that in the 1953 translation Speckel left the errors only in the third and last examples, since they are followed by a passage underlining Amy's mistake. Indeed, not to maintain the errors in this case would have required completely eliminating the subsequent passage of the text. Some interesting strategies were adopted to translate these two examples. Trabalza (TT1) replicated Amy's malapropism with the similar sounding words *sampiero* – designating unripe figs –and *vampiro*. Sacchini (TT3) chose to translate vampire as leech (*sanguisuga* in Italian) - the two terms can be associated at a semantic level - so that she could reproduce a very accurate example of malapropism, as the words *sanguisorba* and *sanguisuga* are very similar. These choices of course required both translators to change the subsequent part concerning the seaweed. Speckel (TT2) left *samphire* untranslated and added a note explaining that the Italian translation of the word does not recreate the English wordplay. As for the last example, Sacchini (TT3) was the only one who did not calque *fascinating* in translation by using the word *incantevole*. I believe she might have opted for this adjective because the English *fascinating* and the Italian *fascinosa*/*affascinante* can be considered false friends, as the former means extremely interesting in English, while the latters are generally used in Italian for grown-up women as a synonym of attractive. Hence, *incantevole* may be more suitable for a thirteen-years-old. For the penultimate example, it is quite difficult to

recreate Amy's malapropism in Italian. Trabalza's (TT1) translation seems to have played with the word *label*, which in Italian sounds similar to *libellula* (dragonfly) and was distorted in *libellulo*, but I cannot find a reason for this association of words other than simply making Amy use a completely incorrect term. In any case, this translation proves obscure for an Italian reader, who is not able to understand which word Amy misused or what she meant to say beyond her mistake. Speckel (TT2) opted for completely removing Amy's mistake, as she did in several other cases. Sacchini (TT3) found a clever solution by simply using the verb *etichettare*, which she had already employed for Amy in Chapter 1 – as we will see with the next example – thus making a reference that hopefully will not go unnoticed by an attentive reader. In so doing, even though she did not maintain Amy's malapropism, she managed to make sense of the part saying "quoting Amy". Readers are introduced to Amy's personality from the very first pages of Chapter 1, where Alcott manages to accurately characterise the sisters through short dialogues, like the following (1868/2012:7):

> "I don't believe any of you suffer as I do, for you don't have to go to school with impertinent girls, who **plague** you if you don't know your lessons, and laugh at your dresses, and **label** your father if he isn't rich, and insult you when **your nose** isn't nice."
>
> "If you mean *libel* I'd say so, and not talk about labels, as if pa was a pickle-bottle," advised Jo, laughing.
>
> "I know what I mean, and you needn't be "statirical" about it. It's proper to use good words, and improve your *vocabilary*," returned Amy, with dignity.

TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Voi non avete da andare a scuola con fanciulle impertinenti, che vi **canzonano** se non sapete la lezione, ridono delle anticaglie che avete in dosso, e **sfamano** vostro padre se non è ricco, e v'insultano se non portate il **naso greco**. "Se tu vuoi dir *diffamano*, dillo, e non parlare di sfamare, come se papà fosse un morto di fame," corresse Jo, ridendo. "So io quel che voglio dire, e non importa che tu ci faccia sopra la **statirica**! Bisogna adoperar parole scelte e migliorare il	Voi non siete costrette ad andare a scuola con ragazze impertinenti che vi **prendono in giro** se non sapete la lezione, vi burlano per i vostri vestiti fuori moda, **sfamano** vostro padre se non è ricco, o vi insultano se non avete un **profilo greco**." "Faresti meglio a dire *diffamano* e non *sfamano*, come se papà fosse un morto di fame", suggerì Jo, ridendo. "So quel che dico, e tu non dovresti fare della *statira* al riguardo. È corretto usare le parole e ampliare il proprio *vocabolario*", replicò Amy con dignità.	A voi non tocca andare a scuola con ragazzine impertinenti che ti **assillano** se non sai la lezione e ti prendono in giro per i vestiti che indossi e se tuo padre non è ricco lo **etichettano** subito come un morto di fame e se non hai un **naso carino** ti insultano pure." "Lo diffamano, vorrai dire, e non parlare di etichette come se papà fosse un barattolo di cetrioli sottaceto," suggerì Jo, ridendo. "So bene quello che voglio dire, e vedi di non fare tanto la *spiritata*. È giusto usare parole più *cercate* e migliorare il proprio *vocabilario*,"

proprio **vocabilario**," replicò Amy, dignitosamente.		ribattè Amy, con una certa solennità.

The exchange was accurately rendered in all versions, even if Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) had to slightly change Jo's reply as a consequence of translating *label/libel* with the verbs *sfamare/diffamare.* Indeed, this did not have any repercussion on the characterisation of Amy, as the example of malapropism, which was the central part of this passage, is still successfully rendered. Shortly after, Jo and Amy have a tiff over Jo whistling. This is another brief yet extremely revealing exchange about Amy and Jo:

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-sacchini
"Don't, Jo, it's so boyish"	"Non lo fare, Jo; è una cosa troppo da ragazzi."	"Non fare così Jo, sono modi troppo da ragazzi"	"Smettila Jo, è una cosa da maschi"
"That's why I do it"	"Per questo lo fo."	"Per questo lo faccio"	"È per questo che lo faccio"
"I detest rude, unladylike girls"	"Io non posso vedere le fanciulle sgarbate, senz'aria affatto di signorine."	"Non mi piacciono le ragazze sgarbate, che non sembrano signorine"	"Detesto le ragazze maleducate e poco eleganti"
"I hate affected, niminy piminy chits" (p.8)	"Io ho in uggia le santarelline mogie mogie ed affettate"	"E io odio le gatte morte, affettate"	"E io invece odio le mocciose tutte lezi e smancerie"

In this passage, Amy is annoyed by Jo's behaviours and forgets her usually quite manners to harshly scold her. I think it is important to maintain her peremptory and harsh tone (***Don't*** *Jo; I* ***detest***) here. I find Sacchini's (TT3) translation appropriate in these terms (*Smettila; Detesto*), while I do not think Trabalza's (TT1) and Speckel's (TT2) renditions are as sharp as the original – respectively *Non lo fare/ Io non posso vedere* and *Non fare così / Non mi piacciono*. As for the translation of *affected, niminy piminy chits,* Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) found an appropriate periphrasis to convey the original sense, while I do not think Speckel's (TT2) *gatta morta* - which indicates a person who appears harmless but is subtly pursuing his/her own personal benefit - is what the author wanted to convey in English.

If Amy strives to be a prim, well-mannered lady, Jo would have preferred to have been born a boy, as she likes "boys' games, work and manners" (1868/2012:9). She is wild, adventurous, and has little interest in looking and behaving like a young lady. These traits

are reflected in her direct and decisive way of speaking, with "good, strong words, that mean something", which Amy instead views as *slang* (1868/2012:63). Let us look at the following passage, related to the part of the plot where Beth contracts scarlet fever after going to the Hummels. Jo is angry at herself for not having gone in her place as she had promised to. When Beth asks her if she could contract the fever again, she replies:

ST	I guess not. Don't care if I do. Serve me right, **selfish pig**, to let you go, and stay writing **rubbish** myself! (p.303)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Immagino di no; non ti affannare se l'avrò; me lo merito, **brutta egoista** che sono, a lasciarti andare, e io rimanere a scrivere **robaccia** per mio conto!
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Non credo; non ti agitare non mi verrà; e me lo meriterei, **egoista** che sono stata a lasciarti andare, per rimanere a scrivere qualche **sciocchezza**!
TT3 2018-Sacchini	No, non credo; e se anche fosse non preoccuparti; così la prossima volta ci penserò bene prima di farti andare da qualche parte al posto mio perché voglio starmene a casa a scrivere la mia **robaccia**, **brutta egoista** che non sono altro!

We can perceive she is upset from the tone and strong words she uses (*serve me right*; *selfish pig*; *rubbish*). Both Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) tried to maintain the original tone by translating *selfish pig* as *brutta egoista*, and *rubbish* as *robaccia*. For *serve me right*, Sacchini (TT3) opted for a longer but effective periphrasis involving a frequently used phrase in Italian (*così la prossima volta*…). As in the previous example, Speckel (TT2) used a more neutral word for rubbish (*sciocchezza*). The following is another example of Jo's colloquial register:

ST	**I say**, isn't bread "**riz**" enough when it runs over the pans? (p. 196)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	**Dico**, il pane non è '**levito'** abbastanza quando esce dalla casseruola?
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Il pane è **lievitato** abbastanza quando esce fuori dalla pentola?
TT3 2018-Sacchini	**Senti un po'**, quando esce fuori dalla terrina il pane è ***lievito*** abbastanza?

Riz is the American dialectal form of the verb *rise* in the past tense. Here again Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) tried to reproduce the same register as the original by maintaining the colloquial *I say* at the beginning of the phrase and using the dialectal form of *lievitare* (rise) in Italian as well, that is *lievito/levito*. Speckel (TT2), instead, translated using a standard register and vocabulary. The next passage best reveals how Alcott accurately reflected the characterisation of the protagonists in the way they speak. It concerns Mrs March's, Amy's, Meg's and Beth's surprised reactions to Jo cutting her

hair to collect money for Mrs March' stay in Washington. No speaker is specified, yet anyone who has read the book to this point can positively say which member of the March family is saying what.

ST	'Your hair, your beautiful hair!' 'Oh, Jo, how could you? Your one beauty,' My Dear girl, there was no need of this.' 'She don't look like my Jo any more, but I love her dearly for it!'
TT1 1908-Trabalza	"I tuoi capelli! I tuoi bei capelli!" "oh, Jo, come hai potuto. L'unica tua bellezza! "Mia cara figliuola, non c'era questo bisogno" "non mi par più la mia Jo; ma io l'amo più caramente per questo!"
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	"I tuoi capelli, I tuoi splendidi capelli! Oh Jo, come hai potuto…l'unica tua bellezza!" "Figliola mia, non era necessario; non sembri più la mia Jo, ma mi sei ancora più cara per questo!"
TT3 2018-Sacchini	"I tuoi capelli, I tuoi bei capelli!" "Oh, Jo, come hai potuto? La tua bellezza più grande!" "Bambina mia, non dovevi." "Non sembra più la mia Jo, ma le voglio ancora più bene!"

Of course, to recreate the same effect of the original one must maintain the division in four different voices with inverted commas, which was done by Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3), but not by Speckel (TT2). In her translation, indeed, it seems that only two characters are speaking.

Hannah is another character of the book to have her own peculiar way of communicating. She started to work for the March family when Meg was born, and after all these years she is considered more as a dear friend than a servant. Unlike the other main characters, Hannah did not receive any education. Alcott does not explicitly tell the readers this information but let them guess it from the way Hannah writes and speaks, that is in a very colloquial, sometimes grammatically incorrect way. Most of her words are written in the way they are pronounced, which tells us that Hannah's knowledge of English is very much based on orality.

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Some poor creeter come a-beggin', and your ma went straight off to see what was needed (p.26)	Certe povere creature son venute a chiedere un soccorso, e vostra madre è scappata com'un razzo a vedere di che si trattava.	Certe povere creature sono venute in cerca di soccorso, e vostra madre è scappata via per vedere cosa occorreva loro.	È venuto un poveraccio a chiedere l'elemosina e vostra madre non **c'ha** pensato un attimo e s'è precipitata fuori a vedere **che** aveva bisogno.

I'd know which each of them gardings belonged to, ef I see 'em in Chiny (p. 169)	Riconoscerei a chi appartiene ciascun'aiuola, se le vedessi in China	Anche se mi dovesse capitare di vedere questi lotti che coltivate in Cina, sono sicura che riconoscerei la mano di ognuna di voi in ogni pianta che avete preso a curare	Saprei dire a chi appartiene ognuno di questi orticelli pure se li **vedrei** in Cina

It is not an easy task to reproduce in Italian Hannah's language with the same methods as Alcott. Indeed, the translators could not rely as much on the misspelling of words according to their pronunciation, because in Italian sounds have a one-to-one correspondence with a letter or groups of letters, while in English, for example, one can misspell *creature* in *creeter* and still obtain very similar sounds. The only option available for Italian translators is the use of colloquial vocabulary, style and expressions, together with minor grammatical mistakes when present in the ST. Throughout the book, Sacchini (TT3) strived more than the other translators to reproduce as accurately as possible Hannah's language. Where she could not misspell words, she tried to include modern colloquial expressions, constructions and forms distancing from standard Italian. In the examples above, for instance, she used the contracted forms for pronouns and verbs (*c'ha*), incorrect verb tenses (the conditional instead of the subjunctive in *pure se li **vedrei***) and the so called "che polivalente" (*a vedere **che** aveva bisogna*), which is an informal way of using the conjunction *che* for subordinate clauses that usually are characterised by other specific conjunctions. As we can see, the other two translators did not use any systematic strategy to reproduce Hannah's language variety; Speckel (TT2) in particular decided to make her speak and write in standard English throughout the whole book. In section 4.5.2, I will further discuss the issue of emulating Hannah's language in Italian by analysing a letter she writes to Mrs March.

As already mentioned, dialogues and scenes' descriptions, featuring minor but extremely revealing details, play a fundamental part in characters' development in *Little Women,* as much as direct contributions or comments from the omniscient narrator do. The following are some examples of this phenomenon.

ST	If Jo is a **tomboy** and Amy a goose, what am I, please? (p. 10)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Se Jo è un **maschio vestito da femmina**, e Amy un'oca, io che sono, di grazia?

TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Se Jo è un **monello** e Amy un'ochetta, che cosa sono io, per piacere?
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Se Jo è un **maschiaccio** e Amy un'oca, io cosa sono, di grazia?

Beth calls Jo a *tomboy*, which designates a girl who acts and dresses like a boy, liking noisy, physical activities[38]. Each translation is effective here, but it seems to me that while Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) both tried to convey the exact same idea as the original, Speckel (TT2), by translating as *monello*, added a vaguely negative connotation, as if Jo was not just more lively and confident than the average girls of her age, but slightly ill-mannered and troublemaker.

ST	Mr Pickwick put on a pair of spectacles […] and, having stared hard at Mr Snodgrass, **who was tilting back in his chair**, till he arranged himself properly, began to read (pg. 171)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	[…] e, fissato seriamente il signor Snodgrass, **buttato all'indietro sulla sedia**, finché non si fu ricomposto
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	[…] e dopo aver lanciato un'occhiataccia al signor Snodgrass che si agitava sulla sedia per trovare una posizione più comoda.
TT3 2018-Sacchini	[…] e, dopo aver fissato con sguardo severo Mr Snodgrass che si dondolava sulle gambe posteriori della seggiola fin quando non ebbe assunto una postura più acconcia

In this passage, a small detail like the one highlighted in bold depicts a quite vivid image of Jo – she plays the part of Mr Snodgrass in the sisters' literary club based on Dicken's novel *The Pickwick Circle* – and her "rude, unlady-like" manners, as Amy claims. In Speckel's (TT2) rendition it seems that Jo is moving on the chair just to find a more comfortable position, while in the original she was purposely tilting back, and Meg stared gravely to scold her. With their translations, Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) manage to convey the same meaning and visual image of the original. In the next passage Meg is again reproaching Jo for wearing an old-fashioned hat

ST	Oh, oh, Jo! You ain't (are not) going to wear that awful hat? It's too absurd! You shall not make a **guy** of yourself" (p.211)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Per carità, jo! Tu non verrai con quell'orribile cappello! È una vera assurdità. Non vorrai far di te uno **spauracchio**"
TT2	Oh, Jo, non metterai quell'orribile cappello, vero? È una cosa assurda: non vorrai sembrare un **ragazzo**

[38]Cambridge Dictionary. Tomboy. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/tomboy. Accessed: February 11, 2021

1953/2011-Speckel	
TT3 2018-Sachini	Oh, oh, Jo! Non avrai mica intenzione di indossare quel cappellaccio osceno? È ridicolo! Conciata in questo modo, sembri uno **spaventapasseri**

To which Jo promptly replies "I just will though! it's capital; so shady, light, and big. It will make fun; and I don't mind being a guy, if I'm comfortable". Given the fact that it is a broad-brimmed hat we are talking about, both Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) thought of translating with the equivalent of scarecrow in Italian – *spauracchio* and *spaventapasseri* are synonyms – to give a very precise idea of how Jo looked in that hat. Speckel (TT2), instead, opted for a more literal translation, simply conveying the idea that Jo's hat is not one women would usually wear, and this is why Meg complains. These few examples were provided just to show how minor details, put together, can reveal a lot about a certain character, and consequently how important it is to pay attention to the smallest aspect in literary translation to be sure that the text is rendered in all its nuances.

4.3.2. Language and style in descriptions

As already mentioned at the beginning of the section, Alcott's descriptive style is very direct, without excessive embellishments or particularly long sentences. With this apparent simplicity, however, the author manages to create a complex structure of coordinate and subordinate clauses, and obtain quite a rhythmic prose. Her vocabulary is varied, but never too difficult, thus allowing her to reach a wide range of readers. Below I provided a few examples to show these features in practice.

> Fifteen–year–old Jo was very **tall, thin, and brown**, and reminded one of a colt; for she never seemed to know what to do with her long limbs, *which were very much in her way*. She had a decided **mouth**, a comical **nose**, and sharp, gray **eyes**, which appeared to see everything, and were by turns **fierce**, **funny**, or **thoughtful**. Her long, thick hair was her one beauty, but it was usually bundled into a net, to be out of her way. Round **shoulders** had Jo, big **hands** and **feet**, a fly-away look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman, and didn't like it. (p. 10-11)

This physical description of Jo is very straightforward, the vocabulary is ordinary but expressive, varied and precise. It is comprised of short coordinate and subordinate phrases skilfully combined to form an elaborate structure. It is also very rhythmic – a feature best noticeable when read aloud – thanks to the repeating pattern of triads (highlighted in bold)

the author scatters throughout the whole passage. Not to make the prose boring and repetitive Alcott used a dislocation (*Round shoulders had Jo*) and alternated as the subject of sentences both Jo and her features (*her long, thick hair*). Let us now look at how this style and language was rendered in Italian.

TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Josephine, o Jo, che ne aveva quindici, era molto alta, magra e bruna; rassomigliava a un puledro, perché pareva che non sapesse mai cosa far delle sue lunghe *estremità* che le erano assai d'impaccio. Aveva un taglio di bocca netto, un naso che rivelava l'umorista, degli occhi grigi vivaci, che sembrava vedessero tutto, ed erano a volta a volta fieri, birichini, pensosi. La sua lunga e folta capigliatura era una bellezza; ma di solito era tenuta nella rete perché non le desse fastidio. Aveva le spalle un po' curve, le mani e i piedi grossi; le vesti pareva sempre che le volessero volar via: **il suo era l'aspetto punto sodisfacente della ragazza che sta per diventar rapidamente una donna e non vuole.**	Jo o Josephine, di quindici anni, era alta, magra e bruna ed evocava un puledro perché sembrava non saper mai che cosa fare delle sue lunghe *estremità* che spesso la imbarazzavano. Aveva una bocca risoluta, il naso spiritoso; gli occhi grigi e furbi, **a cui nulla sembrava sfuggire, erano, volta a volta**, fieri, scherzosi o pensosi. La folta e lunga capigliatura rappresentava la sua bellezza; ma, **di solito,** era raccolta in una rete perché non le desse fastidio. Teneva le spalle curve, i piedi e le mani apparivano grandi; sembrava che i suoi abiti dovessero sempre volar via e presentava l'aspetto di una ragazza che sta mutandosi rapidamente, e *suo malgrado*, in donna	Per i suoi quindici anni Jo è molto alta, bruna e sottile, e ricorda un giovane puledro; **sì, perché** con quelle *gambe* e quelle *braccia* lunghe, **nel suo caso lunghissime**, pare che non sappia mai cosa farci. Ha una bocca dal taglio risoluto, un naso buffo e occhi grigi, sempre attenti, cui sembra non sfuggire nulla, di volta in volta fieri, arguti o pensosi. I suoi lunghi e folti capelli sono la sua unica bellezza; ma di solito li tiene raccolti in una retina, così non le danno impiccio. Ha le spalle spioventi Jo, mani e piedi grandi, una certa trascuratezza nel vestire e l'aspetto irrequieto di una ragazza che sta crescendo a vista d'occhio, e di colpo si ritrova donna, e la cosa non le piace per niente

The first element to notice is that Sacchini (TT3) decided to translate in the present tense, which in this case may have the effect of bringing Jo closer to the reader, as if she was standing right in front of him/her and the reader could see her features first hand. Each translation tried to maintain the same vocabulary and structure. I find Trabalza's (TT1) prose, however, less concise and rhythmic in general, because of the few periphrases included (*naso che rivelava l'umorista; le vesti pareva sempre che…*) and the choice of writing a stand-alone sentence at the very end (highlighted in bold). As for Speckel's (TT2) translation, it is very faithful to the original syntax and conciseness, but it is slightly less rhythmic due to a few asides (highlighted in bold) framed by a series of commas requiring brief but frequent pauses, with the effect of a less smooth reading flow compared to the English. Only in the last passage (*round shoulders etc*) the translator made some changes: she included more verbs than the original (*apparivano; sembrava che; presentava*), which lead to a less concise and rhythmic prose. As for Sacchini's

(TT3) translation, while she remained faithful to the structure of the original for the last passage, she took some liberties for the translation of the initial part. To maintain the semicolon and, consequently, a small pause between the two sentences "reminded one of a colt" and "for she never seemed to know…" , she had to add *sì* at the beginning of the second sentence to comply with Italian punctuation rules that do not allow to begin a phrase after a semicolon simply with *perché*. Therefore, in this case the embellishment was needed if one did not want to sacrifice the original syntax structure. The same cannot be said, however, for the subsequent aside (*nel suo caso lunghissime*), which could have been avoided. With regard to vocabulary in translation, it is worth mentioning some of the choices adopted: the English *limbs*, for example, was rendered by both Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) as *estremità*, which is not incorrect, but sounds odd in this context. Sacchini (TT3) decided to split the word in two with *gambe* and *braccia*, thus obtaining a more spontaneous text in Italian. Another element to notice is Speckel's (TT2) rendition of the phrase "which were very much in her way" as *che spesso la imbarazzavano.* This translation seems to convey the idea that Jo is embarrassed by her long limbs. I do not think Alcott wanted to give this nuance to the original, as it also would not be consistent with Jo, who is quite careless about her physical appearance. I believe Alcott simply wanted to say that Jo found her long limbs to be in the way of her constant restlessness.

The following passage is a brief description of Jo's personality. Here again, Alcott repeated the triadic pattern (highlighted in bold), which contributes to the rhythm of the prose. The syntax is made up of a series of coordinate clauses and the vocabulary is again varied but easily accessible.

> Jo's ambition was to do something very splendid. What it was, she had no idea (as yet); but left it for time to tell her; and meanwhile, found her greatest affliction in the fact that she couldn't **read, run, and ride** as much as she liked. A **quick temper, sharp tongue, and restless spirit** were always getting her into scrapes, and her life was a series of ups and downs, which were both comic and pathetic (p. 67)

TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
L'ambizione di Jo era di far qualche cosa di molto splendido; che cosa, non lo sapeva neppur lei, ma lasciava al tempo	L'ambizione di Jo era di fare qualcosa di veramente splendido; che cosa ciò fosse non ne aveva ancora la minima idea; per il	Jo aveva ambizioni molto più alte; quali di preciso, ancora non lo sapeva, ma il tempo l'avrebbe aiutata a capire; e intanto si

d'indicarglielo; e, frattanto, era afflittissima di non poter leggere, correre, e cavalcare quanto le piaceva. Un temperamento vivace, una lingua pronta e uno spirito irrequieto la ponevano sempre in qualche impiccio, e la sua vita era una serie di alti e bassi, divertenti insieme e noiosi.	momento aspettava che il tempo glielo dicesse e ora si sentiva tremendamente afflitta per il fatto che non le riusciva di leggere, di correre e di scarrozzare come le pareva meglio. Il suo caratteraccio sempre pronto a scattare, la lingua tagliente, e quel suo spirito senza pace la mettevano sempre nei guai, e la sua vita era tutta una serie di alti e bassi che assumevano aspetti comici e patetici allo stesso tempo.	dannava l'anima perché non poteva leggere, correre e cavalcare quanto avrebbe voluto. Il carattere impulsivo, la lingua tagliente e lo spirito indomito non facevano che metterla nei guai, e la sua vita era una sequenza di alti e bassi, buffi e patetici al tempo stesso.

Both Trabalza's (TT1) and Sacchini's (TT3) translations stick to the original syntax and conciseness, and therefore the rhythmical aspect of the passage is maintained. Speckel's (TT2) version is not as immediate as the original due to some expressions or periphrasis making the sentences longer. This affects the overall rhythm of the passage, but not its meaning, except for the translation of *ride*, rendered as *scarrozzare*, which does not convey the idea of riding a horse. The fact that both the examples provided concern Jo is not an indication that this writing style is a prerogative of this character; any reader will notice that it is consistent, regardless of which character or situation Alcott is describing, and therefore can be considered typical of the author for this book. Several passages could be included here to prove these claims, but for space constraints I will only mention the followings, which feature the same characteristics highlighted so far:

> There never was such a Christmas dinner as they had that day. The fat turkey was a sight to behold, when Hannah sent him up, **stuffed, browned, and decorated**. So was the plum pudding, which melted in one's mouth; likewise the jellies, in which Amy revelled like a fly in a honeypot. Everything turned out well (p. 376)

> Elizabeth, or Beth, as everyone called her, was a **rosy, smooth–haired, bright–eyed** girl of thirteen, with a **shy manner, a timid voice, and a peaceful expression** which was seldom disturbed (p.10)

> Instantly, Sir What's–his name recovered himself, pitched the tyrant out of the window, and turned to join the lady, victorious, but with a bump on his brow; found the door locked, tore up the curtains, made a rope ladder, got halfway down when the ladder broke, and he went headfirst into the moat, sixty feet below. Could swim like a duck, paddled round the castle till he came to a little door guarded by two stout fellows; knocked their heads together till they cracked like a couple of nuts, then, by a trifling exertion of his prodigious strength, he smashed in the door, went up a pair of stone steps covered with dust a foot thick, toads as big as your fist, and spiders that would frighten you into hysterics, Miss March (p. 220)

4.3.3. "Linguistic" realia: neologisms, wordplays, idiomatic expressions

This section will look at the rendition of wordplay, neologisms and idiomatic expressions contributing to the vibrant language and style of Alcott's writing. For the following passage, for example, Alcott invents the word *dollanity.*

ST	One forlorn fragment of *dollanity* had belonged to Jo (italics not mine) (p. 68)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Un resto abbandonato di *bamboleria* era appartenuto a Jo (italics not mine)
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Un frammento abbandonato di questo mondo di bambole era una volta appartenuto a Jo
TT3 2018-Sacchini	C'era poi un misero resto, più un frammento di *bambolità* che una bambola vera e propria (italics not mine)

Both Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) translated by recreating a corresponding neologism in Italian (*bamboleria/bambolità*), while Speckel (TT2) opted for a periphrasis (*mondo di bambole*). Each translation is valid, but Trabalza's and Sacchini's are obviously more unique and expressive. In another passage, Meg is packing the

ST	**"go abroady**" trunk (p.142)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Il baule "dell'estero"
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Baule "per andare all'estero"
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Baule dei "viaggi importanti"

In Italian it is impossible to obtain a construction like the English, where, by adding a *y* to *go-abroad*, it becomes an adjective of trunk, therefore there were no translating options other than the ones shown above. As anticipated, the book is characterised by several examples of wordplay and idiomatic expressions, which are extremely difficult to render in another language. Let us consider the following example:

ST	A fine, spacious building, with padlocks on the doors, and every convenience for the mails, -**also the females**, if I may be allowed the expression (p.182)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Un elegante, spazioso stabile, con lucchetti alle porte, e tutto l'occorrente per il disbrigo della posta.
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	E di quanto altro può essere necessario per i postini…e anche per le postine
TT3 2018-Sacchini	E tutto quel che occorre ai postini – e ai postini femmina, passatemi l'espressione

Here Laurie comes up with a clever expression by playing with the words *males* and *mails,* which are homophones in English. It is impossible to recreate a similar wordplay, as the phenomenon of homophony between two terms with different spelling and meaning does not occur in Italian. As a consequence, Trabalza (TT1) decided to eliminate the wordplay, while the other two translators attempted to render it, but the effect cannot obviously be compared to the original. A similar example involving homophony concerns Miss Crocker, a family friend the sisters are not really fond of, and therefore jokingly call "Croaker". Croaker literally means "the one who croaks", that is the sound made by animals such as frogs and crows. In her translation, Speckel (TT2) left Croaker untranslated and added a footnote to explain the meaning of the verb *to croak* in English, while Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) translated the word into Italian. The former used the word *Gracchiona*, which has the same stem of *gracchiare*, the corresponding Italian verb for *croak*. Even though not as effective as the original, this translation works because *Gracchiona* shares some sounds with *Crocker/Croaker (r - r, ck/k - cch)*. By translating as *Crocchiola*, it seems that Sacchini (TT3) primarily focused on distorting the surname with a word sounding very similar to *Crocker/Croaker*. However, one may argue that she also tried to include the "croaking" element, as the word *Crocchiola* remotely reminds of the Italian onomatopoeic sound associated with frogs, that is *cra cra*.

One of Beth's Christmas presents is a red ribbon for "Madam Purrer's tail" (p. 372). Laurie and Jo cleverly personify Beth's cat by inventing the surname Purrer, which includes the verb *to purr*, used in English to refer to the soft, low sounds typical of cats. In Italian this wordplay was rendered in different ways: Trabalza (TT1) left it untranslated and explained it in a note; Speckel (TT2) eliminated the wordplay by translating *Mamma Gatta*; Sacchini (TT3) translated as *Madama Fusetta*, recreating the wordplay with the corresponding Italian verb for *purr*, that is *fare le fusa*.

When it comes to idiomatic expressions, they are often relatively easy to translate because one can find a corresponding fixed expression in the target language that may have "a similar meaning and form" or "similar meaning but dissimilar form" (Baker, 1992/2001:72-4) compared to the one in the SL text, as in the following example:

ST	There don't seem to be anything to hold on to when Mother's gone, so I'm all at sea (p. 306)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Qui sembra che non ci sia niente di stabile, quando la mamma è lontana; io ho perduto la bussola
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Quando la mamma non c'è sembra che qui non vi sia più un sostegno; ho proprio perso la tramontana
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Da quando mamma è partita, è come se non ci fosse più un porto sicuro, e io mi sento in alto mare

As we can see, three different and equally valid idiomatic expressions were used to translate *I'm all at sea*.

In one passage of the book Jo is described as a *bookworm.* Today the officially recognised (Treccani encyclopaedia) idiomatic expression for *bookworm* is *topo da biblioteca,* which was used by Sacchini (TT3) in her translation. Speckel (TT2) translated as *tarlo dei libri*, which is not the translation readers would expect today, but still coveys the right idea. Trabalza (TT1) opted for *gran leggitore di cartello*, which is neither a literal translation, nor an Italian idiomatic expression. In another passage, Amy says *I'll be a double distilled saint* (p. 258). Here Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) obtained an equally effective translation: the first used an Italian fixed expression conveying the same meaning as the English (*Oh, sarò un agnellino*), while the second used the word *quintessenza* (quintessence) to reinforce the status of saint like *double distilled* does in the original (*Diventerò la **quintessenza** di un santo*). Sacchini (TT3) opted for a less expressive tone here (*Sarò un **vero** santo*). The following part contains another interesting expression:

ST	"Hold your tongue!" cried Jo, covering her ears. "Prunes and prisms" are my doom, and I may as well make up my mind to it. I came here to moralize, not to hear about things that make me skip to think of." (p. 362)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	"Zitto!" gridò Jo, turandosi le orecchie. "Casa e bottega è il mio destino, e sarebbe meglio che mi ci rassegni. Son venuta qui per predicar la morale, e non per udir delle cose che, al solo pensarci, mi fanno saltare"
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	"Zitto", gridò Jo, chiudendosi le orecchie, "casa e bottega è il mio destino e sarebbe meglio che mi rassegnassi. Sono venuta qui per predicare la morale e non per udire discorsi che, al solo pensarvi, mi fanno saltare."
TT3 2018-Sacchini	"Tieni a freno la lingua!" urlò Jo coprendosi le orecchie con le mani. "'Calzetta e salamelecchi', è questo il mio triste destino, ed è meglio che ci faccia l'abitudine. Sono venuta qui a farti la morale, mica a sentirti parlare di cose assurde che non stanno né in cielo né in terra."

This is Jo's reply to Laurie insisting on running off to Washington together. *Prunes and prisms* is a phrase coined by Charles Dickens in his novel *Little Dorrit* (1857) and used

to refer to an intentionally prim and affected speech, look, or manner[39]". Both Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) translated the phrase with an Italian idiomatic expression, *casa e bottega*, which designates a person whose life is entirely devoted to work and family and, by extension, has no other particular aspirations. Jo has many wishes (fight in the War, become a famous writer, travel abroad) but knows that, being a woman, this is not the life society has in mind for her. Therefore, even though it does not exactly correspond to the dictionary's definition of *prunes and prisms*, using the expression *casa e bottega* to decline Laurie's offer seems a valid option here, coherent with the story. Given the fact that the Italian language has no fixed expression corresponding to English *prunes and prisms*, Sacchini (TT3) created one from scratch in order to convey precisely the same meaning as the original.

The last example I wish to provide is from the letter Amy writes to her mother while she is in Washington, caring for her husband.

ST	Laurie is not as respeckful as he ought to be now **I am almost in my teens** (p. 294)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	Laurie non è tanto rispettoso come dovrebbe essere ora che io sto per entrar negli undici
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	Laurie non rispetta come dovrebbe, ora che sto per compiere tredici anni
TT3 2018-Sacchini	Laurie non è così rispeccoso come dovrebbe essere ora che vado per i quattordici

The expression *I am almost in my teens* is based on the distinctive English way of naming the age span going from thirteen to nineteen, that is "teens". It is clearly linked to the fact that each of these numbers ends in *teen.* The only Italian expression similar to the English one would be *ora che sto per entrare nell'adolescenza/ora che sto per diventare adolescente.* However, I would not recommend it, as the term *adolescenza* does not have an exact age range in Italian like the word *teens* does in English. Indeed, *I am almost in my teens* leaves no doubt as to the fact that Amy is now twelve and is soon going to be thirteen. I believe the only correct way to render this expression is how Speckel (TT2) did in her translation, while I find both Trabalza's (TT1) and Sacchini's (TT3) translations inaccurate.

[39] Encyclopedia.com. Prunes and prisms. https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/prunes-and-prisms. Accessed: February 3, 2021

4.4. Archaic vs modern lexicon in translation

One of the first questions that may come to mind when approaching the translation of a literary classic written in a distant era is how to deal with the style and lexicon used in the text. Cavagnoli, in her book *La voce del Testo* (2012), makes a distinction between what she calls "falsi classici" (fake classics), that is contemporary novels purposely set in remote times, and "classici autentici" (authentic classics), written and set in the same era. In the first case, it is reasonable to maintain an antiquated lexicon in translation to respect the author's intention. Authentic classics, instead, according to Cavagnoli (2012), should be translated with a contemporary lexicon, especially in the case of retranslation, or otherwise one could simply take a previous translation and revise it. Each of the translations I analysed seems to be in line with Cavagnoli's theory. To a contemporary reader, indeed, Trabalza's and Speckel's translations are likely to sound archaic because they reflect the Italian language of their time of publication (1908 and 1953). In this light, it does not seem coherent to make a comparison in terms of lexicon, as the time difference between the translations is too great. However, given the fact that the 1953 translation was republished in recent years, one can question if the lexicon used still meets the expectations of today's readers. By looking at the reviews for the 2011 edition we discover that some readers found this translation "awful" due to its "archaic language", "obsolete constructions" and typographical errors[40]. As we have seen, the issue is more complicated than this, as the translation is not "awful" in itself, but as a result of the fact that it is anachronistic today. While the majority recognised that the problem lay in this specific edition and hoped that the publishing house would update the translation, some could not separate the two matters and expressed a negative judgement about the English novel in general. One of the most evident elements of Speckel's translation which might have bothered contemporary readers is the systematic use of the personal pronouns *ella/essa* instead of *lei*, *egli/esso* instead of *lui* and *esse/essi* instead of *loro.* The following chart aims at giving an idea of the "archaic language" and "obsolete constructions" the reviewers mentioned by offering some practical examples from the text and how they

[40] This information was taken from the reviews written on Amazon by those who purchased the 2011 edition of Piccole Donne published by Newton Compton. The complete reviews can be found here https://www.amazon.it/Piccole-donne-Piccole-donne-crescono-integrale/dp/8854197513. Accessed: February 27, 2021

were translated in 1953 and 2018. The parts in bold are the terms and expressions that I believe might sound archaic today.

ST	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Money lavished on trifles (p. 65)	**Profondere in semplici quisquilie**	Vedere sprecato in cose di nessuna importanza quel denaro che…
Going out for exercise (p. 80)	Vado fuori a fare **un poco di moto**	Vado a sgranchirmi un po' fuori
No need of that; I ain't a young lady, **and it's only a step** (p.96)	E c'è solo un passo	E siamo a due passi
A handsome soldierly old gentleman (pg.111)	Da uomo bello e **marziale** qual era	Da vecchio gentiluomo bello e valoroso qual era
Suppose we take her (p. 126)	Che dici se la **conducessimo con noi?**	La portiamo con noi, che dici?
The old man quite dotes on them (p. 150)	Il vecchio è proprio **infatuato** di loro	Il vecchio stravede per loro
Here's richness!" cried Jo, flying in to tell the news to Meg (p. 208)	[…] strillò Jo, irrompendo nella stanza per **partecipare la notizia** a Meg	[…] esclamò Jo, volando a riferire la notizia a Meg.
The tale was romantic, and somewhat pathetic, and most of the characters died in the end (p. 266)	Il racconto era, infatti, romantico e anche **patetico** perché la maggior parte dei personaggi, alla fine, moriva	Era una storia davvero romantica e toccante, dato che nel finale moriva gran parte dei personaggi
Roll of bills (p.277)	Il **pacchetto** di **biglietti di banca**	Rotolo di banconote

It is worth noticing that, while the 1953/2011 edition was described as too archaic, in her 2018 translation Sacchini was not afraid to use quite modern expressions, such as the following:

ST	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Come on, then! Why not? You go and surprise your father, and I'll stir up old Brooke. (p. 361)	E allora vieni anche tu! Perché no? Così fai una sorpresa a tuo padre, e io vado a **rompere un po' le scatole** al vecchio Brooke
She was 'fond of luxury' (p.65)	Aveva il "**pallino del lusso**"
There never was such a cross family (p.62)	Mamma mia che **branco di musoni**, **'sta** famiglia

In the last example, which is a complaint from Jo, Sacchini used the contracted form of the demonstrative adjective *questa* ('sta), which is popular among young people today and successfully emulates Jo's slang in the original.

