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Jackie Kay's The Adoption Papers: An Italian translation

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INTRODUCTION

This dissertation consists of the translation of Jackie Kay's long poem *The Adoption Papers*. My interest in the Scottish writer started with the course of Contemporary Literature in English, during which I came across the drama *The Lamplighter*, a journey through the Atlantic slave trade. Kay's sensitivity struck me and I began to read her works. Starting from personal experiences, she is able to depict people's weaknesses; her writing explores the human condition and, through her intelligence and humour, she leads readers to reflect upon their bittersweet existence.

The Adoption Papers (1991) is a long poem that tells the story of a black girl's adoption by a white Scottish couple: it is Jackie Kay's story. The personal experience has determined the literary subject matter, thus the author's autobiography took an artistic form. This is her breakthrough work whereby she began to obtain positive outcomes from critics.

The admiration for Kay's writing and my personal involvement in her story brought me to analyse and translate this highly emotional text. My aim was to put myself to the test with a double challenge: autobiographical works and poems require particular attention to details in terms of content, for the former, and form, for the latter. Moreover, I chose to work on a text that so far, officially, has not been translated into Italian.

In the first chapter, I presented the biography of the author, making an overview of her works; even if her life has determined the subject of all her writing since the beginning of her career, I focused on the main theme of identity in her autobiographic works, *The Adoption Papers* (long poem) and *Red Dust Road* (novel). The context of her writing is that of contemporary Britain, where racism, developed as a consequence of the colonial period, has not been extinguished but has only changed shape. Writing has encouraged Kay to face discriminatory attitudes and to define a faithful representation of herself; despite all difficulties, she has taken advantage of her complex heritage, becoming one of Scotland's most popular writers.

The second chapter concerns translation theory and the place of translated works in literature. Starting from a reflection on the value of translated literature and established that translation requires the same competences and abilities of writing, I directed my attention to the different phases of the translation process. I analysed the two main approaches toward the original text and the corresponding translation methods: foreignization (source-oriented translation) and domestication (target-oriented translation). Then, as far as methods are concerned, I described Newmark's theory, referring in particular to semantic and communicative translation. Because of the nature of *The Adoption Papers*, I expanded the analysis of the main features of translation theory related to poetry and autobiographic works. Finally, I illustrated my experience as a translator, describing my approach to the text, the methods I followed and the steps I had to take in order to reach a respectable translation.

The translation is in the third chapter, following a section on the analysis of the original text, where I described linguistic features, structure and content. The translation is accompanied by a parallel commentary that clarifies my translation choices: on the left there is the translation of the poem, while on the right we find the commentary; the original text can be found in the appendix. The last section is devoted to those features of the translation that have required particular attention because of their complexity: figurative language, dialect, shifts, cultural matters and different traits of stream of consciousness. The solutions I proposed may supply a potential way to follow for a translator that deals with a text that has similar features to *The Adoption Papers*.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 JACKIE KAY

Jacqueline Margaret Kay, better known as Jackie Kay, was born in Edinburgh on 9 November 1961 to a Scottish mother and a Nigerian father. Her mother, Elizabeth Fraser, was a young nurse who had an affair with a Nigerian university student, Jonathan O. Their relationship did not last a long period, as Jonathan had to go back to Nigeria after his studies because he was betrothed to another woman. In the sixties, being a white unmarried mother with a black baby was a disgrace and her family encouraged her to give her daughter away. After a few months Jackie was adopted by Helen and John Kay, a white couple from Glasgow, who had already adopted a boy, Maxwell. Helen was the Scottish secretary of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, while John worked for the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Kay studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, following her dream of becoming an actress, and in 1983 she graduated with honours from the University of Stirling, where she studied English. After graduating, she moved to London with the intention of becoming a dramatist, but once there she worked at a series of menial jobs while focusing on her literary career.

In 1988 she gave birth to her son Matthew, who graduated from the University of Guadalajara, Mexico, and is now a film maker in London. A few years later she met the Scottish poetess and playwright Dame Carol Ann Duffy and their relationship lasted until 2003.