An additional aspect to take into consideration before concluding this section is that the 2011 Italian edition of *Little Women* belongs to a series of literary classics, *I Mammut*, sold by the publishing house Newton Compton at a price much lower than the average. We can suppose that, in order to maintain a low price and still make a profit, the publishing house could not commission a new translation and therefore decided to reprint one that had already been used in previous editions. On the one hand, one can argue that, even if the translation is not ideal, it is a compromise worth accepting for a low price and the possibility of reading classics granted to everyone, regardless of their economic status. On the other hand, one could condemn the practice of putting a price on culture and letting the rules of profit guide book publishing decisions.

4.5 Rhymed compositions and letter-writing *Little Women*

The regular narrative of the novel is sometimes interrupted by other writing genres, such as short poems, letters and articles. These are genres Alcott was familiar with, as she herself would frequently write little compositions in her childhood and, to her admission, she "always love[d] to get letters and to answer them too" (Myerson and Shealy, 1995: 37 in Gaul, 2015). Letters and poems are not just casually scattered here and there in the text, they are the main body of two chapters of the book: Chapter 10, *The P. C. and P. O.*, and Chapter 16, *Letters*. From the analysis of these chapters and two others from *Little Women-Part 2*, Gaul (2015) noticed that this change in narrative genre seems to help the author in dealing with particularly delicate parts of the plot or highlighting significant transitional moments: in Chapter 10 the sisters accept Laurie as a member of their secret literary club, which, by extension, can be viewed as his final acceptance into the March girls' circle; Chapter 16 seems to mitigate the anxiety generated by Mrs Alcott moving to Washington to assist her husband, who has fallen ill during his Civil War service. This section will look at the challenges posed by these narrative genres from a translation point of view and the strategies adopted in the three Italian translations.

4.5.1 Rhymed compositions in *Little Women* and *Piccole Donne*

With the concept of "dominant" Jakobson (1987) designated the central component on which any translator aiming to preserve the integrity of the ST should focus. When it

comes to poems, identifying the dominant is not easy, as form and content usually have equal importance and preserving them both is particularly difficult. Therefore, translators often need to come to terms with the logic of gain and loss: in order to preserve content, they might need to sacrifice form, or vice versa. The poems included in *Little Women* might be seen both as embellishments to the main plot and as a further characterisation of Jo. They confirm her role as writer of the family and make evident her creative nature. In this light, I believe that maintaining the rhymes and rhythm of these compositions is important, as they reveal Jo's skills and passion for writing. In addition to this, one should consider that the novel's primary addressees are young people, and that the musicality of a text is greatly entertaining for them. Having said that, let us now look at two of the rhymed compositions of the book.

The Pickwick Portfolio, the newspaper the sisters write for their secret literary society, opens with an *Anniversary Ode* (p. 171), written by Jo. The ode is composed of ten quatrains, each one with the same rhyme scheme A-B-C-B. Out of the ten stanzas, I selected the first two, the sixth and the ninth, as their translations offer interesting elements to comment.

	1st stanza	**2nd stanza**
ST	Again we meet to celebrate With badge and solemn rite, Our fifty–second anniversary, In Pickwick Hall, tonight.	We all are here in perfect health, None gone from our small band; Again we see each well–known face, And press each friendly hand.
TT1 1908 Trabalza	Insiem, di nuovo, nel salone solito si viene, a celebrare il cinquantesimo secondo anniversario: tutti accorrere ci si vede in divisa e solennissimo rito, stasera. Tutti stiam benissimo,	e la famiglia non lamenta perdite, la piccola famiglia: si riveggono le facce note e amicamente stringosi le mani amiche. Già Pickwick è in ordine,
TT2 1953/2011 Speckel	E nuovamente siam qui a festeggiare, con fascia in capo e rito solenne, L'anniversario del nostro P.C. Che un altro anno ha trascorso indenne.	Ci siamo tutti, in perfetta salute, nessuno ha lasciato il nostro piccolo gruppo; di nuovo vediamo le facce ben note, e lieti stringiamo le mani amiche.
TT3 2018 Sacchini	Ed ecco di nuovo la società riunita a celebrare con distintivi **sgargianti** e rito solenne, i cinquantadue anni di vita del Circolo Pickwick, che son tanti.	Siam tutti qua in perfetta salute, nessuna defezione nel nostro gruppo di amici; di nuovo vediamo queste facce conosciute e ci stringiamo le mani, **lieti e felici.**

	6th stanza	**9th stanza**
ST	Poetic fire lights up his eye, He struggles 'gainst his lot; Behold ambition on his brow, And on his nose, a blot.	The year is gone, we still unite To joke and laugh and read, And tread the path of literature That doth to glory lead.
TT1 1908	A lui brillano gli occhi di poetica Fiamma ed ognora lo vediamo combattere Colla sorte: vediamo sul fronte assidersi	[…]. È giunto al termine Ormai l'anno: ma per ridere, per leggere E per scherzare siamo tutti unanimi

Trabalza	Ambizione e macchioline livide Sul naso.	Ed insieme raccolti: si vuol correre, gloria cercando, la via delle lettere
TT2 1953/2011 Speckel	Gli splendon negli occhi poetici fuochi E lotta tenace contro la sorte; egli è **ambizioso come pochi**: le macchie d'inchiostro **lo gridano forte**	L'anno è passato e ancora qui siamo a ridere, a leggere e a scherzare; Le vie dell'arte qui percorriamo Perché alla gloria **vogliamo arrivare**.
TT3 2018 Sacchini	Nelle pupille brillano poetici fuochi, e lotta **come un titano** contro il destino; guarda l'ambizione dentro i suoi occhi e la macchia d'inchiostro sul suo nasino!	L'anno è trascorso e qui ci riuniamo Per ridere, leggere e scherzare, e la via della letteratura percorriamo ché sola alla gloria può portare.

In the 1908 edition Trabalza modified the aesthetics of the ode: the ten stanzas were united into a single, long one with no rhymes. It seems as if the translators took the content of the ode and retold it with long reformulations, thus losing the conciseness characterising the original. Speckel (TT2), instead, preserved the ode's structure, maintaining the division in stanzas. As for the rhymes, eight out of ten stanzas present a rhyme scheme (five A-B-A-B, two A-B-C-B, one A-B-A-C). If we consider the sixth and ninth stanzas, we can deduce that Speckel (TT2) considered important the preservation of musicality because, for some lines, which I highlighted in bold, she chose to slightly change the text or add expressions not present in the original in order to keep the rhyme scheme. In her translation Sacchini (TT3) was able to recreate a poem of ten quatrains, each one with the regular rhyme scheme A–B–A-B. Similarly to Speckel (TT2), she sometimes switched lines or added some expressions - highlighted in bold - not present in the original in order to recreate the rhyme scheme and maintain the same length for each line. None of the three translations result as succinct as the original, especially Trabalza's (TT1), but one needs to consider that the Italian language in general tends to be less concise compared to the English.

The following is a little composition Jo and Laurie write for Beth on Christmas Day.

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
THE JUNGFRAU TO BETH God bless you, dear Queen Bess! May nothing you dismay, But health and peace and happiness Be yours, this Christmas day.	LA JUNGFRAU A BETH O Beth, regina cara, Ti benedica Iddio; Nessuna cosa amara Ti venga a rattristar; Ma in questo natal giorno Sempre ti siano intorno La pace, la salute E la felicità	LA JUNGFRAU A BETH Dio ti benedica, cara regina Bessie! Più nulla possa farti male; Ma salute, pace e felicità Ti porti questo Natale.	LA JUNGFRAU A BETH Ti benedica Iddio, Cara regina Bess! E nulla ti scoraggi, Ma pace e sana allegria Con te a Natale sian. C'è frutta perché l'ape Operosa la mangi, Fiori **pel suo nasìn**. Musica **per il pianin**

Here's fruit to feed our busy bee, And flowers for her nose. Here's music for her pianee, An afghan for her toes,	Per nutrire l'operosa Ape nostra, ecco le frutta; Pel suo naso, ecco qua i fior; Pel suo piano, ecco la musica; E pel suo piedino rosa, Un Afghan ecco qui ancora	Frutti succosi per la nostra ape, E fiori odorosi per il suo nasino; E musiche elette per il suo piano **E un caldo scialle per il suo corpicino.**	Calda lana **pei piedìn**, Di Joanna un ritratto Del nuovo Raffaello, Che con gran lena fece Il viso vero e bello. Un nastro rosso accetta, Per Madama Fusetta, E il gelato di Peg, Un mont blanc in un mastello.
A portrait of Joanna, see, By Raphael No. 2, Who laboured with great industry To make it fair and true.	Di Joanna, ecco, un ritratto Io ti prego d'osservare; E l'ha fatto Il secondo Raffaello Con sua industria singolare, Perché fosse vero e bello.	Un ritratto di Joanna, mirate Opera tutta di Raffaello secondo, Che utilizzò colore a palate Per rendere noto il suo viso nel mondo.	Chi mi plasmò mi ha messo Di neve dentro il petto Il suo più dolce affetto. Accettalo, ti prego, Con la fanciulla alpina, Sono doni di Laurie E Jo, tua sorellina.
Accept a ribbon red, I beg, For ***Madam Purrer***'s tail, And ice cream made by lovely Peg, A Mont Blanc in a pail.	Accetta, io ben ti supplico, Di Madama Purrer Per la coda, purpureo Questo nastro da me; E, fatto dall'amabile Peg, di crema un gelato, Che par un monte candido In una secchia entrato.	Accetta, ti prego, questo nastro rosso Per la coda di mamma Gatta; e il gelato che con animo mosso **Meg ha fatto per la sua adorata**.	
Their dearest love my makers laid Within my breast of snow. Accept it, and the Alpine maid, From Laurie and from Jo	Dentro il mio seno di neve Pose il suo più caro affetto Chi alla vita mi creò; Con dell'Alpi la fanciulla A te torni in dono accetto Dai tuoi cari Laurie e Jo.	Enorme affetto chi mi creò Pose dentro il mio petto di neve: Accetta l'amore di Laurie e di Jo, **Che voglio offrirti come si deve**.	

The first element to notice here is that each translator opted for a different structure. Trabalza (TT1) maintained the division in five stanzas, but frequently distributed the content of each ST's line in two TT's lines, therefore the total number of lines is considerably higher compared to the English (20 vs 34). This translation did not transpose the musicality of the original and does not include any rhyme scheme, perhaps as a result of sticking to the exact words and order of the original lines. In her translation Speckel (TT2) aimed at preserving each characteristic of the original: she maintained the structure (5 quatrains), recreated a systematic rhyme scheme (A-B-C-B for the first two stanzas, D-E-D-E for the remaining) and left the content more or less unchanged, except for the lines highlighted in bold, which she might have needed to slightly change for the benefit of the rhyme scheme. Sacchini (TT3) was the only one removing the division into stanzas, but she kept the same number of lines. Even though she did not include a systematic rhyme scheme in her version, she played with assonance (*allegria – sian, mastello* -

messo) and alliteration (in bold), which help in obtaining an overall musicality especially perceivable when the poem is read aloud.

Sacchini (TT3) seemed to make conciseness and a tight rhythm the primary focus of her translation. As we can see, she eliminated a few elements - *tail* from "Madam Purrer's tail", *lovely* from "made by lovely Peg", *health* from "health, peace and happiness", which she transformed into the adjective *sana* - which allowed her to maintain the same rhythm throughout the text with no relevant loss compared to the English. On the contrary, Speckel (TT2) decided to add "embellishments" to the target text - the adjectives *succosi* (succulent), *odorosi* (odorous), *elette* (best), *caldo* (warm). This reminds me of Eco's discussion on the practice of "enriching the target text" included in his book *Dire quasi la stessa cosa* (2003). He explains how some translations enrich the target language and in so doing "say more" than the original text intended to (Eco, 2003:110). He considers these target texts good literary works per se, but not good translations, and suggests they should be classified as "rifacimenti d'autore" (rewriting of a literary work) instead. In our case, Italian readers will certainly appreciate Speckel's (TT2) version, but from a translating point of view it must be noted that she "said more" than the original and did not respect Alcott's style.

I provided these two examples to give a general idea of how the translation of these poetic compositions was approached by the three translators. I find Speckel's (TT2) and Sacchini's (TT3) renditions the most accurate, not only because they managed not to sacrifice content for musicality and vice versa, but because the language, lexicon and syntax employed are more in line with the original. As already mentioned at the beginning of this section, one must bear in mind that these short compositions were invented by Jo to amuse herself and her sisters. Therefore, Alcott did not use formal English, or a particularly elegant or intricate syntax. From this point of view, Trabalza's (TT1) translations seem more sophisticated, while Speckel's (TT2) and Sacchini's (TT3) reflect the original more in terms of syntax and vocabulary choices.

4.5.2. Letter-writing in *Little Women* and *Piccole Donne*

Apart from the letters Laurie and the sisters exchange for fun after he sets up a post-office (Chapter 10), Chapter 16 of the book consists for the most part of letters the sisters,

Hannah, Laurie and Mr Laurence write to Mrs March while she is in Washington, caring for her husband. While the use of letters may be a means of varying and refreshing the narration, in the case of Chapter 16 it has several additional purposes. Other than helping the author in toning down the anxiety and stress of this part of the plot, the letters allow each character to speak for himself/herself and not through the narrator's voice. Moreover, each letter serves as a reaffirmation of the characters' personality and typical behaviour. From the point of view of translation, the letters of Amy, Hannah and Laurie are particularly interesting. Let us begin by analysing Amy's letter (1868/2012:294).

> **Ma Chere** Mamma,
>
> We are all well I do my lessons always and never **corroberate** the girls—Meg says I mean **contradick** so I put in both words and you can take the **properest**. Meg is a great comfort to me and lets me have jelly every night at tea its so good for me Jo says because it keeps me sweet tempered. Laurie is not as **respeckful** as he ought to be now I am almost in my teens, he calls me Chick and hurts my feelings by talking French to me very fast when I say Merci or **Bon jour** as Hattie King does. The sleeves of my blue dress were all worn out, and Meg put in new ones, but the full front came wrong and they are **more blue** than the dress. I felt bad but did not fret I bear my troubles well but I do wish Hannah would put more starch in my aprons and have buckwheats every day. Can't she? Didn't I make that **interrigation** point nice. Meg says my **punchtuation** and spelling are disgraceful and I am **mortyfied** but dear me I have so many things to do, I can't stop.
>
> Adieu, I send heaps of love to Papa.
>
> Your affectionate daughter,
>
> AMY CURTIS MARCH

As we can see, Amy's letter has numerous spelling and punctuation errors, which is perfectly in line with the characterisation she is given throughout the book. This element, together with the subjects of her report, produces a comical effect, entertaining the readers and distracting them from the critical moment the family is experiencing. Of the three translations, only Trabalza (TT1) and Sacchini (TT3) attempt to replicate the original:

TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Ma chere mamma: Noi stiamo tutte bene, fo le mie lezioni sempre e non mai **collobero** le ragazze – Meg dice che io intendo dire **controdico** così io ci metto tutte e due le parole e voi potete prender la **più propria**. Meg è un grande conforto per me e mi lascia prender la gelatina ogni sera al tè, essa mi fa tanto bene, Jo dice perché mi mantiene di dolce umore. Laurie non è tanto rispettoso come dovrebbe essere ora che io sto per entrar negli undici, mi chiama Pollastra e	**Ma chere** Mamà, stiamo tutte bene io faccio i compiti sempre e non **ribalto** mai alle mie sorelle – Meg insiste che volevo dire **ributto** e allora io scrivo tutte e due le parole, scegli tu quella che ti pare la più adatta. Meg è un grande conforto per me e ogni sera mi lascia mangiare le gelatine di frutta insieme al tè mi fa tanto bene Jo dice perché mi addolcisce pure il carattere. Laurie non è così **rispeccoso** come dovrebbe essere ora che vado per i quattordici, mi

offende il mio amor proprio col parlare Francese con me tanto svelto quando dico Merci o **Bon jour** come fa Hattie King. Le maniche del mio vestito turchino erano tutte consumate e Meg ne ha rimesse delle nuove, ma il gonfio del davanti non va bene ed è più turchino del vestito. Mi son seccata ma non irritata, sopporto le mie afflizioni in pace ma vorrei che Anna mettesse più amido ne' miei grembiali e facesse polenta ogni giorno. Non può? Non ho fatto bene questo punto interrogativo. Meg dice che la mia punteggiatura e ortografia sono vergognose e io sono **mortaficcata** ma povera me ho tante cose da fare che non posso stare a pensarci. Adieu, mando un mucchio di baci a Papà. Vostra affezionata figlia, Amy Curtis March	chiama Pulcino e per farmi dispetto mi parla in francese troppo svelto quando io gli dico Merci o **Bon jour** come fa Hattie King. Le maniche del mio vestito blu erano tutte consumate e Meg me le ha cambiate ma tutte e due le parti davanti sono venute male e sono più blu rispetto al vestito. Io ci sono rimasta male ma non mi sono lamentata sopporto più che posso le avversità ma vorrei tanto che Hannah usasse più amido per i miei grembiuli e mi facesse tutti i giorni le focacce di grano saraceno. Perché, non può? Ho fatto o non ho fatto un punto **interocattivo** molto grazioso. Meg dice che la mia **ponteggiatura** e la mia **ottografia** fanno pena e io sono mortificata ma povera me ho così tante cose da fare che non posso interrompermi. Adieu, un sacco di baci per papino. La tua figlia amorevole, AMY CURTIS MARCH

Trabalza's translation (TT1) features only some of the errors present in the original. As for Amy's malapropisms at the beginning of the letter, the translators chose to misspell the Italian verb *collaboro,* as it recalls the verb *contraddico* (Italian for *contradict),* which they misspelled as *controdico* to emulate the original *contradick.* With regard to the other spelling errors, the translators kept only *mortyfied*, which was rendered as *mortaficcata* (*mortificata* would be the correct spelling), *bon jour*, which should be written as *bonjour*, *Ma Chere*, which lacks the accent on *Chère*, and *properest,* which was translated as *la più propria* (the correct form is *la più appropriata).*

Even though the 1908 translation has no punctuation errors except for a missing question mark – the two translators added commas where the original had none - the part where Amy defines her punctuation "disgraceful" was still included. Sacchini (TT3) was even more faithful to the source text: she kept all the spelling errors – she wrote *mortyfied* correctly (*mortificata*) but compensated by misspelling *ottografia* (the correct form should have been *ortografia*) – and left the same punctuation as the original. She rendered the initial malapropism with the word *ribalto*, which sounds similar to *ribatto* (misspelled as *ributto*). I did not include Speckel's (TT2) version of the letter because she corrected every spelling and punctuation error. I believe this choice might be explained by the general principle of Vermeer's *skopos* theory, holding that translators make their choices according to the *skopos* (purpose) the translation will have in the TL culture. From the preface of the 1908 (TT1) edition we discover that the primary purpose of this translation

was to educate children[41]. This might be one of the reasons for choosing not to include too many errors in the translation of the letter, as it would be counterproductive for children if they took Amy's language and use of punctuation as a model. One may argue that the two translators kept the other linguistic mistakes Amy makes throughout the book, but they are written in italics, to differentiate them from the rest, and Jo usually corrects Amy on the spot. This cannot happen in the case of this letter.

As for Speckel's (TT2) translation, we have no indication of any specific purpose or addresses. From the complete analysis of her translation, it seems that she eliminated Amy's linguistic errors whenever it did not mean having to substantially alter the original text or cut parts of it. This may be due to the fact that her malapropisms or grammar errors do not contribute to the development of the plot or add any semantic information, and therefore may be overlooked with no evident repercussion to the book's economy. As for Sacchini, in the comment at the end of the book she identified as the aim of her translation restoring all the original book's characteristics and facets, and hence the choice of maintaining these additional elements. In another letter (1868/2012:175-6) Amy writes for *The Pickwick Portfolio* she does not make any spelling error, except for a French expression, but uses no punctuation at all:

> Mr. Pickwick, Sir:
>
> I address you upon the subject of sin the sinner I mean is a man named Winkle who makes trouble in his club by laughing and sometimes won't write his piece in this fine paper I hope you will pardon his badness and let him send a French fable because he can't write out of his head as he has so many lessons to do and no brains in future I will try to take time by the fetlock and prepare some work which will be all *commy la fo* that means all right I am in haste as it is nearly school time.
>
> Yours respectably,
> N. WINKLE
>
> [The above is a manly and handsome acknowledgment of past misdemeanors. If our young friend studied punctuation, it would be well.]

In this case each translator decided to stick to the original and add no punctuation. However, I do not think this choice goes against our hypothesis, as the fact alone that no sign of punctuation is used in such a long sentence signals that this is not a text anyone should take as a model.

[41] Ciro and Michelina Trabalza conclude the preface wishing that Italian children will read the book and be inspired by "these dear Little Women", the beauty of their friendship and the "flame of their ideals" (Trabalza, C. & M., 1908: XIV)

The following is the letter Hannah writes to Mrs March (1868/2012:295-6)

Dear Mis March,

'I jes drop a line to say we git on fust rate. The girls is clever and fly round right smart. Miss Meg is goin to make a proper good housekeeper; she hes the liking for it, and gits the hang of things surprisin quick. Jo doos beat all for goin ahead, but she don't stop to cal'k'late fust, and you never know where she's like to bring up. She done out a tub of clothes on Monday, but she starched 'em afore they was wrenched, and blued a pink calico dress till I thought I should a died a laughin. Beth is the best of little creeters, and a sight of help to me, bein so forehanded and dependable. She tries to learn everything, and really goes to market beyond her years; likewise keeps accounts, with my help, quite wonderful. We have got on very economical so fur; I don't let the girls hev coffee only once a week, accordin to your wish, and keep em on plain wholesome vittles. Amy does well about frettin, wearin her best clothes and eatin sweet stuff. Mr. Laurie is as full of didoes as usual and turns the house upside down frequent; but he heartens the girls, so I let em hev full swing. The old gentleman sends heaps of things, and is rather wearin, but means wal, and it aint my place to say nothin. My bread is riz, so no more at this time. I send my duty to Mr March, and hope he's seen the last of his Pewmonia.

Yours respectful,
Hannah Mullet

TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Cara Sora March: Anch'io butto giù due righe per dire che noi andiamo avanti benissimo. Le **ragazze è brave** e se la **cava** proprio fino. La signorina Meg diventerà una brava massaia; ci ha disposizione, e chiappa a volo le cose in modo sorprendente. Jo soprassa tutte per sveltezza, ma non si ferma a calcolar prima, e voi non sapete mai dove **arriva**. Ha fatto un bucato lunedì, ma lo inamidava prima che fosse sciacquato, e dava il turchinetto a un vestito di color rosa che ho creduto di **morì dal ride**. Beth è la migliore delle creaturine […] cerca d'imparar tutto, e realmente fa la spesa troppo bene pei suoi anni […]; non passo il caffè alle ragazze che una volta per settimana, secondo il vostro desiderio, e le mantengo a vitto semplice e sano. Amy si porta abbastanza bene quanto all'inquietarsi, al voler portare i migliori abiti e mangiar dolci. Il signorino Laurie è sempre pieno di matterie come il solito, e mette sottosopra la casa spesso e volentieri; ma diverte le ragazze così io lascio piena libertà. Il vecchio manda un'infinità di roba, e è un po' seccante, ma lo fa per il meglio, e non è mio posto dir nulla. Il mio pane è lévito, così basta per questa volta. Il mio dovere al signor March, e spero che abbia visto la fine di questa **Pormonita**. Vostra rispettosa, Anna Mullet.	Cara signora March, Ci scrivo giusto un rigo per dirvi che tutto fila liscio come l'olio. **Le ragazze è brave** e si danno un sacco da fare. Miss Meg **ci diventa** una brava padrona di casa, sicuro come l'oro; si vede che **ci piace** farlo e ci fa la mano a una velocità sorprendente. Jo in quanto a trottare però le batte tutte, **ma non è che** prima ci pensa su, e non sai mai dove va a parare. Lunedì ha lavato un mastello di panni, ma l'ha inamidati **prima che li strizzava**, e ha tinto di blu un vestito rosa di calicò finché ho pensato che **mi morivo** dalle risate. Beth, povera creatura […] si sforza di imparare tutto, **nonostante che è** ancora piccola va pure al mercato […] Finora siamo state proprio brave a **sparagnare**; **alle ragazze il caffè ce lo faccio** prendere solo una volta a settimana, come che volevate voi, e **ci cucino** piatti semplici e sani. Amy è la regina a **sbrontolare**, a mettersi i vestiti buoni e ingozzarsi di robacce dolce. **Il signorino Laurie ogni tanto gli piglia** il matto e butta per aria casa; ma tiene allegre le ragazze e perciò **li lascio fare come gli pare**. Il vecchio ci manda **un fracco di roba** (espressione dialettale da treccani), pure troppa, eh, però è a fin di bene e non sto proprio nella posizione di dire niente. Il pane mi si trapassa, e quindi non **c'ho** più tempo. Mando i miei rispetti al signor March, e **spero che** ormai **vede** la fine di '**sta pulmanite**. Le mie **cordiglianze**, Hannah Mullet.

If Amy's errors are linked to the fact that she is young and still needs to learn, Hannah's are the consequence of her belonging to a lower social class and not receiving any education. Her written language is very much shaped on orality, which means she spells words according to how she pronounces them. In addition to this element, she sometimes misses subject and verb agreement in number (singular or plural). Sacchini (TT3) cleverly reproduced Hannah's language by choosing colloquial forms in Italian, highlighted in bold: she avoided subjunctive and conditional forms of verbs, usually associated to formality in Italian, and substituted them with the present simple (e.g. *e spero che che ormai* ***vede;*** *nonostante che* ***è***); she used pronouns and contractions typical of orality (e.g. *Meg* ***ci*** *diventa;* ***l'ha*** *inamidati; non* ***c'ho*** *più tempo*); she kept subject-verb/noun-adjective agreement's mistakes (e.g. *le ragazze è brave; robacce dolce*); she used dislocations in the syntax (e.g. *alle ragazze il caffè ce lo faccio prendere*) and vernacular expressions and words (e.g. *un fracco di roba; sparagnare*). As done in the previous letter, Trabalza's translation (TT1) considerably minimises the characteristic elements of Hannah's written language, perhaps for the same reasons given for Amy's letter. However, they kept one subject-verb agreement's mistake (*le ragazze* ***è*** *brave e se la* ***cava*** *proprio fino),* only used the present simple throughout the whole letter and included some colloquial expressions *(morì dal ride)* and misspelling of words *(Pormonita)*. Here again I did not include Speckel's version of the letter because she made Hannah write in standard Italian.

For Laurie's letter Alcott emulates the style of a war report

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
Head Nurse of Ward No. 2, All serene on the Rappahannock, troops in fine condition, commissary department well conducted, the Home Guard under Colonel Teddy always on duty […]	Capo Infermiera della Sala II.: Tutto sereno nel territorio d'Anna, le truppe in buone condizioni, il Commissariato bene diretto, la Guardia di casa sotto il colonnello Teddy sempre al posto […]	Capo infermiera della sala n.2, tutto sereno nel territorio di Rappahannock, le truppe **sono** in buone condizioni, il commissariato **è** ben diretto, la guardia di casa, al comando del colonnello Teddy **compie** sempre il suo dovere.	All'infermiera capo del 2° reparto: Tutto tranquillo sul Rappahannoock, truppe in buona condizione, reparto vettovagliamento ben gestito **dall'ufficiale predisposto**, Milizia territoriale sempre in servizio sotto la guida del Colonnello Teddy […]

Apart from the specific war lexicon, Alcott also adopted the typical syntax of these kind of reports by removing verbs. This element was maintained in TT1 and TT3, while Speckel (TT2) restored the standard form of sentences with verbs (highlighted in bold). The original text references the Rappahannock river of eastern Virginia, along which various American Civil War battles took place. It is worth noticing Trabalza's clever strategy of replacing this cultural reference with the expression *nel territorio d'Anna* (in Hannah's territory). Even though this translation does not preserve the original reference, the comical effect is still maintained.

4.6. You as *tu*, *voi* or *lei*: ambiguities of the English language

I have already discussed (Chapter 4, section 4.1) the difficulties translators face when having to render passages including distinctive features of the source language with no correspondence in the target. The most straightforward evidence of this phenomenon are probably the ambiguities generated by different grammatical norms between the source and target languages. In the preface to their edition (1908), Ciro and Michelina Trabalza discuss their translation choices with regard to the rendering of the pronoun *you* in Italian. Indeed, this single address form in English corresponds to three different ones in Italian - *tu*, *voi* or *lei* (polite address form) - which makes translating in Italian such an ordinary word quite a complex task. This ambiguity is generated by the diversity of grammatical categories across languages (Baker, 1992/2001), in this specific case with regard to the category of "person" and the different ways in which languages organise their systems of pronouns and modes of address (Baker, 1992/2001:94-6). The difficulty for translators lies not so much in distinguishing between the singular or plural use of the English pronoun *you* – the context usually helps in this respect – but in understanding when it should be translated with the Italian polite address form. From the analysis of when and why these three Italian pronouns were alternated in the three translations, one can track the developments of the Italian language with regard to the use of address forms, especially the polite one. The following charts show which of the three forms (*tu*, *voi*, *lei*) was used between the main characters of the book. When both names are in bold it means that the form is reciprocal.

TT1 1908-Trabalza		
Tu	Voi	Lei
Sisters > sisters Mrs/Mr March > daughters Meg's friends > Meg	**Sisters** > Mrs/Mr March > **Laurie** **> Mr Laurence** **> Aunt March** **Laurie > Mrs March** **Amy** > **Mr Davis** **Meg** > **Mr Brooke** **> Meg's friends**	/

TT2 1953/2011-Speckel		
Tu	Voi	Lei
Sisters > sisters **Mrs/Mr March** > **daughters** Aunt March > Sisters **Sisters > Laurie** **Meg > Meg's friends**	**Sisters > Mr Laurence** > aunt March **Laurie > Mrs March** **Amy > Mr Davis** **Meg > Mr Brooke**	/

TT3 2018-Sacchini		
Tu	Voi	Lei
Sisters > sisters Mrs March > Laurie Mr Laurence > sisters **Mrs/Mr March** > **daughters** Aunt March > Sisters **Sisters > Laurie** **Meg > Meg's friends**	**Sisters >** Mr Laurence > aunt March Laurie > Mrs March **Amy > Mr Davis** **Meg > Mr Brooke**	/

The first element to notice is that in neither of the translations is the form *lei* used. According to Treccani Encycloaedia (2012), between the 19th and the very beginning of

the 20th century the forms *lei* and *voi* were used indistinctly. The beginning of the 20th century saw the rise of the fascist movement, which was against the use of the polite form *lei* because considered a borrowing from the Spanish language; under the regime, this form was officially substituted with *voi*. After the fall of the regime (1943), the polite form *lei* was restored and *voi* started to slowly disappear, except in southern Italy, where it continued to be used (and still is today) with this function. Given the years of publications of the two translations (1908 and 1953), we can suppose that Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) were under the influence of the fascist school of thought when opting for the form *voi*. As for the 2018 edition, I was expecting the use of *lei* instead of *voi*, since the lexicon and style chosen throughout the translation is contemporary and today the polite form *voi* has disappeared – with the dialectal exception said above. A possible reason for choosing *voi* may be that the translator wanted to meet the expectations of readers, who are used to the polite form *voi* for former historical periods, perhaps as it further signals the distance in time compared to today's form *lei*. Another aspect to notice is how frequent the use of the address form *voi* is in the 1908 translation compared to the other two. This shows how traditions with regard to the use of address forms have changed in Italy: in 1908, children would pay respect to their parents by addressing them as *voi,* and even Laurie and the sisters reciprocally address so. In the 1953 and 2018 editions, it appears clear that *voi* is mostly used to show respect to older people – with the exception of parents.

As mentioned above, the singular or plural use of *you* is usually signalled by the context. In a passage of the book Laurie and Mr Laurence have an argument, and Jo is comforting Laurie afterwards. At some point of their conversation he tells her *"It's no use, Jo; he's got to learn that I'm able to take care of myself, and don't need any one's apron-string to hold on by"* (1868/2012:361*),* to which Jo replies *"What pepper-pots you are. How do you mean to settle this affair?".* This was the only passage where that "you" in *"What pepper-pots you are!"* was misinterpreted in two of the translations; Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2), indeed, translated respectively as *Che pepino siete!* and *Che suscettibile che sei!.* Even though the context could be misleading, there is actually a quite evident sign that "you" was referring to both Laurie and Mr Laurence, that is the "s" of pepper-pot**s,** and Sacchini (TT3) caught it by translating *Che fumantini che siete, fra tutti e due!.*

Another example of ambiguities generated by differences in grammar between English and Italian relies in the issue of nouns and gender. Most English nouns, indeed, do not have grammatical gender; those referring to people, in general, do not present separated male and female forms, but there are some exceptions (e.g. waiter/waitress). The Italian language, on the contrary, usually has separate male and female forms; for the exceptions (e.g. insegnante, giornalista, etc), articles, which vary according to number and gender, can signal if the noun is being used in the male of female form (*la/l'*or *un'/un* insegnante; *il/la* or *una/un* giornalista). These differences in grammar rules have generated ambiguities for the translation of the following two passages:

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
And my **children** need fixing up for the summer (p. 187)	E poi le **mie piccine** hanno bisogno di abiti per l'estate	E **i miei bambini** hanno bisogno di avere il loro guardaroba sistemato per l'estate	E **le mie bambine** hanno proprio bisogno di una sistematina per l'estate
Two letters for **Doctor** Jo (p.205)	Due lettere pel **dottor** Jo	Due lettere per il **Dottor** Jo	Due lettere per la **dottoressa** Jo

The focus here is on the two words in bold, children and Doctor. The issue in translation is that for both words in Italian the gender needs to be made explicit. In the first passage, the context helps in deciding if children should be translated with the female or male form – in the case of Beth, "children" can only refer to her dolls, therefore Trabalza's (TT1) and Sacchini's (TT3) translations are the most accurate. For the second example, instead, the context may be even more confusing. I do not think there is a more correct way of translating that "doctor": indeed, it could be *dottoressa*, given that Jo is a girl, but also *dottor*, as it might be that Beth is making fun of Jo's continuous complains for not being a boy.

The next passages are all taken from the part of the book where Laurie refuses to answer his grandfather's questions, which causes Mr Laurence to get angry and shake him. The ambiguity here is related to the verb *to shake.*

ST	TT1 1908-Trabalza	TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	TT3 2018-Sacchini
"I've been **shaken**, and I won't bear it" growled Laurie, indignantly. […]	M'hanno **messo le mani addosso**, e non lo sopporterò."	"Sono stato **picchiato** e non posso tollerarlo!"	"Sono stato **redarguito e strattonato** come un ragazzino, ed è una cosa che non sopporto!"
"That's nothing, I often **shake** you, and you don't mind," said Jo, soothingly.	Non è nulla; *anch'io spesso ve lo fo*, e voi non ci badate."	"Non è nulla; anch'io spesso ti **picchio** e non ci badi",	"Non è niente. *Io te lo faccio spesso* e tu mica te la prendi"
"Pooh! you're a girl, and it's fun; but I'll allow no man to **shake me**" (p. 359-60)	Puh! voi siete una ragazza e lo fate per ridere; ma non permetterò ad alcuno di **prendermi pel petto**."	Tu sei una ragazza e lo fai per ridere; ma non permetterò ad alcuno di **prendermi per il bavero**." (anticipating Laurie's subsequent line, when he tells Jo that Mr. Laurence "collared" him.	"Bah! Tu sei una donna, con te è divertente, ma non permetto a nessun uomo di *trattarmi così*!"
"Don't try to shield him. I know he has been in mischief by the way he acted when he came home. I can't get a word from him, and when I threatened to **shake the truth out** of him he bolted upstairs and locked himself into his room." (p.364)	Non cercate di coprirlo, veh! Capisco che ha fatto del male, dal modo tenuto quando è entrato a casa. Io non posso cavargli una parola; e, quando ho minacciato di **scrollargli le spalle per sapere la verità**, è scappato di sopra e s'è chiuso nella sua stanza.	Non cercate di scusarlo, vi prego! Capisco che ha fatto qualche cosa di male, dal modo con cui si è comportato quando è tornato a casa. Non posso cavargli una parola, e quando ho minacciato di **scrollargli le spalle per sapere la verità**, è scappato e si è chiuso nella sua stanza.	Non ti azzardare a difenderlo. Lo so che ha imbastito qualche imbroglio da come si è comportato appena ha rimesso piede in casa. Non riesco a cavargli fuori una parola, e quando l'ho minacciato di fargli dire la verità *con le cattive* è corso di sopra e si è chiuso a chiave in camera."
I think the **shaking** hurt his feelings very much. (p.367)	Io credo che l'averlo **toccato** abbia ferito moltissimo il suo amor proprio.	Credo che l'averlo **scrollato** abbia ferito moltissimo il suo amor proprio.	Penso che i vostri *modi bruschi* lo abbiano molto ferito

Depending on the degree of familiarity with a culture, one is more or less able to associate a word with a precise image of what it indicates in practice. As we can deduce from the different ways (in bold) in which the verb was rendered, the translators had some difficulties in understanding what precisely Mr Laurence did to Laurie by "shaking" him, and especially which words in Italian could best render the term. In this regard, I find Speckel's (TT2) translation with the verb *picchiare* (to beat/hit someone) too harsh compared to the original. In one of the passages above, both Trabalza (TT1)

and Speckel (TT2) took advantage of the fact that later in the conversation Laurie says his grandfather "collared" him by respectively translating as *prendermi pel petto* and *prendermi per il bavero*, thus anticipating the information. In general, I believe that the best translating strategy here is to avoid using specific verbs each time the word *shake* is repeated and, when possible, to translate it with more generic words or expressions falling into the meaning of the English verb, as Sacchini (TT3) did with the expressions *trattarmi così, modi bruschi, con le cattive.*

I would like to end this section with a different type of ambiguity not related to differences in grammar rules between the English and Italian languages or English terms not having an exact one-to-one correspondence in Italian (cfr. Baker (1992/2001) and the problem of non-equivalence at word level across languages); only after reading the Italian renditions of the passage I suspected the ambiguity of the original, therefore this could be viewed as an example of "reversed" ambiguity. The passage in question is taken from the part of the book where Beth catches scarlet fever. Unlike Jo and Meg, Amy did not have the fever before, and therefore needs to stay at Aunt March's until Beth recovers. Amy initially refuses, as she would be by herself all day and she is not very fond of Aunt March, but Laurie convinces her by saying

ST	["You go to Aunt March's, and I'll come and take you out every day, driving or walking, and we'll have capital times.] Won't that be better than **moping** here?" (p. 305)
TT1 1908-Trabalza	[…] Non sarà meglio che star qui a **intristire**?
TT2 1953/2011-Speckel	[…] Non sarà meglio che rimaner qui a **rattristarti**?
TT3 2018-Sacchini	[…] Non è forse meglio che star qui a **passare lo straccio**?