On 17 June 2006, the writer was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). She now lives in Manchester and is Professor of Creative Writing at Newcastle University and Cultural Fellow at Glasgow Caledonian University. In October 2014, she was nominated as the new Chancellor of the University of Salford and from the 1st January 2015 she holds the position of University 'Writers in Residence'.

When she was at school, her English teacher was so impressed by her poems that she showed them to the Scottish writer Alasdair Gray, who recognised a real talent in what he read. She began writing poetry at the age of twelve, when she composed ‘One Person, Two Names’, an eight-page poem about an African-America girl who pretended to be white.

Since the very beginning, her life has determined the subjects of her writing; as a black adopted lesbian, she has always focused her attention on the question of identity. Starting from herself, she writes about the imaginary, since she wants her works to be accessible to everybody. Kay believes that writing should have more than one meaning, and as she states in an interview “It’s very important to me that readers do find the way into my works” (Key in Severin 2002).

Determined to escape categorization as a writer, Kay has published several collections of short stories as well as collections of poems, works for theatre, television and radio, novels, memoirs and she has also produced writing for children.

After two early novels, *Everyday Matters 2* and *Stepping Out*, she turned her attention to the stage with the first play *Chiaroscuro*, which evolved from a half-hour play that Kay was commissioned to write by the Theatre of Black Women in 1985 and whose final version was performed by the same company at London’s Soho Polytechnic in 1986. Her second play is *Twice Over* and was produced by the Gay Sweatshop Theater Company in 1988.

But her breakthrough work is her first collection of poems *The Adoption Papers* (Bloodaxe Books 1991), which tells the (autobiographical) story of a black girl’s adoption by a white Scottish couple; the collection includes also some poems reflecting issues of identity, for example sexuality, blackness, Scottishness and the belonging to the working class. In 1993 she published *Other Lovers* (Bloodaxe Books), a collection of poems which explores the search for identity in the experience of slavery during the colonial period and which contains some poems on the jazz and blues singer Bessie Smith. The year after, the collection won the Somerset Maugham Award.

Off Colour (Bloodaxe Books 1998) explores the theme of injustice and abuse through images of disease and violence; despite the dark themes, Kay wants to underline the need for community and dialogue among people.

The same year she won the Guardian Fiction Prize and the Author's Club First Novel Award for her first novel, *Trumpet* (Picador); Kay took inspiration from the true story of the life of the American jazz trumpet Joss Moody, who lived as a man but who was really a woman. Like *The Adoption Papers*, the novel is a polyphony, whose voices belong to Moody's wife, his adopted son and a journalist from a tabloid newspaper. The book was also shortlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

In 1999 she published her first collection of poems for young readers, *The Frog Who Dreamt to Be an Opera Singer* (Bloomsbury) and in 2002 the children novel *Strawgirl* (Macmillan).

Her first collection of short stories, *Why don't you stop talking* (Picador 2002), explores the world of mental illness, while the following collection, *Wish I Were Here* (Picador 2006), extends into human emotion, and in particular into love with all its faces. As Tranter (2008) states,

Many of Kay's characters are drawn from the unfashionable literary shadows: the middle-aged, the unloved, the overweight, the disappointed. Her stories give a voice to those from these often-ignored ranks, and gain our compassion through the use of shrewdly-observed humour which is at its best when at its most bittersweet (Tranter 2008).

The collection of poems *Life Mask* was published in 2005 (Bloodaxe Books), the novella *Sonata* in 2006 (Picador). In 2007 she turned again her attention to children literature, producing a new collection of poems, *Red Cherry Red* (Bloomsbury). In the same year, she published another collection of poems for an adult readership, *Darling: New and Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books).

The Lamplighter (Bloodaxe Books 2008) is a drama that explores the Atlantic slave trade through the voices of four enslaved women and a white man; it was broadcast on BBC Radio3 in March 2007 and published the year after. Kay won the British Book of the Year in 2009 (British Council) and her work was also shortlisted for the 2009 Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award.