As we can see, the first two translations are alike, while Sacchini (TT3) translated as *passare lo straccio*, which corresponds to the English verb *to mop*, whose -ing form is *mopping*; *moping* with a single p derives from the verb *to mope*, which means "to feel bored or unhappy and show no interest in doing anything[42]", in accordance with the way Trabalza (TT1) and Speckel (TT2) translated**.** Given the small difference

[42]Macmillan dictionary. Mope. https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/mope. Accessed: February 16, 2012

between the two verbs, at first I thought Sacchini's rendition (TT3) might have simply been an oversight; however, it may also be the case that she thought Alcott wanted to play with the two similar verbs intentionally. There is no way of replicating the wordplay in Italian, therefore we can suppose that rather than translating *moping* literally and eliminate Alcott's wordplay altogether, Sacchini decided to render it as *mopping*, thinking that the general idea of feeling bored and unhappy would still be preserved, as mopping is not a particularly fun activity for a twelve-year-old.

5. Stella Sacchini's *Little Women*

Stella Sacchini is the translator of the 2018 Italian edition of *Little Women* which I analysed in this thesis. I had the opportunity of contacting her and she was willing to answer to some questions about her edition of *Piccole Donne*. I had initially planned to conduct a face-to-face interview, but eventually it was decided to opt for a written one in Italian. The eight questions I formulated were mainly based on the issues emerging from the comparison I conducted on the three Italian translations and concerned: the double nature of *Little Women* as a literary classic and a children's literary classic; the choice of maintaining the references to the SL culture in translation; the challenges of translating Alcott's writing style; the use of a contemporary language in translation; the translation strategies adopted for the rendition of rhymed compositions; the decision of opting for literal or free strategies of translation; the relationship established with the multitude of already existing translations; and the opinion she formed about this translation experience. With her answers, she gave me detailed information about the translation strategies she adopted and the relationship she established with the novel and its author. She also offered interesting views on some theoretical issues around translation discussed throughout this thesis.

The first question focused on how Sacchini approached the translation of *Little Women* with respect to its double nature of classic *tout court* and children's literary classic. I also asked her if she thought that maintaining in translation the characteristics of a classic *tout court* might prevent her version from falling into the typical reading age attributed to the original novel (8-12+). Sacchini replied that the division between classics *tout court* and children's classics (and their respective literature) may exist in theory, but not in practice. She thinks that books like *Little Women*, but also Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* or Jack London's *White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild,* are condemned to be known as books for children simply because, when they came out, they were presented as such. However, Sacchini agrees with writer Nadia Terranova in thinking that, rather than being books *for* children, they are books *with* children as the main characters. This is to say that she does not think that the translation of the so-called children's literary classics should be approached any differently than the translation of classics *tout court.* In this light, the comparison conducted in Chapter 4 shows that the fact that *Little Women* is a book children are able to appreciate and

understand does not make it less complex, not only with respect to the style it is written in, but also regarding the topics it deals with. Like any other classic, the novel communicates on more than one level; it is both the translator and publisher's choice to decide how many of these levels they want to render in their edition. On the basis of these observations, translating the book as a classic *tout court* might be viewed as a way of making the Italian version communicate on more levels, as does the original. Therefore, Sacchini believes that her edition of *Piccole Donne* can still fall into the typical reading age attributed to the English original.

The second question concerned Sacchini's choice of maintaining the references to the SL culture and accompanying them with translator's notes. I asked her why she thought important to do so, if keeping the references may help readers to appreciate the novel more, and if adding notes to better explain them might serve a didactic purpose for children, by bringing them closer to the target culture. From the systematic use Sacchini makes of translator's notes and the exhaustive information they provide Italian readers with, I had already deduced how these references play a central part in her translation. In the answer she gave me, Sacchini explained that eliminating the references would mean "trivialising, simplifying and impoverishing the novel both at a quantitative and qualitative level"; in other words, depriving the novel of its nature of a classic *tout court*. It was important for the translator to "frame the book within the context that produced it, so as to preserve its distance and alterity. This is why the historical and cultural references cannot be removed[43]". The use of translator's notes, she adds, is a natural consequence, because some of the references would prove completely obscure to contemporary readers. In Chapter 4 I discussed how consulting translator's notes necessarily means interrupting the reading flow, but Sacchini seems to think this is a worthy sacrifice, as through notes readers can "learn something they did not know before, and gain the knowledge which will help them in better relating to the text and understanding it in greater depth".

In the third question I asked Sacchini about the complexity of Alcott's writing style. This is the longest answer she gave me, which already tells us that the style of the book is indeed very complex, and it is not an easy task to render it in translation. As a general premise, Sacchini highlighted how Alcott's novel is "very pleasant to read, but very

[43] This and all the subsequent quotes are my translations from Italian into English of passages taken from the translator's answers.

difficult to translate". Those who are familiar with "the context the author grew up in, the historical period she lived in, her social battles and feminism", as well as the fact that she "was determined to make a living for herself" as a writer and, consequently, how literature "was not a hobby for her", but a "job requiring dedication, experience and skills", are unlikely to see in *Little Women* just a frivolous "story for teenage girls" written in a plain, banal style, but rather a socially and politically engaged novel, written in "refined prose". Therefore, if the translator and publisher want to go beyond the most superficial level of the book – that making it an entertaining and pleasant story to read[44] – there are several aspects of the original that need to be covered, as we have seen with the detailed comparison conducted in Chapter 4. Among these aspects, Sacchini includes the text's stratification and numerous intertextual references, *realia*, wordplays and expressions with a double meaning, as well as the variety and irony of Alcott's prose, the linguistic creativity permeating the whole text and the impressive use Alcott makes of dialogues. In this answer, Sacchini confirmed the main findings which emerged in Chapter 4 regarding the strategies adopted in the attempt at rendering the above-said characteristics. She said that translator's notes helped her with the intertextual links and *realia* included in the story. Among the most difficult passages to translate, she mentioned those characterised by Amy's errors and English idiomatic expressions or words strictly linked to the tradition of English and American cultures. In these cases, she explains, one can either be lucky enough to find expressions or words in Italian "ready" to be used and more or less corresponding to the English ones, or one needs to invent a new expression, reproducing the same effect as the original. In Chapter 4, I hypothesized that this was how Sacchini arrived at the translation *calzetta e salamelecchi* for the idiomatic expression *prunes and prisms,* taken from Dicken's novel *Little Dorrit.* She confirmed my hypothesis. Given the fact that there is no Italian equivalent for the English idiom, Sacchini invented one from scratch, based on the fact that Jo uses this expression to say that she should stop dreaming of being free from the duties and models of femininity that society expects her to comply with: *calzetta* reflects the part of the duties – taking care of

[44] This point recalls the importance of evaluating a translation not only from the point of view of its faithfulness to the characteristics of the novel, but also according to the purpose it serves in the TL culture and the audience it is addressed to. In this light, we have seen in Chapter 4 how Speckel's choice of minimising some of the novel's main features (the stratification of language, cultural references, realia, etc.) may be explained by the fact that it helped her satisfy the purpose this translation needed to have for a certain audience in the target culture.

the house – while *salamelecchi* the part of the models – having elegant manners and a proper physical appearance.

In the fourth question I asked Sacchini to comment on her use of a contemporary language in translation. In her answer she highlighted yet another difficulty of translating literary classics. Their distance in time requires the translator to constantly find a balance between a language that needs to be contemporary - to meet the expectations of today's readers - but cannot include extremely modern or colloquial expressions, or otherwise it would be inconsistent with the choice of maintaining in translation the historical context of the original. While analysing her translation, I noticed that in a very few cases Sacchini decided to use more archaic words, such as *rampognare* and *empito,* in the following passages.

ST	TT
It won't be dull with me popping in every day to tell you how Beth is, and take you out gallivanting. The old lady likes me, and I'll be as sweet as possible to her, so she won't peck at us, whatever we do (p.305)	Non sarà una noia se ogni giorno farò una capatina per dirti come sta Beth, e poi ce ne andremo un po' a zonzo. Alla vecchia sto simpatico, e con lei farò il bravo più che posso, almeno non ci rampognerà, qualunque cosa facciamo.
Laurie went by in the afternoon, and seeing Meg at the window, seemed suddenly possessed with a melodramatic fit, for he fell down on one knee in the snow, beat his breast, tore his hair, and clasped his hands imploringly, as if begging some boon (p.383)	Nel pomeriggio Laurie passò davanti casa dei March e, vedendo Meg alla finestra, di colpo parve posseduto da un empito melodrammatico, perché si lasciò cadere sulla neve, in ginocchio su una gamba sola, prese a battersi il petto, si strappò i capelli e giunse le mani in atto di contrizione, come se stesse chiedendo una grazia dal cielo.

I was interested in understanding why she felt the need to vary her vocabulary in these specific passages. She explained that in both cases she wanted to convey a sense of irony. The first passage is taken from the part of the book where Amy categorically refuses to stay at her aunt's house until Beth recovers from scarlet fever. In the attempt of convincing her, in her translation Sacchini made Laurie "create a sort of complicity" with Amy by using the word *rampognare.* Indeed, not only does the refined verb create a comical effect among the other ordinary words Laurie uses, it also "pays homage" to Amy's passion for sophisticated words. A similar pattern concerns the second passage: given that Laurie's gestures are described as *melodramatic*, Sacchini decided to translate *fit* using the more elegant word *empito* instead of *impeto*. According to the translator, both

passages offered her the chance of compensating for the irony and shifts in registers in other parts of the novel she was not able to render in translation.

The fifth question concerned Sacchini's approach to the translation of the rhymed compositions present in the ST. She confirmed the observations of my analysis by saying that she "tried to maintain the rhymes, musicality and rhythm more than the content". Other than these aspects related to sound, in her answer Sacchini referred to the specific translation strategy she used to transpose another characteristics of Jo's compositions, that is the use of a solemn form to talk about trivial themes, with the result of a comical effect. Sacchini tried to reproduce this effect by "alternating terms of low register, describing everyday actions and objects, with others taken from the Italian poetic language tradition, renowned for its high register". To make a clear example of this strategy, Sacchini mentions the short composition, entitled *A song from the Suds,* Jo adds to the letter for her mother, who is in Washington caring for Mr March.

ST	TT
A SONG FROM THE SUDS Queen of my tub, I merrily sing, While the white foam rises high; And sturdily wash and rinse and wring, And fasten the clothes to dry; Then out in the free fresh air they swing, Under the sunny sky. I wish we could wash from our hearts and souls The stains of the week away, And let water and air by their magic make Ourselves as pure as they; Then on the earth there would be indeed, A glorious washing day! Along the path of a useful life, Will heartsease ever bloom; The busy mind has no time to think Of sorrow or care or gloom; And anxious thoughts may be swept away, As we bravely wield a broom. I am glad a task to me is given, To labor at day by day; For it brings me health and strength and hope, And I cheerfully learn to say, - "Head, you may think, Heart, you may feel, But, Hand, you shall work alway!" (p. 293)	*Canto della saponata* Regina del mastello, io canto serena Mentre la schiuma bianca in alto vola; lavo, risciacquo e strizzo di buona lena, e <u>fora</u> appendo ad asciugare le lenzola in una giornata di vento fresco piena e di sole, a svolazzar come una banderola. Potessi dal cuore e dall'anima lavar via le nere macchie del tempo andato, e l'acqua e l'aria facessero la magia di farci uguali a un panno immacolato; <u>allor sì</u> che sulla terra quel giorno <u>sarìa</u> il giorno universale del bucato! Lungo il sentiero di una vita ben spesa fiorisce dell'animo la tranquillità; la mente occupata di sentirsi offesa, triste o angosciata tempo non ha; e i pensieri ansiosi scaccia nell'attesa chi straccio e ramazza adoperare sa. Son felice di versare lacrime e sudore di impegnarmi ogni giorno in qualche cosa; poiché mi dà salute, speranza e vigore, e m'ha insegnato a dire, allegra e festosa: "Testa, puoi pensare; puoi sentire, Cuore, ma voi, Mani, lavorerete senza posa!"

In her answer, Sacchini explicitly refers to the use of ordinary words like *mastello*, *risciacquo*, *strizzo*, *bucato*, *straccio*, *ramazza*, etc next to more refined and archaic expressions such as *fora*, *allor sì*, *sarìa*, etc.

In the sixth question, I asked the translator which side she takes in the famous debate on literal vs free translations. She began by saying that, "thankfully, this dichotomy does not exist anymore". In accordance with Italian poet and translator Franco Buffoni, she said her aim in translation is "not to be faithful to the original, but rather *loyal* (italics mine)". In her opinion, being loyal means carefully reading the source text and using a monolingual dictionary whenever one stumbles upon an unclear word or expression. Indeed, she thinks bilingual dictionaries can be a "dangerous source of illusions" if used to understand a passage in the SL. Monolingual dictionaries, together with "a deep knowledge of the author's bibliography and the cultural and social contexts in which the works were produced", are all it takes to fully understand the ST. A bilingual dictionary can be helpful once the meaning is clear and there is a word "on the tip of our tongue" we cannot recall at the moment. In any case, according to the translator, the "right word most times comes from one's own "interior dictionary" after "endless hypotheses, changes of mind, mistakes, […] rewriting and corrections". The final result of this process is neither "a series of exact but unnatural correspondences, or of inexact but pleasant ones"; it is a text "written in a sort of foreign language created within our own language in the process of translation". The expression "exact but unnatural correspondences" recalls some of the translation choices found in the 1908 and 1953 translations. We have seen how sometimes, by sticking to the English literal formulation, the translators failed to be "loyal", in Sacchini's and Buffoni's words, to the original, and in so doing provided readers with an unnatural text in some passages (e.g. reminisced > *reminescenze* (1908/1953), *ricordarono "i bei tempi di una volta"* (2018); to peck > *beccare* (1908/1953), *rampognare* (2018); relation > *relazione/conoscente* (1908/1953), *parente* (2018), etc.)

In the seventh question I wanted to discuss how Sacchini related to the long history of Italian translations of the novel, and why she thought necessary to add a new one to the list. Sacchini replied that she never consults previous translations before having finished her own. In so doing, she can be sure that both the voice of the original text and her view of the literary work will not be subjected to external influences. However, consulting

previous translations can be helpful later, when, in the process of revising her translation, she wants to check how her "colleagues resolved a certain translation problem or rendered a specific passage". As for the necessity of a new translation, in this case "one could say it was almost urgent, given that there are not many recent translations of *Little Women*, and that the older ones were marked by that "prejudice" characterising the so-called "children's" books." She also made a more general point on the importance of new translations, saying that "it is always good to have a plurality of translations, it is a richness, especially if we are talking about a classic, which is a kaleidoscopic text by definition. Every translation is an interpretation of the original […]: there exist many Martin Eden, Jane Eyre, Jo March, and not only are they all possible, but also necessary." Sacchini's opinion on retranslation is in line with the premises I made for the comparison conducted in Chapter 4: my aim was not to classify the translations from best to worst, but to see how they differed, in order to understand why they all have a reason to exist at the same time. A new translation does not cancel previous ones; together, translations create a more complete picture of the original. Each translation brings a new interpretation, serves a precise purpose in the TL culture, addresses a certain group of readers more than another, and therefore has its own reason to exist. This is especially true for classics because, as we have seen, they are "books that never cease to say what they have to say" (Calvino, 1991:13)

In the eighth and last question, I asked Sacchini to talk in general about this translation experience. As a premise, she reminded me that every translator "needs to be familiar with the "art of losing", from the words of poet Elizabeth Bishop. Translating almost always means losing the game, or, if one is lucky, ending it with even scores". In her opinion, the entity of this loss can vary according to "the ability of the translator and the nature of the original text: it is usually minimal for technical and scientific texts […], but it can be great in poetry". As for her translation, she said: "I am not able to measure how great the loss is with respect to the original. I only know that the feature I wanted to "preserve" the most was the linguistic liveliness and variety in dialogues". As a child, she started to read the book in Italian and found it "terribly boring", to the point that she did not even finish it; but when she read the book in English, she realised that the "boredom and indifference" experienced as a child were probably linked to the translation, as she "had so much fun reading the original. Amy's errors and her malapropisms were hilarious,

Jo's language and ideas strong and revolutionary. To provide Italian readers with a text maintaining as much of this richness as possible was my personal way of apologising to the author and the novel, and doing it justice".

Conclusions

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the phenomenon of retranslating the classics by comparing three Italian translations of *Little Women* published between the 20th and 21st centuries. The main objective was to understand why there seems to be a need for new versions of a book that remains unchanged through time. As a general premise, we can say that the comparison conducted showed that the need for retranslation can either come from the will to give a new, personal interpretation of a work, after realising that previous translations failed at rendering certain characteristics of the original, or as a consequence of the influences any translation receives from the historical period in which it is written.

The phenomenon of retranslation is clearly subjected to the passing of time. Translations are said to "age" and, for this reason, they have been considered defective and incomplete compared to their everlasting originals. This element of ageing, however, should not be characterised by a negative connotation. It is natural for translations to age, because the norms of language, cultural values, and the translation standards of accuracy to which they are subjected change in the course of history. In this light, the comparison of the three translations highlighted interesting elements with regard to the topics of foreignization vs domestication, literal vs free translation and modern vs archaic language in translation. As for the first theme, the strategies adopted by the translators of the 1953 (republished in 2011) and 2018 editions seem to reflect the status of translation theory at the time of publication: the latter appeared to prefer a more foreignizing strategy, in accordance with the trend of our time – she maintained the references to the foreign culture and explained them with translator's notes – while the former a more domesticating one. The 1908 edition, instead, proves that translation is not an exact science: I expected to find a prevalence of domestication in this version, but the two translators explicitly stated in the preface to the book that, as opposed to what they did with the translation of *Little Men*, for *Little Women* they wanted to preserve the strangeness of the text – they left many of the references to the SL culture and clarified them with translator's notes. As for the dichotomy between literal and free translations, I noticed that the 1908 and especially the 1953 editions showed some signs of literal translation, not just in the attempt at maintaining the original syntax, but also in the adherence to constructions and expressions distinctive of the English language, leading

in some cases to odd, redundant or nonsensical translations in Italian. In the 2018 edition, instead, the translator seemed to adopt a free translation strategy: she strived to be loyal to the meaning and intentions of the original while also trying to provide readers with a natural text in Italian, which sometimes means distancing oneself from the syntax, constructions or exact words used in English. In this light, it is worth mentioning that, in a few cases, she decided to translate with Italian idiomatic expressions passages of the original not featuring any idiomatic expression in turn. I highlighted the pedagogical function this translation choice may have for young readers.

As for the debate on archaic vs modern language, each translation appeared to reflect the language of its time; this is perhaps the most evident reason for retranslation, that is the changes and developments occurring in the target language with the passing of time. In relation to this topic, it was interesting to analyse how readers received the republication of the 1953 translation in 2011. Not surprisingly, many complained that the translation was "awful", with too archaic vocabulary and constructions. This case led to an interesting reflection on the issue of ethics in the book publishing industry: is it better to economise by republishing previous translations and, in so doing, being able to sell a book at a lower price, so that everyone can afford it; or is it unethical to put a price on culture and provide readers with a book which cannot meet their standards anymore?

As for the rendition of the book's characteristics and Alcott's style, the 1908 and 2018 editions appeared to be the most loyal to the original in this sense. Indeed, the comparison showed that some characteristics of the original, such as language stratification (Amy's and Hannah's oral and written language; Jo's *slang* and strong expressions) and the neologisms, wordplays and vivid expressions enriching the English text, are not as pervasive in the 1953 translation as in the original. The same can be said for the typical features of Alcott's writing style, which seemed to be minimised in the 1953 edition as compared to the other two. In the 1908 and 2018 editions, indeed, the translators tried to play with the Italian language in order to provide readers with a text which was as lively and varied as the original. Another recurring feature of the book concerns the presence of short, rhymed compositions. The difficulty of translating this genre relies in the ability to preserve both content and musicality. Given the fact that all translations had young

readers among the addressed audience, the rhythm, musicality and structure of these compositions are all elements I thought important to maintain in translation. In this respect, both the 1953 and 2018 editions seemed to be able to preserve musicality and not to excessively sacrifice content, while the 1908 translation, compared to the other two, appeared to minimise more the rhythm and rhymes, and to alter the visual structure.

This summary of the main findings obtained shows that the need for retranslation can be a consequence of the fact that any translation establishes its own relation with the original book. This becomes particularly relevant when it comes to literary classics and their capacity of communicating on more than one level. In this light, a new translation may stem from the desire to offer new interpretations of a work or to emphasize characteristics that were not covered fully enough by previous translations. This is what happened with the 2018 version. The translator declared that her main aim was to provide Italian readers with a version characterised by the same vibrant style, change in registers, variety of vocabulary and lively dialogues of the original. The analysis conducted showed indeed that in the 2018 translation these aspects of the original seemed to emerge more than in the other two.

Alongside this motivation, there exist more objective reasons behind the need for new translations, related to the fact that any translation is a product of its time. As simple as it may sound, new translations are needed because the language of previous ones is frozen in time, and therefore cannot satisfy the expectations of contemporary readers, who normally prefer a text written in a language closer to theirs, which they can understand and appreciate. New translations may also derive from the new perspectives brought by developments in Translation Studies research and the consequences they have on translation strategies, standards of accuracy and ethics. In our specific case, we have seen the different approaches adopted with respect to foreignization and domestication, and literal vs free translation choices. Finally, the constant change in social and cultural values is another element contributing to the phenomenon of retranslation. While Jo's desire for independence, to choose what her future will be and not comply with the one society plans for her, may not have been aspects that needed to emerge clearly and strongly at the time of the 1908 and 1953 translations, today the situation is different. Indeed, gender

equality and women's independence are hot topics of our everyday lives. Jo, with her big dreams and determination, her strong personality and decided way of expressing herself, sets a great example in this sense.

This analysis showed that retranslation is a natural phenomenon and should not cast a negative shadow on previous translations. Indeed, new translations do not come out because earlier ones are incorrect or incomplete per se, but because older versions cannot reflect linguistic developments and changes in social and cultural values. The comparison also demonstrated that it would be pointless to make classifications in terms of "good" or "bad" translations, as the terms of judgement are many, various and always subjective. Moreover, one should always keep in mind that translation choices are influenced by the purpose that certain edition will have in the TL context and the types of readers it is mostly addressed to. In the case of classics and their multifaceted nature, retranslation is undoubtedly an asset, because each translation can offer only one interpretation, only its own version of the original. Therefore, the translations of a classic do not substitute one another, but rather all coexist to try to recreate the incredible richness of the original.

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Appendix

Interview

È lei stessa, nella nota alla traduzione in fondo al libro, a sollevare la questione della doppia natura di Piccole Donne in quanto classico della letteratura per ragazzi e classico tout court. Come si è approcciata alla traduzione del libro in questo senso? Pensa che, mantenendo in traduzione le caratteristiche di classico tout court, anche la sua edizione tradotta possa rientrare nella fascia di età tipicamente assegnata al romanzo inglese, ovvero 8-12+?

La sorte toccata a *Piccole donne* e alla sua autrice è una sorte che molti scrittori del suo tempo hanno condiviso, basti pensare a Mark Twain, diventato famoso soprattutto – o esclusivamente? – per i suoi libri per ragazzi, in primis *Le avventure di Tom Sawyer* e *Le avventure di Huckleberry Finn*, o a Jack London, che ha raggiunto la fama grazie a romanzi come *Zanna bianca* o *Il richiamo della foresta*. Queste opere non sempre sono nate, perlomeno non nelle intenzioni del loro autore, come opere per bambini o ragazzi. Per Louisa May Alcott si è trattata di una precisa richiesta del suo editore, Niles, che nel settembre del 1867 le propose di scrivere "un libro per ragazze", condannandola a diventare non solo una scrittrice per ragazzi (e qui uso il maschile generico), ma un'autrice per il solo genere femminile, e di una precisa fascia di età. Partendo da queste premesse, c'è però, a mio parere, da superare una divisione che di fatto non esiste: quella tra la letteratura – e i classici – *tout court* e la letteratura – e i classici – per bambini e per ragazzi. Mi piace, a tal proposito, citare quello che dice la scrittrice Nadia Terranova nel suo *Un'idea di infanzia. Libri, bambini e altra letteratura* (Italo Svevo 2019), ovvero che "non esiste la letteratura 'per' ragazzi, esiste la letteratura con i ragazzi e bambini dentro". E se è vero che "una società si racconta attraverso la sua letteratura" è vero che "quella per ragazzi, con le sue regole e la sua anarchia, con la libertà di un sottobosco, è la parte più interessante di quel racconto". Non è un caso se Ernest Hemingway ha affermato che *"*Tutta la letteratura moderna americana deriva da un libro di Mark Twain intitolato *Huckleberry Finn*. La scrittura americana arriva da lì. Non c'era mai stato niente del genere prima. E non c'è più stato niente del genere dopo": dunque, come si può trattare,

maneggiare, leggere e quindi tradurre un libro del genere – e *Piccole donne* e la sua creatrice non sono certo da meno – pensando di trovarci di fronte a un "sottogenere" della letteratura, a una letteratura secondaria, o di serie B? Per cui, tornando alla sua domanda, la risposta è sì: mantenendo in traduzione le caratteristiche di classico *tout court*, anche le "mie" *Piccole donne* possono senz'altro rientrare nella fascia di età tipicamente assegnata al romanzo inglese, ovvero 8-12+.

Nella sua edizione di Piccole Donne lei ha deciso di mantenere i riferimenti alla cultura di partenza e, se necessario, di spiegarli con delle note in fondo al testo. Non per tutte le edizioni di Piccole Donne messe in commercio negli ultimi anni è stato fatto lo stesso. In alcuni casi i suddetti riferimenti culturali del testo di partenza sono stati del tutto eliminati, in altri lasciati senza fornire spiegazioni al lettore. Potrebbe spiegare come mai ha ritenuto importante conservarli?

Questa decisione è "figlia" della decisione di cui si parlava sopra, ovvero quella di trattare questo romanzo come un classico *tout court* e non banalizzarlo, semplificarlo, razionalizzarlo, impoverirlo a livello qualitativo e quantitativo, per usare le categorie di Antoine Berman, allo scopo di rendendolo più "accessibile", più "vicino" al lettore di oggi, e quindi di "addomesticarlo". È un romanzo complesso, che va inquadrato nel contesto sociale che l'ha prodotto, per preservarne la lontananza e l'alterità. Per questo non si possono eliminare riferimenti storici e culturali, né ridurre la profonda stratificazione linguistica dell'originale a una lingua monocorde e piana. Certo, per il lettore di oggi alcuni riferimenti risulterebbero completamente oscuri e inaccessibili, per questo è fondamentale corredare il testo di un apparato di note.

Secondo lei, quanto l'utilizzo di note esplicative in fondo al libro contribuisce a fare apprezzare di più il romanzo? Dal momento che è un classico per ragazzi, ciò potrebbe avere anche un ruolo didattico per avvicinarli a una cultura diversa dalla loro?

L'utilizzo di note esplicative, in testi così lontani nel tempo e nello spazio, è fondamentale, se non indispensabile. Il lettore di oggi non sa cos'è una *Hansom cab* o una "raganella"(prendo questi esempi dalla seconda parte di *Little Women*, in Italia noto

come *Piccole donne* crescono, che sto traducendo in questo momento), per cui quando incapperà in queste espressioni potrà fare due cose: passare oltre per non dovere interrompere la lettura o fermarsi, "inciampare", e andare a leggere la nota, imparando così qualcosa che non sapeva e acquisendo conoscenze che lo aiuteranno a calarsi meglio nel testo, a comprenderlo più in profondità. *Piccole donne* nella mia traduzione è prima uscito per la UE di Feltrinelli, poi per Gribaudo e infine per la UE Ragazzi, collana inaugurata di recente dalla casa editrice. Quando si traduce si tiene sempre conto del lettore ideale: i libri che escono per la UE sono classici pensati per tutti, mentre quelli che escono per la UE ragazzi o per Gribaudo sono libri pensati per un pubblico più specifico (bambini, ragazzi). Chi traduce dovrà tenere conto anche di questo aspetto.

La prosa della Alcott è varia, ricca di espressioni vivaci, e il registro si alza e si abbassa a seconda di chi parla o che si tratti di pezzi narrati o discorsi diretti. Lei come si è approcciata alla traduzione in questo senso? Per alcune delle espressioni idiomatiche del testo originale esiste il corrispettivo italiano, per altre invece è necessario creare da zero un'espressione idiomatica. Come è arrivata, per esempio, alla traduzione calzetta e salamelecchi (pg. 277, nota 82) per prunes and prisms dell'originale?

La Alcott è una scrittrice molto dotata, la sua prosa raffinatissima. Non è una scrittrice "semplice" (se mai esistono scrittori semplici), come non è uno scrittore semplice Mark Twain. I loro romanzi sono molto piacevoli da leggere, ma molto difficili da tradurre. Chi non conosce la sua particolarissima vicenda familiare, le sue battaglie sociali, il femminismo, il contesto storico, potrebbe scambiarla per una tranquilla signora – anzi, signorina, perché, a differenza della sua Jo, lei non si è mai sposata – che si dilettava nella scrittura poco impegnata e impegnativa di romanza per "ragazzine". Niente di più lontano dalla realtà di una donna determinata a vivere del proprio lavoro, di una scrittrice consapevole che la letteratura è un mestiere che richiede dedizione e perizia e ha regole tutte sue. La scrittura per lei non è un passatempo, è un lavoro molto serio, un lavoro che le consentirà di riscattarsi da una precarietà economica che caratterizzò la sua vita fin dai primi giorni. Senza conoscere questi aspetti della sua vicenda umana, è difficile comprendere appieno la sua vicenda letteraria. Questo non toglie che si possa comunque affrontare un romanzo come *Little Women* per il semplice piacere di leggerlo: si resterà a

un livello più superficiale di comprensione del testo, non si coglieranno alcuni riferimenti, ma sarà lo stesso un'esperienza godibilissima. Tuttavia, il testo è stratificato, esistono diversi livelli di fruizione, rimandi intertestuali, isotopie, ecc. che solo il lettore più consapevole riesce a cogliere. Ovviamente il traduttore può fare molto per restituire al lettore un testo che conservi il più possibile questa complessità, questa stratificazione. Lo può fare con le note, come dicevamo prima, ma è chiamato a farlo anche e soprattutto in traduzione, restituendo la grande varietà della prosa alcottiana, l'ironia che spesso permea la narrazione, i doppi sensi, i giochi di parole, la grande inventività linguistica. In questo passaggio da una lingua all'altra ci sono cose più difficili da "salvare", e di certo sono quelle più connaturate, più radicate, più proprie della lingua: i reali, i culturemi, gli *idioms*, gli errori. La difficoltà sta nel fatto che non c'è mai una vera corrispondenza fra le lingue, e il traduttore opera e si muove cercando di colmare continuamente questa sfasatura, questo slittamento. A volte si riesce a trovare qualcosa che funzioni bene anche nella nostra lingua, qualcosa che esiste già, a volte bisogna "inventarselo", attraverso un gesto creativo ermeneutico: come a dire che è la lingua da cui traduciamo, con le sue strutture, con le sue regole, ad autorizzarci a farlo. Venendo all'esempio che mi pone nella domanda, "*prunes and prisms*" è per l'appunto un *idiom* che indica un modo di parlare e comportarsi molto formale, cerimonioso e affettato ma anche molto bacchettone e moralista. L'espressione è stata usata per la prima volta da Charles Dickens nel suo romanzo *La piccola Dorrit* per indicare un modo di parlare consono e formale, adatto e consigliabile nel caso in cui il parlante sia una giovane donna ("*When you talk to your grandmother, stick to prunes and prisms so that you don't offen d her*";"*If you want to become a proper lady, be sure to practice your prunes and prism s*"): Mrs General, l'istitutrice di Dorrit, raccomanda alla piccola di stare attenta a non spalancare la bocca quando parla perché non sta bene in una donna. In italiano, ovviamente, non esiste un "equivalente", per cui ho dovuto crearlo a partire dalla nostra lingua: sono partita dal significato generale dell'espressione e ho provato ad applicarlo a Jo, visto che è lei a usarlo – qual è il destino di cui parla e a cui vorrebbe sottrarsi? Poco prima esprime il desiderio, come anche altrove nel corso del romanzo, di essere un ragazzo, per poter godere di tutta la libertà riservata al genere maschile; così ho pensato quali fossero gli aspetti della vita di una donna che a lei vanno stretti, i modelli di femminilità da cui non si sente rappresentata e da cui prende le distanze: nella stessa

pagina, Jo dice che è "stufa di badare alla casa e di starsene confinata lì dentro", mentre in altri punti del romanzo rimprovera Amy di essere troppo "schizzinosa e rigidina" (in fondo un concetto non troppo lontano da quel *prunes and prisms*), di darsi troppe arie e di essere una mocciosa "tutti lezi e smancerie" (vedi il primo capitolo). Insomma, Jo non vuole diventare né una casalinga senza aspirazioni né una donna che ama frequentare l'alta società e guarda più alla forma che alla sostanza. È a partire da questo ragionamento che ho scelto la traduzione "*calzetta e salamelecchi*", che contiene, per l'appunto, due parole-mondo: la "calzetta" rappresenta il primo tipo di donna, i "salamelecchi" la seconda. Ed ecco che l'*idiom* diventa una specie di manifesto, per Jo.

Un discorso a sé meriterebbe la resa dei dialoghi: è qui che Alcott dà il meglio di sé. Come ho scritto nella postfazione, le sorelle March non parlano tutte allo stesso modo: ognuna ha il suo modo di parlare, dato dal carattere, dall'età, dal livello di istruzione. La scrittrice ci fornisce molti elementi in tal senso: Jo ricorre spesso allo *slang*, e ama le parole che significano qualcosa; Amy è soprannominata *Miss Malaprop* (in traduzione "Miss Baglio"), proprio perché commette tantissimi errori esilaranti cercando di usare paroloni difficili e ricercati. Tra la lingua di Jo e quella di Amy si colloca quella delle altre due sorelle, che hanno caratteristiche meno vistose, ma possiedono comunque una loro specificità, una loro caratura. Tutto questo va reso in traduzione, attingendo a piene mani alla lingua neostandard, alla lingua colloquiale e popolare, nel caso di Jo (e ancor più di Hannah, la domestica di casa March), e inventandosi errori e imprecisioni che siano all'altezza dell'originale per Amy.

Franca Cavagnoli, nel suo libro La Voce del Testo, suggerisce che un classico della letteratura scritto in epoche lontane dalla nostra debba essere tradotto con un linguaggio odierno. Lei sembra condividere questa linea nella sua traduzione.

Sì, certo. Non avrebbe senso creare a tavolino una lingua artificiale, che non è esistita in passato né esiste nel presente, per rendere quella lontananza, quell'estraneità. Si traduce sempre inserendosi nella fluvialità della lingua in cui viviamo. All'interno di questa fluvialità cercheremo di trovare un equilibrio, perché anche l'estrema modernizzazione può costituire un rischio. Non credo che le sorelle March potrebbero mai dire "scialla" o "fuori come un balcone", neanche Jo. Insomma, è un lavoro di cesello, un'impresa

funambolica. Sbilanciarsi da una parte o dall'altra significherebbe cadere nel vuoto. Il classico ha una vitalità tale che non agisce solo nel passato, ma anche nel presente, e attraverso il presente contribuisce a costruire il futuro: forte di questa consapevolezza, il traduttore deve essere disposto a correre molti rischi.

Sono pochi i passaggi in cui utilizza dei termini più datati e meno in uso al giorno d'oggi (ad esempio rampognare per tradurre "to peck" (pg. 235), o "empito melodrammatico" (pg.292) per il "melodramatic fit" di Laurie quando prende in giro Meg davanti finestra). In questo tipo di casi c'era qualche elemento del testo originale che l'ha portata a fare questa scelta?