The work *Maw Broon Monologues* combines rhythmic verse and music and was performed in 2010 at the Tron Theatre in Glasgow; the same year it was shortlisted for the 2010 Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry.

Red Dust Road (Picador 2008) is her memoir: Jackie Kay traced her upbringing as a mixed-raced adopted child and told of her search for and encounter with each of her

biological parents. In 2011, the writer was shortlisted for the PEN/Ackerley Prize and won the Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust Book of the Year Award (British Council). Her last collection of poems is entitled *Fiere* (Picador 2011); it was shortlisted for the 2011 Costa Poetry Award and the 2011 Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award. Her last publication is the collection of short stories *Reality, Reality* (Picador 2012); as Kay usually does, also in this work she deals with existential questions of contemporary life. The title of the book is a satire on how reality TV makes people lose touch with reality; Sethi (2012) summarizes in a few lines the meaning of Kay's stories:

Feeling that "something's missing" in their lives, not least their own minds, characters fill the void with food, fags, sex and reality TV. Each to be savoured, these taut tales hauntingly depict the psychological realities of loss and loneliness (Sethi 2012).

Jackie Kay has spent all her life writing; she has encompassed a wide range of literary genres, but her work has continued to gravitate around the theme of identity, being central to her and to everybody of us. Starting from her personal experience, she is able to create believable characters who tell themselves, generating empathy among readers.

Kay is one of Scotland most popular writers.

1.2 AUTOBIOGRAPHIC WORKS

Jackie Kay began to obtain positive outcomes from critics with her first collection of poems, *The Adoption Papers* (1991), which received a Scottish Arts Council Book Award, a Saltire First Book of the Year Award and a Forward Prize. The collection bears the same name as the main poetic sequence, whose lines tell the story of the author's adoption through a polyphonic symphony. The three narrative voices, adoptive mother, biological mother and daughter, dramatize the adoption experience, presenting it from different points of view. On one hand we read the experience of a woman, who considers her infertility a personal failure and is full of anxiety; at first she is worried about not being up to the task of adopting a baby, and then, after having become a mother, she is terrified of the idea that her daughter could prefer her biological mother to her. On the other hand, there is the story of a young woman who, forced to give away her baby by her family, spends all her life regretting it. In the middle we find the daughter, whose life has been determined by their choices and who has to deal with her complicated identity every day.

The singular personal experience has determined the literary subject matter, creating a fictionalized text, where the author's autobiography takes an artistic form. As I have already outlined in the previous section, the theme of identity plays a fundamental role in Kay's entire work, as it is central also in her life. Since she was a child, the writer has had to struggle to discover and understand her real nature. Having African roots and being adopted by white communist Scottish parents, she started to feel different from the other children at primary school, where she was often offended not only by her classmates but also by her racist teacher.

The conservative society of the '60s looked down upon adopted children, especially when they were a different colour from that of the dominant group. When the adoptive parents went looking for a baby in several adoption agencies, their daughter was not even considered a possible choice because of her skin colour:

They told us they had no babies at first
and I chanced it didn't matter what colour it was

and they say *oh you are sure*
in that case we have a baby for you –
to think she wasn't even thought as a baby,
my baby, my baby (Kay 1991: 24).

The community's racism upset Kay and growing up, she began to reflect upon the importance of blood inheritance. Bowed down by blood questions, she came to the conclusion that blood ties are not significant:

I know my blood.
It is dark ruby red and comes
Regular and I use Lilllets.
I know my blood when I cut my finger.
I know what my blood looks like (Kay 1991: 29).

She could not stand people who gave too much importance to lineage and tried to convey the idea that the only people she could consider her real parents were her adoptive parents, as they were those who brought her up with love and shared her joys and losses.

Despite her strong relationship with her white family, she started to feel the need to search for someone who looked like her and identified with the American politician black activist Angela Davis. They had the same skin colour and hair, and these identity markers made her fight for the cause of Davis and wish to attain her bravery. Embracing the activist's cause might equal fighting for her own cause in a closed society that did not acknowledge her rights because of its prejudices and boundaries.

If on one hand she recognized that real parenthood was not directly linked to genetics, on the other she was pushed by curiosity to find out who her biological parents were. Kay started to imagine her biological mother's appearance but the act of visualizing a never-seen figure turned out to be confusing:

She is faceless
She has no nose
[...]
She wears no particular dress
[...]
She is faceless, she never
weeps. She has neither eyes nor
fine boned cheeks (Kay 1991: 30).

In the poem, the daughter (as I mentioned before Kay starts from her experience to create a fictionalized text) got obsessed by the desire of a meeting with the birth mother and the woman begun to dog her also in dreams. Wanting to make sure that her biological mother had a physical appearance, after some searches, she tried to contact her by phone. She was only able to speak with her mother's sister, who promised her that when the woman would be ready she would have written her a letter, which never arrived.

The Adoption Papers was written by Jackie Kay while she was in the process of tracing her birth mother; it was when she was pregnant (1988) that she really thought about her for the first time. Kay wondered what it was like for her mother when she was pregnant with her and decided to try to get her own original birth certificate in order to find the woman who, up to that time, was a set of abstract images in her mind.

The poetic sequence stands for a journey of self-discovery and Kay portrays identity as a process whose formation never ends. In an interview, the writer states that nobody can have the same identity forever, as "identity's something that's fluid, it's not something that's static and fixed and I'm really interested in writing about identity and how fluid it is" (Kay 2005). She is fascinated by the capacity people have to invent themselves, creating and transforming their identity endlessly.

Kay's identity has never taken a fixed form and its different aspects coexist without eclipsing one another: she is a Scottish woman with African roots, a lesbian and a mother, a university professor and an artist.

Thus, the poetess represents identity as a process of production that has many different phases but which does not lead to a well-defined final product. As Elgezeery (2015) asserts,

The self in Kay's poems is reinvented in many forms that show how identity formation is a creative act that is frequently performed so that the self can undertake a renewable process of self-discovery and self-actualization (Elgezeery 2015: 12).

The main characteristic of Jackie Kay's idea of identity is fluidity; through her works she conveys the idea that human beings are not just the product of genetics, but they are the dynamic and mobile result of the multiple interactions with the different environments.

Kay wrote this first collection of poems driven by a deep personal need for self-understanding:

I think that we write often in order to try and discover or understand ourselves and so *The Adoption Papers* was a cathartic book for me to write. I wrote it before I had ever traced a birth parent and it made me think about nature and nurture and the conflict of identities. It was a searching book to write and in the end it did feel healing too (Kay 2010).

More recently, nearly twenty years later, Kay has revised her own life story in her memoir *Red Dust Road* (Picador 2010). In this second autobiographic work she focuses on the process of search for her biological parents; she describes their meetings and the relationship they have established. While *The adoption Papers* is a fictionalized text that took form starting from a personal experience, the novel is the faithful and accurate narration of important moments in Jackie Kay's life. Another difference between the two works is represented by the importance given to the figure of the biological father, since, if in the poem the daughter never mentions him and he only appears twice in the birth mother's memories, in *Red Dust Road* he plays a fundamental role.

The narration opens in 2003 in the Nicon Hilton Hotel in Abuja, where Kay meets her natural father for the first time. He is a born-again Christian who prays over her for two hours trying to make her receive Christ in order to be cleansed of his sinful past. She is distressed by what she is experiencing in that hotel room, as she understands that she is just a sin in her father's eyes:

I realized with a fresh horror that Jonathan is seeing me as the sin, me as impure, me as bastard, illegitimate. [...] He's moved on now, he's a clean man, a man of glory and of God, but I'm sitting on the hotel room chair little better than a whore in his eyes, dirty and unsaved, the living proof of sin (Kay 2010: 6).

After that time Kay and her father never meet again. She makes other efforts to keep in touch with him, among which another journey to Nigeria, but without any result, since he considers her part of his past and does not want her to be part of his present.

Luckily, the refusal of the natural father is balanced out by the successful meeting with one of her half-brothers. He immediately accepts her as his sister and he wants to change their father's mind and speak to his other brothers and sister about Jackie.