In entrambi i casi l'utilizzo di termini più datati e di registro più alto è funzionale a conferire alla frase una venatura di ironia. Nel primo caso è Laurie a parlare: sta cercando di convincere Amy ad andare a stare dalla zia March perché Beth ha la scarlattina. Amy non vorrebbe andare e si lagna perché la zia è noiosa e intrattabile, così Laurie, per vincere le sue resistenze, le promette che la andrà a trovare ogni giorno e la porterà a fare un giro con il calessino, e poi, per creare una specie di complicità che possa aiutarlo a persuaderla, fa riferimento ai proverbiali rimproveri dell'anziana signore e lo fa in maniera ironica, per strappare un sorriso a Amy, e con il sorriso anche la promessa di trasferirsi dalla zia finché Beth non starà meglio. Ecco che l'uso del dantesco "rampognare" al posto di un verbo più comune come "rimproverare" o "sgridare" non soltanto rafforza il concetto (infatti la "rampogna" è un rimprovero vibrato e solenne, un'invettiva) intensificandolo, ma, dal momento che è un termine di registro alto, crea una sfasatura, uno straniamento, una sproporzione rispetto al contesto, e questa sproporzione conferisce alla frase una sfumatura comica, restituendo un'atmosfera presente nel testo. Inoltre, Amy è una grande appassionata di parole altisonanti, desuete, ricercate, e in questo modo Laurie, usando uno dei suoi amati "paroloni", le fa un piccolo omaggio, che crea l'intesa di cui parlavo prima. Si può dire che con questa scelta ho potuto "compensare" quello che magari avevo perso altrove – l'ironia, la sfasatura di registri – applicando la famosa "legge della compensazione" dei traduttori. Lo stesso discorso si potrebbe fare per "melodramatic fit", e qui è lo stesso aggettivo (*melodramatic*) a indicarci che, come al solito, Laurie sta facendo il burlone: traducendo con "empito melodrammatico" di nuovo si crea

un'increspatura nel tessuto narrativo, un'increspatura che assomiglia molto a quella che percorre il labbro di chi sta accennando un sorriso.

Il romanzo è costellato di brevi poesie, spesso in rima. Quale strategia ha utilizzato per la traduzione di questi componimenti? Cosa ha ritenuto più importante mantenere quando si trovava alle strette: la musicalità e le rime o il contenuto?

Trattandosi di piccoli componimenti o filastrocche, ho cercato di conservare il più possibile la rima, e di mantenere la musicalità e il ritmo dell'originale, più del contenuto. Penso ad esempio al *Canto della saponata* (in originale *A song from the suds*), contenuto nel capitolo XVI. Qui Jo, a corredo della sua lettera per la mamma, che ha raggiunto il padre in ospedale, scrive una piccola poesia, anzi, una "posiòla" (in originale c'è "*pome*" anziché "*poem*"), come dice lei stessa prima dei saluti, spiegando che l'ispirazione le è venuta mentre aiutava Hannah con il bucato. Sono cinque sestine, la rima è per lo più alternata: qui Jo gioca tra l'apparente solennità della forma e la comicità del contenuto. Per questo in traduzione è stato fondamentale rendere *in primis* la melopea, ossia la musicalità, il ritmo, e quindi conservare rime, assonanze e figure di suono. Un discorso a parte va fatto per la resa dell'elemento comico e parodico: il primo verso inizia con l'invocazione alla regina ("*Queen of my Tub*", ossia "Regina del mastello"). È probabile che in questa filastrocca ci sia un'eco della famosa "queen of Mab", regina delle fate cantata da Mercuzio in *Romeo e Giulietta* di Shakespeare, per cui l'effetto comico, oltre che dall'ambientazione quotidiana e umile di un "Canto" originariamente regale, è dato anche dal riferimento alla regina delle fate, che qui diventa la regina del mastello. In traduzione, un espediente per creare questa coloritura comica è quello di accostare termini di registro molto basso che descrivono azioni e oggetti umili, della quotidianità ("mastello", "bucato", "straccio", "ramazza", "risciacquo", "strizzo") a termini propri del linguaggio poetico codificato della tradizione italiana, storicamente di timbro alto. Da qui l'utilizzo, in alcuni punti, di un lessico raffinato e arcaizzante ("fora", "sarìa", "allor sì" ecc). Più che un tentativo filologico, dunque, si tratta dell'evocazione di un'atmosfera, di un sentimento, che in questo caso si potrebbe definire pirandellianamente "il sentimento del contrario".

Nel famoso dibattito su una traduzione letterale e una libera, lei dove si colloca e perché?

Fortunatamente, questa dicotomia è ormai superata, come quella tra "bella e infedele" e "brutta e fedele". Quando mi si rivolge questa domanda, mi piace sempre citare quello che disse un giorno a lezione, quando frequentavo il Master di Traduzione a Pisa, Franco Buffoni, nostro grande poeta e traduttore di poesia, ossia che alla traduzione si richiede non tanto di essere fedele, quanto di essere leale. Dico questo perché le barriere fra i linguaggi sono più alte di quanto si pensi comunemente. I dizionari bilingue sono senz'altro utilissimi, ma costituiscono una pericolosa fonte di illusioni: non è quasi mai vera l'equivalenza che garantiscono fra la parola della lingua di partenza e quella corrispondente della lingua d'arrivo. Le aree dei rispettivi significati si possono sovrapporre in parte, ma è raro che coincidano, anche fra lingue strutturalmente vicine e storicamente imparentate fra loro. Per questo dico sempre, nei miei seminari di traduzione, che il dizionario più utile per un traduttore che non conosce o non ricorda il significato di una parola è il dizionario monolingue: quello della lingua originale prima e quello della lingua italiana poi. La comprensione e l'interpretazione di una frase, di un periodo, devono avvenire dapprima nella lingua straniera, nel corso della lettura attenta del brano che dobbiamo tradurre: la conoscenza dell'opera di un autore (opera nel senso di insieme della sua produzione letteraria) e del contesto culturale e sociale in cui è nata, e la comprensione di tutto ciò che c'è intorno alla parola o alla locuzione che non si conosce contribuiscono alla corretta interpretazione di quanto ancora ci è oscuro. Il dizionario bilingue si consulta in un secondo momento, dopo che ci si è fatti un'idea del significato, ma ancora non si riesce a trovare la parola, il traducente che si sta cercando: il possibile significato si aggira nella nostra mente e si ferma sulla punta della lingua – in questo senso, come ha scritto Susanna Basso in *Sul tradurre: esperienze e divagazioni militanti* (Bruno Mondadori 2010), "tradurre è un po' come avere interi romanzi sulla punta della lingua". E in fondo, la parola "giusta" la si troverà il più delle volte nel proprio "dizionario interiore". Si procede per congetture, ipotesi, ripensamenti, errori, si aggiusta continuamente il tiro, si riscrive, ci si corregge infinite volte: è da questo movimento incessante e da questa paziente attesa che nasce il testo tradotto, che non è fatto di una serie di corrispondenze esatte ma "brutte" (ecco la "brutta e fedele"), né da una serie di corrispondenze inesatte ma "belle" ("la bella infedele"), ma altro non è che un testo scritto

in una sorta di lingua straniera che, nel corso di questo inesausto movimento di avvicinanza che è la traduzione, si è venuta a creare all'interno della nostra stessa lingua.

Esistono moltissime traduzioni di questo classico. Prima di imbarcarsi in questo progetto di ritraduzione si è documentata sulle precedenti traduzioni? Cosa l'ha spinta a credere che ci fosse la necessità di dare una nuova interpretazione al romanzo?

Quando si traduce un classico si ha sempre a che fare con una lunga serie di colleghi chi ci hanno preceduto. Il loro lavoro è una preziosa bussola, e di certo in alcuni casi è utile consultarlo, ma credo che sia fondamentale, soprattutto all'inizio di una traduzione, restare soli con la voce che stiamo traghettando alla nostra riva, altrimenti rischiamo di farci distrarre, come da un canto di sirena, influenzare, condizionare: troppe voci, e nessuna che sia la nostra, o meglio la nostra che segue le orme dell'originale. Per cui non guardo mai le traduzioni precedenti, quantomeno nel corso della prima stesura. Lo faccio a volte in fase di revisione, per confrontarmi ad armi pari con i colleghi che mi hanno preceduto, e vedere come hanno risolto quel dato problema traduttivo o reso quel passo.

Per quanto riguarda invece la necessità di una nuova versione del romanzo, in questo caso direi che fosse quanto mai urgente, visto che esistevano poche traduzioni recenti, e le vecchie traduzioni soffrivano un po' di quel "pregiudizio" di cui soffrono i romanzi cosiddetti "per ragazzi" o "per l'infanzia". Ma più in generale la pluralità delle traduzioni è sempre un bene, è sempre una ricchezza, soprattutto se si tratta di un classico, un testo per sua natura caleidoscopico. Ogni traduzione è appunto un'interpretazione, e quindi ci restituirà un aspetto, un'idea dell'originale: per questo la traduzione è per sua natura sempre plurale: esistono tanti Martin Eden, tante Jane Eyre, tante Jo March, e sono tutte non solo possibili, ma anche necessarie, addirittura "salvifiche".

Se dovesse fare un bilancio di questa esperienza di traduzione, cosa direbbe? Quali sono stati gli aspetti positivi e negativi? Ricorda parti che l'hanno messa più alla prova?

I bilanci sono sempre sconsigliati, con la traduzione. Chi fa questo mestiere deve conoscere bene "l'arte di perdere", per usare le parole della poetessa Elizabeth Bishop. Tradurre significa perdere quasi sempre, o, bene che vada, pareggiare. Questa perdita,

questo "calo", è di misura varia, grande o piccolo a seconda dell'abilità del traduttore e della natura del testo originale: è di regola minima per i testi tecnici o scientifici (ma occorre, in questo caso, che il traduttore, oltre a conoscere bene la lingua di partenza e la lingua d'arrivo, conosca anche la materia – la medicina, l'informatica ecc. – e quindi possegga una terza competenza), massimo per la poesia (cosa resta del verso dantesco "e vengo in parte ove non è che luca" se viene ridotto e tradotto come "giungo in un luogo buio"?). Per cui non so dire quanto sia consistente la perdita, nel caso di *Piccole donne*. So per certo che l'aspetto che più mi premeva "preservare" era la straordinaria vitalità e varietà della lingua dei dialoghi, di cui si è parlato sopra. Ho capito, traducendo questo romanzo che da bambina non avevo amato e avevo lasciato a metà perché mi annoiava terribilmente, che la mia noia, il mio disinteresse erano probabilmente legati alla traduzione. Leggendo l'originale mi sono divertita tantissimo, ho trovato spassosissimi gli errori e gli strafalcioni di Amy, potente e rivoluzionaria la lingua e – di conseguenza – il pensiero di Jo. Restituire ai lettori italiani un testo in cui tutta questa ricchezza fosse il più possibile conservata è stato il mio modo personale di chiedere scusa alla scrittrice e al romanzo, e rendergli giustizia.

Riassunto

Questa tesi nasce dall'incontro fra la mia passione per il romanzo per cui la scrittrice americana Louisa May Alcott è più famosa, ovvero *Piccole Donne* (*Little Women* in inglese), e la mia curiosità rispetto a un argomento strettamente legato al mio corso di studio ma mai trattato in ambito accademico, ovvero la ritraduzione di opere letterarie. *Little Women* si è rivelato un ottimo candidato a uno studio sulla ritraduzione per la sua lunga storia di traduzioni italiane, iniziata nel 1908, ovvero a quarant'anni esatti dalla prima pubblicazione (1868) del romanzo in lingua originale in America, e che continua ad evolversi con nuove, recenti aggiunte. L'obiettivo di questa tesi, dunque, è quello di esaminare in dettaglio il fenomeno della ritraduzione dei classici letterari attraverso la comparazione di tre traduzioni italiane di *Piccole Donne*. Si è deciso di prendere in considerazione solo edizioni italiane integrali dell'opera inglese, e che non mostrassero indicazioni di particolari modifiche o adattamenti del testo originale per una specifica fascia di lettori. Le tre traduzioni sono state analizzate rispetto ai principali dibattiti sollevati all'interno dei Translation Studies (Studi sulla Traduzione), come ad esempio i concetti di equivalenza in traduzione e di fedeltà rispetto al testo fonte, l'etica della traduzione, la relazione fra traduzione e cultura, etc., e confrontate per trovare similitudini e differenze rispetto alle strategie utilizzate per la resa dei tratti distintivi del testo fonte. Lo scopo di questa analisi è quello di arrivare a comprendere quali possano essere le ragioni dietro al fenomeno della ritraduzione dei classici letterari.

Il primo capitolo offre una panoramica sulla storia della teoria della traduzione nel mondo occidentale. La pratica della traduzione esiste da tempi remoti: le prime testimonianze risalgono al II millennio a.C. con le popolazioni dell'Anatolia (Ittiti, Babilonesi e Assiri). Tuttavia, gli studiosi concordano nell'attribuire la prima, vera riflessione sistematica sulla traduzione a Cicerone che, nel 46 a.C., commentando la sua traduzione dei discorsi di Demostene ed Eschine, si chiese se fosse più appropriato produrre una traduzione letterale, ovvero più fedele alla sintassi del testo fonte, o libera, ovvero più fedele al significato dell'originale, sollevando così per la prima volta un dibattito che si sarebbe protratto a lungo in questo campo.

Nel mondo occidentale, la necessità di diffondere le Sacre Scritture fra gruppi variegati di fedeli ha giocato un ruolo fondamentale per lo sviluppo della traduzione sia in ambito

teorico che pratico. Non a caso la Bibbia risulta il testo più tradotto al mondo. Al di fuori del contesto religioso, i primi contributi teorici più rilevanti intorno alla traduzione in Occidente furono prodotti fra i secoli XVI e XVIII. Nel 1540 Etienne Dolet scrisse un breve trattato in cui fornì cinque principi fondamentali da seguire per ottenere una "buona" traduzione. Nel 1680, il poeta e traduttore inglese John Dryden arrivò a delineare tre possibili tipi di traduzione: la *metafrase*, ovvero la traduzione letterale; la *parafrasi*, o traduzione libera, più fedele al senso che alle parole dell'originale; e *l'imitazione*, che risulta essere più una libera interpretazione del testo fonte. Nel 1790, invece, Alexander Tytler introdusse un cambio di prospettiva, definendo "buona" una traduzione che genera nella cultura di arrivo lo stesso effetto che il testo originale ha sui propri lettori. L'avvento del Romanticismo tedesco ispirò diverse riflessioni sulla traduzione da parte di figure come Schleiermacher, Goethe and Von Humboldt. Il primo, in particolare, definì la traduzione come il processo con cui il lettore viene avvicinato all'autore o viceversa, una visione che sarà d'ispirazione per teorie successive.

Il XX secolo rappresentò un periodo particolarmente fertile per gli studi sulla traduzione; ci si iniziò ad allontanare dai dibattiti che caratterizzarono i secoli precedenti (traduzione letterale vs traduzione libera, accuratezza, fedeltà al testo fonte, etc.) per andare verso teorie di traduzione più strutturate. Fino alla metà del XX secolo furono molti i tentativi da parte di altre discipline di spiegare il fenomeno della traduzione e fornire dei modelli o delle procedure da applicare durante il processo traduttivo. Fra i più rilevanti approcci filosofici rientrano quello ermeneutico di George Steiner e il decostruzionismo di Jacques Derrida. Nell'ambito della "Scienza della Traduzione", basata sulle regole della linguistica, importanti contributi giunsero da Eugene Nida, che tentò di trovare una procedura sistematica da seguire ispirata a concetti presi dalla semantica, dalla pragmatica e da alcuni studi sulla sintassi di Noam Chomsky, e dalla scuola tedesca della *Ubersetzungswissenschaft* (Scienza della Traduzione). Ma il vero punto di svolta del XX secolo rappresentò l'istituzione della traduzione come disciplina accademica indipendente con la nascita dei "Translation Studies" nel 1972, grazie al contributo fondamentale di James Holmes. Questo evento fu d'ispirazione per molti studiosi e, negli anni successivi, si assistette a una forte accelerazione della ricerca nel campo della traduzione. I testi tradotti cominciarono ad essere analizzati non solo in relazione al testo fonte, ma anche rispetto alla posizione che occupavano nel contesto

sociale, storico e culturale della lingua di arrivo, come nel caso dei Descriptive Traslation Studies di Gideon Toury. Negli ultimi decenni del XX secolo, gli studi sulla traduzione sperimentarono una "svolta culturale" ("cultural turn"), grazie alla quale si iniziarono ad investigare le influenze reciproche fra traduzione e colonialismo, studi di genere, relazioni di potere e ideologie. Nuove teorie vennero avanzate anche nel campo dell'etica, nel tentativo di stabilire le giuste regole di comportamento da adottare nel processo traduttivo. Un apporto fondamentale in questo ambito è quello di Lawrence Venuti e delle sue teorie sulle due opposte strategie di traduzione addomesticante, che riduce l'"estraneità" del testo fonte, e straniante, che al contrario conserva le peculiarità linguistiche e culturali del testo originale. Per quanto riguarda le prospettive future degli Studi sulla Traduzione, gli studiosi sembrano concordi nel ritenere che la sociologia della traduzione, e quindi il ruolo, lo status e le responsabilità sociali dei traduttori, sia un ambito che necessita ulteriori approfondimenti.

Il secondo capitolo va ad analizzare in dettaglio il fenomeno della ritraduzione e a discutere i contributi teorici fondamentali che saranno di riferimento per la comparazione delle tre traduzioni di *Piccole Donne*. Come la traduzione, anche la ritraduzione è una pratica che affonda le sue radici nell'antichità (si pensi alla ritraduzione dei testi sacri), ciononostante le prime ricerche più approfondite su questo fenomeno non si registrano prima della fine del XX secolo. Nelle enciclopedie degli Studi sulla Traduzione, la ritraduzione viene definita come l'atto di tradurre un'opera che era stata precedentemente tradotta nella stessa lingua o il risultato di questa pratica. Le prime riflessioni sistematiche sulla ritraduzione risalgono al 1990, anno in cui la rivista francese *Palimpsestes* dedicò un numero alla questione. In uno degli articoli, Antoine Berman avanzò l'ipotesi che la ritraduzione fosse la conseguenza del processo di "invecchiamento" a cui qualsiasi traduzione va incontro: mentre gli originali rimangono eterni, tutte le traduzioni sono caratterizzate da uno stato di incompletezza e obsolescenza legato al fatto che sono il prodotto di un certo stato della lingua, della cultura e della letteratura del popolo della lingua di arrivo. Secondo Berman, le prime traduzioni di un'opera risultano particolarmente lacunose rispetto all'originale, ed è solo attraverso successive ritraduzioni che il significato dell'opera può essere ripristinato.