He wants her to be part of the family:

‘This is your heritage,’ Sidney says. ‘You have a right. If our father dies and I say you must come and bury our father, what’s going to happen? You’re supposed to come to Nzagha and nobody knows who you are?’ (Kay 2010: 273).

Through her last journey to Nigeria, Kay’s fluid identity has absorbed another phase, adding itself to the others and not obscuring them; African roots have become part of her in a more concrete way and the red-dust roads of the local landscape now belong to her:

The whole time I’ve been in Nigeria, I’ve never come across a red-dust road exactly like the one in my imagination until I come to my own village. I ask Pious to stop so that I can get out and walk on it. I take off my shoes so the red earth can touch my bare soles. It’s as if my footprints were already on the road before I ever got there. [...] I feel such a strong sense of affinity with the colours and the landscape, a strong sense of recognition. There’s a feeling of liberation, and exhilaration, that at last, at last, at last I’m here. It feels a million miles away from Glasgow, from my lovely Fintry Hills, but, surprisingly, it also feels like home (Kay 2010: 213).

The first time Kay meets her mother is also in a Hilton Hotel, but in Milton Keynes, England and in 1991, twelve years before the meeting with her father. When the woman recognizes Jackie, her eyes fill with tears and she hugs her. They converse about their lives showing each other several pictures and the mother tells her that she has married a black man and has three children. She was a Catholic, but subsequently she has become a Mormon and, like her natural father, is a great believer. The woman reveals herself to be very fragile and sensitive and she manifests the need to avoid speaking about her past. Their encounters take place about every four or five years, and with the passing of time the woman appears increasingly more confused, manifesting memory problems. Also her mother’s family does not know anything about the existence of Jackie and the woman wants to keep the secret because she is afraid of her ex-husband’s reaction; Kay is sorry for that, but respects her mother’s decision. The two women grow fond of each other and Jackie is touched by her mother’s mental-health condition, but she cannot do anything in order to help her:

I wondered if she would remember to feed herself, and who would look after her properly, and how long it would be before she would have to go into a home. [...] A lost soul, she seemed to me, my mother. A woman who had first lost her baby and much later lost her mind. [...] When I get home, I find a little pink heart-shaped Post-it note, stuck inside the zipped part of my purse, which reads, *Jackie, Elizabeth loves you* which moves me to tears because I don’t know if she’s reminding herself or me [...] (Kay 2010: 90).

In the novel Kay speaks also about her adoptive parents, two extraordinary people who raised her with much love; she what she is thanks to them and in order to be grateful she has dedicated her autobiography to them, defining it “a letter of love to my parents” (Kay 2010).

Red Dust Road describes Jackie Kay’s long path to self-knowledge and self-acceptance, it is a book of existential questions, which gradually builds up answers; through the work the writer has laid bare her deeper emotions, her vulnerabilities and her dashed expectations as well as her successes. It has been a long and hard journey into herself, but finally she has increased self-awareness, realizing that she is only alone in the way everybody else is alone (Kay 2010:46).

1.3 POST-COLONIAL HERITAGE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN

The dismantlement of the English colonial Empire entailed the relationship between the ex-colonies and the ancient motherland, leading to the development of an ambivalent attitude of the colonized people toward the conquerors. If on one side there was the need for cultural independence and for the affirmation of their own identity, on the other side the bond with the language and the institutions of the motherland continued to be strong among people. Thus, starting from the '50s, the United Kingdom became the destination of massive migrant waves from India, Africa and Caribbean islands (the new States were economically and politically unstable), acquiring a multi-ethnic nature.

The citizens from the ex-colonies were not welcomed with open arms, especially by the conservatives, who carried out restrictive ad hoc acts (Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962 and 1968)¹, with which they reduced the right to migrate to the UK. These actions were counterbalanced by the antidiscrimination measures of the Labour Party members (Race Relation Act 1968)², who tried to limit racial integration problems. The majority of English people were still nostalgic about the Empire and its civilizing mission, but they started to realize that England had changed (Marzola 1999).

Despite limits of society, in the '60s, the English Left worked toward libertarian proposals; for example, some acts in favour of individual freedom were approved, capital punishment and theatre censorship were abolished, divorce was legalized, abortion was facilitated and homosexual acts in private were decriminalized (Marzola 1999: 201). The creative community paid great attention to the working class and the petit bourgeoisie; artistic works depicted an image of the society, which was much close to reality, much more heterogeneous than what people wanted to lead to believe.

In 1962 Richard Hoggart, a New Left exponent, founded the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. The intention was to conduct research

¹ The Commonwealth Immigration Act 1962 permitted only those with a job to settle in the U.K. and defined a limited number of immigrants. The Commonwealth Immigration Act 1968 forbade entry to those who did not have substantial connections with U.K., restricting the right to those born there or who at least had one parent or grandparent born there (Marzola 1999: 199).

² The Race Relation Act 1968 made it illegal to refuse housing, employment and public services because of race, colour, ethnic and national origins (Marzola 1999: 200).

into “mass” culture, rather than focus on “high” culture, operating through history, anthropology, sociology and literary criticism and therefore, going against conventional academic practice. Hoggart tried to convey artistic dignity to cultural products that were usually not taken into consideration by traditional literature and for this reason, his work was obstructed; only in the ‘70s with Stuart Hall³, the Centre of Cultural Studies reached complete academic independence.

In the same decade, the racial tensions were weighted down by the development of a “New Racism”, as Gilroy (1996) defines it. It is a kind of racism that is not based on a biological classification (races), but on the certainty that each culture needs to find its own collocation in a distinct and unique national context (Oboe 2012). This nationalist position could be identified in the English conservative politician Enoch Powell’s racist ideology; in his speech “Rivers of Blood” (1968), he predicted a bloody future for Britain society, if the state did not put an end to new migrant waves, which were the cause of Britain’s transformation. His celebration of tradition and refusal of libertarian policies of the ‘60s became some of the basis of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government (1979-1990). During her mandate, integration problems increased because of her patent racism. Nostalgia for the imperial past and desire for a reborn Englishness based on traditional values led to institutional racism and police brutality, which, in turn, gave rise to violent social protests all over Britain. Uprisings were depicted as the expression of black identity and immigrants’ refusal to respect the law, rather than the result of social injustices and abuses of power. Violence became synonymous with black culture and its opposition to legality of British people defined two antithetical cultures that could only exclude each other, without any possibility of coexistence (Oboe 2012).

If the first generation immigrants generally kept a low profile, hoping that a submissive attitude might provide a reward, like being fully integrated into society, the second generation fought for the denied rights through demonstrations, political activism (Black Power movement)⁴ and art in all its expressive forms. Art, in particular literature, became

³ Stuart McPhail Hall (1932 – 2014) was a Jamaican-born cultural theorist and sociologist; along with Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, he was one of the founding figures of the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (Procter 2004).

⁴ The Black Power Movement started in the United States in the mid-1960s with the aim of emphasizing racial pride and encouraging the struggle for social equality. In England the movement was already active at the beginning of the 1970s and it also involved militants from the United States (Elia 2011: 74-75).

the new emblem of political resistance, since people started to understand the power of language as means of self-representation.

Thus, the struggle moved forward and assumed a new form, shifting “from a struggle over the relations of representation to a politics of representation itself” (Hall 1992: 253). Both spoken and written languages produce meanings, through which people conceive the world. Using Foucault’s terminology, we can speak of production of knowledge through what he called *discourse*; for him, a discourse is a system of statements within which the word is brought into being and people come to understand about themselves and the relationship to each other (Ashcroft et al.1998). From this point of view, language can be considered an identity-producing mechanism. Some discourses have created systems of meaning that have gained the status of “truth”, dominating over other discourses, marginalised and subjugated. In our case, the British society represents the power, which through its apparatus has produced the “truthful” knowledge, defining immigrants’ identity.