Gli studi sulla ritraduzione decollarono con l'inizio del XXI secolo grazie all'interesse di numerosi accademici verso le reciproche influenze fra le (ri)traduzioni e la società e cultura della lingua di arrivo, e anche verso le motivazioni alla base del fenomeno. Fra i maggiori contributi del XXI secolo rientrano le teorie di Venuti, secondo cui nuove traduzioni sono necessarie perché le precedenti non riflettono i cambiamenti nelle norme del linguaggio e nei valori culturali di una certa società. In questo senso, Venuti sottolinea il valore sociale che possono avere le ritraduzioni nel diffondere nuovi valori o ideologie, o rafforzare quelli già esistenti. Isabelle Collombat suggerisce varie ragioni dietro al fenomeno della ritraduzione, fra cui: la scoperta di nuove fonti sull'autore o l'opera che possono offrire nuove interpretazioni da dare al testo; la comparsa di nuovi approcci traduttivi in seguito allo sviluppo degli Studi sulla Traduzione; e la volontà di rendere il testo originale accessibile a una data tipologia di lettori. Le studiose Kaisa Koskinen e Outi Paloposki evidenziano anche le motivazioni più prettamente economiche, legate al fatto che a volte per le case editrici è più conveniente commissionare una nuova traduzione piuttosto che pagare i diritti d'autore di una già esistente.

Nel terzo capitolo viene esplorato il romanzo *Piccole Donne* nelle sue caratteristiche di classico della letteratura. Ad oggi, le tipologie di testo più ritradotte sono i testi sacri, le opere letterarie canoniche e quelle teatrali. Gli studiosi sembrano concordare sul fatto che uno dei motivi che rendono un classico della letteratura più facilmente soggetto a ritraduzione sono le sue caratteristiche innate di eccellenza e a-temporalità. A tal proposito, il critico letterario Frank Kermode definisce i classici come testi che, nel tempo, possono essere letti e interpretati in molteplici modi. Similmente, lo scrittore Italo Calvino vede nei classici dei libri che non smettono mai di dire quello che hanno da dire e, per questo, capaci di comunicare su più livelli.

Se nessuno può contestare lo stato di classico di *Piccole Donne*, si potrebbero avere pareri contrastanti rispetto alla sua natura di classico *tout court*, come lo definisce la traduttrice Stella Sacchini, o di classico per bambini e ragazzi. Non ci sono dubbi che la Alcott abbia scritto il romanzo avendo in mente un pubblico di ragazzi, dal momento che gli editori le chiesero esplicitamente di scrivere un "libro per ragazze". Inoltre, il romanzo risponde ai principali criteri che individuano la letteratura per bambini e ragazzi, fatta di personaggi in cui i più piccoli possano identificarsi, di libri che intrattengono ma allo

stesso tempo educano con i propri valori morali. È anche vero, però, che quando *Piccole Donne* fu pubblicato ebbe successo non solo fra i più giovani, ma anche fra gli adulti, perché lo stile di scrittura utilizzato dalla Alcott, i temi trattati e la stratificazione del linguaggio e del carattere dei vari personaggi fanno sì che questo romanzo riesca a parlare a una moltitudine di lettori di età differenti.

Come già accennato, *Piccole Donne* a una lunga storia di traduzioni alle spalle. La scelta delle edizioni italiane da confrontare è stata immediata per quanto riguarda la traduzione realizzata da Ciro e Michelina Trabalza e pubblicata da Carabba nel 1908, trattandosi della prima traduzione italiana in assoluto del romanzo. Altrettanto semplice è stata la decisione di analizzare la traduzione di Stella Sacchini, pubblicata nel 2018 da Feltrinelli Editore, dal momento che la traduttrice ha dichiarato che lo scopo della sua traduzione è quello di restituire la varietà del linguaggio originale, lo stile vibrante della Alcott e il ritmo e la vivacità dei dialoghi inglesi, affermazioni che sembrano mostrare l'intenzionalità da parte della traduttrice di imprimere una nuova visione e interpretazione del testo originale. Per quanto riguarda invece la scelta della traduzione che potremmo chiamare "di mezzo", visti gli oltre cento anni che dividono l'edizione del 1908 da quella del 2018, ho voluto sceglierne una che fosse stata pubblicata intorno alla metà del 1900, in modo da coprire all'incirca tutto il secolo. La traduzione di Anna Maria Speckel, pubblicata per la prima volta nel 1953 da Ape, Artistiche Propaganda Editoriali, mi è sembrata un'opzione interessante vista la scelta della casa editrice Newton Compton di ripubblicarla, con piccole revisioni, oltre cinquant'anni dopo, nel 2011.

Il quarto capitolo entra nel vivo della comparazione fra le tre traduzioni italiane. L'analisi condotta ha cercato di individuare le singole caratteristiche delle edizioni italiane e le similitudini e diversità reciproche rispetto alla resa delle peculiarità del romanzo. Il capitolo si divide in sei sezioni, ognuna dedicata all'analisi di una certa caratteristica dell'originale e delle strategie di traduzione adottate nelle tre edizioni italiane. Ogni sezione è corredata di esempi pratici di passaggi del romanzo inglese e delle rispettive traduzioni italiane, per rendere più chiare ed evidenti le osservazioni fornite.

Nella prima sezione viene analizzato il dibattito fra la scelta di adottare strategie di traduzione più letterali o più libere. Tutta la sezione si basa sul concetto di equivalenza fra due lingue. Un traduttore è costretto a scontrarsi spesso con casi di non-equivalenza

fra la lingua di partenza e la lingua di arrivo, e dunque a trovare delle soluzioni traduttive per colmare al meglio questo divario. L'analisi condotta su alcuni passaggi del romanzo dimostra come, a volte, la scelta di rimanere troppo ancorati al testo originale rispetto alla sintassi o alle parole possa generare un testo poco naturale in italiano, soprattutto nei casi di espressioni idiomatiche, costrutti o parole distintive della lingua fonte, nel nostro caso l'inglese. In generale, l'analisi ha mostrato come la traduzione del 2018 fosse quella meno letterale delle tre analizzate, un risultato in linea con le tendenze odierne rispetto a questo tema.

Nella seconda sezione ho analizzato il tipo di approccio dei traduttori al testo fonte rispetto alle due tipologie di traduzione addomesticante o straniante introdotte da Venuti. Il testo originale è ricco di riferimenti alla cultura inglese e americana, quindi un primo modo per misurare il grado di straniamento e addomesticamento delle singole traduzioni è quello di controllare quanti di questi riferimenti sono stati mantenuti in traduzione e se sono stati spiegati con delle note dal traduttore. Dall'analisi è emerso che le traduzioni del 1908 e del 2018 sono quelle che più hanno preservato questi elementi della cultura di partenza, non solo traducendoli ma anche accompagnandoli con note esplicative. La traduzione del 1953/2011, in confronto alle altre due, ha invece eliminato alcuni dei riferimenti e utilizzato un numero di gran lunga inferiore di note alla traduzione. È necessario sottolineare che queste scelte da parte di un traduttore possono essere dettate da diversi fattori, fra cui lo scopo che il libro (e quindi la traduzione) avrà nella cultura di arrivo e il pubblico a cui più vuole rivolgersi. Ulteriori segnali di addomesticamento sono l'italianizzazione dei nomi propri stranieri (p.e. George > Giorgio; Apollyon > Apollonio) o la sostituzione in traduzione di elementi culturospecifici presenti nel testo fonte con elementi della cultura di arrivo (p.e. hornpipe > tarantella), due strategie che si ritrovano sia nella traduzione del 1908 che in quella del 1953/2011. In generale, si può dire che la traduzione che è risultata più straniante fra le tre è quella del 2018, nuovamente in conformità con le tendenze traduttive attuali, mentre le altre due hanno mostrato segni di addomesticamento.

Nella terza sezione si è andato ad esaminare come il linguaggio, lo stile e il registro del libro originale siano stati trasposti in italiano. Una delle peculiarità di questo romanzo è rappresentata dalla caratterizzazione dei singoli personaggi attraverso il loro modo di parlare e interagire nello spazio. Sono poche le descrizioni dirette del carattere delle

protagoniste da parte del narratore, perché gran parte delle informazioni al riguardo si possono ricavare dai dialoghi fra i personaggi e dal linguaggio di ognuno di loro, ma in particolare di Amy ed Jo. La prima, nel tentativo di suonare elegante, utilizza parole ben aldilà della sua conoscenza della lingua, finendo per commettere errori esilaranti, come scambiare parole con suoni simili ma significati completamente diversi (malapropismo). La trasposizione del linguaggio di Amy richiede al traduttore un certo sforzo creativo, che si ritrova meno nella traduzione del 1953/2011 rispetto a quelle del 1908 e del 2018. Jo, invece, è tutto l'opposto di Amy: usa parole molto espressive, spesso prese dal gergo giovanile americano, che richiedono quindi un registro più basso e informale in traduzione. Anche in questo caso dall'analisi è emerso che la traduzione del 1953/2011, rispetto alle altre due, ha in alcuni casi minimizzato l'espressività che caratterizza Jo nell'originale.

In *Piccole Donne*, la Alcott utilizza uno stile narrativo brillante e vario, caratterizzato da frequenti giochi di parole, espressioni idiomatiche e neologismi. Anche qui, come per il linguaggio di Amy, ai traduttori viene richiesto per prima cosa la capacità di riconoscere queste espressioni marcate della lingua inglese, poi di capirne il senso, e infine di cercare di tradurle generando nel lettore italiano lo stesso effetto che l'originale ha sul lettore inglese. La comparazione delle tre traduzioni ha mostrato che la traduzione del 1953/2011 rispetto alle altre due presentava un appiattimento maggiore nello stile. Anche questo tipo di scelte traduttive può essere in parte dettato dai fattori esterni accennati sopra, ovvero il pubblico di lettori per cui la traduzione è pensata e lo scopo che le si attribuisce.

La quarta sezione tratta della questione del linguaggio e dello stile da utilizzare nel caso della traduzione di un classico letterario scritto in epoche lontane dalla nostra. La traduttrice Franca Cavagnoli sostiene che per i "classici autentici", ovvero scritti e ambientati nella stessa epoca, come nel caso di *Piccole Donne,* è ragionevole usare un lessico contemporaneo, soprattutto per le ritraduzioni, altrimenti basterebbe revisionare una versione precedente. Ognuna delle traduzioni analizzate è in linea con il pensiero di Cavagnoli, di conseguenza fare una comparazione rispetto al linguaggio e al lessico delle tre edizioni italiane non sarebbe coerente. Tuttavia, dal momento che la traduzione del 1953 è stata ripubblicata in anni recenti (2011), è interessante vedere come i lettori contemporanei hanno accolto la ristampa di questa traduzione. In molti hanno espresso giudizi negativi, definendo il linguaggio arcaico e le costruzioni impiegate obsolete.

Chiaramente, le opinioni negative sono legate al fatto che oggi la traduzione risulta anacronistica. Tuttavia, c'è un ulteriore elemento da sottolineare, ovvero che la traduzione è stata ripubblicata per una collana di classici che la casa editrice Newton Compton ha messo in commercio a prezzi molto più bassi rispetto alla media. Si può supporre che, per mantenere un prezzo modico e avere comunque un guadagno, la casa editrice non abbia potuto commissionare una nuova traduzione e abbia quindi deciso di ristampare una "vecchia" che aveva già utilizzato in precedenti edizioni. Questa ipotesi apre il seguente dibattito: se da una parte è apprezzabile la volontà di garantire la possibilità di leggere a tutti mettendo in commercio un'edizione più economica, anche se ciò vuol dire offrire una traduzione non ideale, dall'altra parte si potrebbe condannare la pratica di mettere un prezzo alla cultura e lasciare che il profitto economico guidi le scelte dell'editoria.

La quinta sezione analizza le strategie traduttive messe in atto nelle tre edizioni italiane per la resa di una serie di brevi componimenti in rima presenti nel testo e di alcune lettere che i protagonisti scrivono a Mrs. March mentre si trova a Washington per assistere il marito ammalatosi in guerra. Per quanto riguarda i componimenti in rima, la difficoltà di traduzione sta nel riuscire a conservare sia la parte musicale che il contenuto. Considerando che il libro originale è stato concepito soprattutto per un pubblico di bambini e giovani adulti, ho ritenuto che il mantenimento in traduzione delle rime e del ritmo dei componimenti fosse di particolare importanza. Inoltre, queste brevi filastrocche e poesie sono opera di una delle protagoniste del libro, Jo, e servono a rendere ancora più evidenti due dei suoi tratti caratteristici: la passione che ha per la scrittura e la sua creatività linguistica. Dall'analisi delle tre traduzioni è emerso che le traduttrici delle edizioni del 1953/2011 e del 2018 sono riuscite a preservare, nella maggior parte dei casi, sia la musicalità che il contenuto dei componimenti. La traduzione del 1908, invece, sembra essersi concentrata maggiormente sul contenuto delle brevi poesie, sacrificandone la musicalità e il ritmo. Per quanto riguarda invece la resa delle lettere, due risultano particolarmente interessanti dal punto di vista traduttivo: quella di Amy e quella di Hannah, la domestica della famiglia March. La prima è piena di malapropismi ed errori ortografici e di punteggiatura; la seconda presenta un linguaggio informale, sgrammaticato e basato sull'oralità, dovuto al fatto che Hannah non ha ricevuto alcun tipo di istruzione. Delle tre traduzioni prese in analisi solo quella del 1953 ha completamente eliminato le suddette caratteristiche delle due lettere, facendo esprimere sia Amy che

Hannah in un italiano perfetto. La traduzione del 1908, invece, ha conservato alcuni degli errori della lettera di Amy e usato qualche espressione dialettale per rendere il linguaggio di Hannah. Ma la traduzione del 2018 è quella che più di tutte ha cercato di mantenere, in quantità e qualità, le caratteristiche delle due lettere originali. In particolare, è apprezzabile lo sforzo della traduttrice nell'utilizzare una serie di modi di dire tipici della variante di italiano neostandard per rendere il linguaggio di Hannah.

La sezione sei del capitolo tratta delle ambiguità generate dalla mancanza di corrispondenza fra le categorie grammaticali della lingua italiana e di quella inglese. Un esempio evidente è costituito dal pronome personale inglese *you,* che in italiano può corrispondere a tu, voi o lei. La difficoltà per un traduttore non sta tanto nel riconoscere quando *you* è usato nella forma singolare o plurale (in questi casi di solito il contesto aiuta), quanto nel decidere se renderlo con la forma di cortesia (*lei/voi*). Dall'analisi è emerso che tutte e tre le traduzioni hanno deciso di non utilizzare mai la forma di cortesia *lei*, sostituendola con il *voi*. Se per le traduzioni del 1908 e del 1953/2011 questa scelta non stupisce, dal momento che il pronome *voi* al tempo di pubblicazione delle due traduzioni era più diffuso del *lei*, per la traduzione del 2018 mi aspettavo che venisse utilizzato il pronome allocutivo *lei*, avendo al giorno d'oggi sostituito quasi del tutto il *voi*. Uno dei motivi che può aver spinto la traduttrice ad usare comunque il *voi* è forse la volontà di rimarcare la distanza temporale del romanzo.

Un altro elemento interessante emerso da questa analisi riguarda la frequenza con cui il voi è stato usato nella traduzione del 1908 rispetto alle altre due, un elemento che segnala come l'utilizzo delle forme di cortesia si sia evoluto nel corso del tempo in Italia: nella traduzione del 1908, ad esempio, Meg, Jo, Beth e Amy danno del voi ai genitori, per mostrar loro rispetto, un uso che scompare invece nelle traduzioni del 1953/2011 e del 2018.

Un ulteriore motivo di ambiguità fra lingua italiana e quella inglese rappresenta l'assenza per alcuni nomi di persona comuni inglesi di due forme distinte per il maschile e il femminile (p.e. teacher). Anche se meno diffuso, il fenomeno esiste anche in italiano, ma grazie agli articoli si riesce comunque a segnalare il genere del nome (p.e. la/l' o un'/un insegnate), cosa che invece non accade con l'inglese. Questa incongruenza fra le due lingue a volte ha portato i traduttori a compiere scelte opposte, come nel caso della traduzione di "Doctor Jo", che nelle edizioni italiane del 1908 e del 1953/2011 compare

come “dottor Jo”, mentre nel 2018 come “dottoressa Jo”. In questo caso la scelta di tradurre al maschile nonostante Jo sia una ragazza potrebbe essere giustificata dal fatto che nel libro è solita dire che avrebbe preferito essere un ragazzo.

Il quinto e ultimo capitolo della tesi è un commento all’intervista che ho avuto l’opportunità di condurre con la traduttrice Stella Sacchini, autrice dell’edizione del 2018 di *Piccole Donne*. La traduttrice si è resa disponibile a rispondere per scritto a una serie di domande che ho costruito sulla base dei principali temi emersi dall’analisi condotta nel Capitolo 4, nello specifico: la doppia natura di *Piccole Donne* in quanto classico della letteratura e classico della letteratura per bambini e ragazzi; la scelta di mantenere in traduzione i riferimenti alla cultura di partenza; la resa dello stile di scrittura della Alcott; l’uso di un linguaggio contemporaneo in traduzione; le strategie di traduzione adottate per la resa dei componimenti in rima presenti nel testo fonte; la scelta di un approccio traduttivo più letterale o più libero; il rapporto instaurato con le versioni italiane precedenti di *Piccole Donne*; e le impressioni generali rispetto a questa esperienza traduttiva. Con questa intervista ho avuto la possibilità di fare domande piuttosto specifiche rispetto alle strategie adottate per la traduzione di alcuni passaggi, e la traduttrice è stata molto esaustiva nelle sue risposte, spiegando in dettaglio i motivi che l’hanno portata a determinate scelte. Con le sue risposte, Stella Sacchini mi ha anche offerto spunti di riflessioni interessanti su alcuni dei temi più prettamente teorici che ho trattato nel corso della tesi.

In conclusione, la comparazione delle tre traduzioni italiane di *Piccole Donne* ha dimostrato come la scelta di ritradurre un testo possa essere dettata sia dalla volontà di offrire una nuova, personale interpretazione del suddetto, dopo essersi accorti che le versioni precedenti non avevano fatto emergere sufficientemente certe caratteristiche del testo fonte, sia dalla dipendenza di qualsiasi traduzione dal periodo storico in cui è stata scritta. Sarebbe sbagliato dare una connotazione negativa al fatto che le traduzioni “invecchiano”. È naturale che ciò succeda, perché le norme linguistiche, i valori culturali e gli standard di accuratezza a cui esse sono soggette cambiano nel corso della storia. Una nuova traduzione, quindi, non va a sostituire quelle precedenti per una loro incompletezza, ma semplicemente perché queste ultime non possono riflettere gli sviluppi

a cui va incontro una lingua o i cambiamenti di tipo sociale e culturale. Dalla comparazione è inoltre emerso che sarebbe inutile fare una classificazione in termini di traduzioni "migliori" o "peggiori", perché i metri di giudizio sono vari e sempre soggettivi, e le scelte traduttive sono spesso influenzate da fattori esterni, quali lo scopo che una certa traduzione avrà nella cultura di arrivo e il pubblico a cui più si rivolge. Per quanto riguarda invece la volontà di offrire nuove interpretazioni di un'opera, è un caso che si applica particolarmente ai classici della letteratura date le numerose sfaccettature di cui si caratterizzano per natura. In questo senso la ritraduzione è sicuramente un vantaggio, perché ogni traduzione può offrire solo una interpretazione, solo la propria versione dell'originale. Di conseguenza, le traduzioni di un classico non si sostituiscono l'una all'altra, piuttosto coesistono nel cercare di restituire l'incredibile ricchezza dell'originale.