Immigrants tried to redefine alterity and to take their identity back, using art and language. As Oboe (2011) states,

Their narratives, paintings, poems, songs, performances have for us an *aesthetic* value as art, but also an *epistemological* value, because their imaginative effort *produces knowledge* as a result of a confrontation with power and an entanglement with power – with Englishness, the tradition, the canon, the mainstream (Oboe 2011: 9).

It is evident that one of the outcome of colonialism was the production of specific subaltern groups. The term *subaltern* was adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subject to the power of the ruling classes and who, therefore, have restricted access to institutions and so to the means that define their representation (Ashcroft 1998). The subordination can be of different types, as it can concern race as well as class, age, gender, ethnicity and any other distinctive factor. Subaltern groups have a complex history but it is not complete, since the “official” history is that of the dominant classes. Cultural studies, in particular post-colonial studies, analyse the subaltern condition, starting from Spivak’s essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988); the American philosopher with Bengali origins examines the condition of Indian women

through the analysis of the practice of sati⁵ and replies to the starting question with a strict no. But subaltern voices can be heard through post-colonial discourse, an example of speaking in which the dominant language is appropriate to represent the voices of marginal groups. Moreover, literature becomes an escape route from subordination and a way to draw to a close the act of being defined by others. Writing gives voice to those subjects and those points of view, which have always been confined to alterity and silence, determining the loss of centrality of white culture and defining the multiculturalism of the contemporary British literary production.

Jackie Kay is regarded as an ethnically-marked writer, but above all she is a person with a complex cultural heritage and identity. Because of her features, she could have been a subaltern, one of those people who do not have a place inside history, whereas, “putting into words things that should be left silent as stone” (Kay 2010: 140), she has become one of Scotland’s most popular writers. Writing has helped her to understand herself, to face discriminatory attitudes and behaviours and last but not least, since of fundamental importance, to define a faithful representation of herself:

Being a black child adopted by a white couple, being black in Scotland, being gay in a predominantly heterosexual society, being a woman writer in a male dominated literary tradition. All these borderline experiences have generated Key’s sense of otherness as well as her need to write into existence her supposedly impossible identity as a black Scottish lesbian. (Schrage-Früh 2009)

As she states in *Red Dust Road*, it was literature that changed her racial awareness: Franz Fanon, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker changed her life, transforming the image she had of herself before coming across these writers and their thinking. How these people gave voice to her thoughts, she, with her works, may give voice to all those marginal subjects, who are still victims of the stereotypes of our rather racist society. As Phillips (2011) asserts, “As long as we have literature as a bulkwark against intolerance, and as a force for change, then we have a chance”.

The plunge to take nowadays is that of recognizing the heterogeneous nature of the British culture, since, despite the current visibility of a group of names, black artists are usually

⁵ The Sanskrit term *sati* (“good woman” or “chaste wife”) refers to the Indian custom of a wife immolating herself either on the funeral pyre of her dead husband or in some other fashion soon after his death. (Encyclopaedia Britannica available at <http://www.britannica.com/topic/suttee>)

relegated to a separate space for exhibition and recognition. A first step towards this direction was in 2005, when the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority) stated the need for recognition of the black presence in Britain, still underestimated (Giommi 2011: 14). Solidarity to people who are undeniably part of the society and their reception and engagement in the sociocultural space may reduce the social inequality and multiculturalism may become a resource rather than a disgrace.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 TRANSLATED LITERATURE

Yet who would wish to discourage the people of the world from translating, merely because it is *fundamentally impossible*? (Mann 1970: 211)

The question of the possibility of translation has always been central in translation theory. If on the one hand the impossibility of translation is in a sort of way not questionable, since every language has a distinct structure, vocabulary and sound, on the other hand it is undeniable that our civilization founds its aesthetic and moral consciousness on translated texts (Molesini 2004: 763). Thus, we cannot do without translation, but we can make a distinction: it is not possible to fully render something written in one language into another language, but it is surely possible to translate in a satisfactory way.

Those theorists who consider translation as a process of reformulation of ideas believe that linguistic difficulties do not exist, since the role of language is seen as secondary. The diametrically opposed position is that of those who mainly consider translation as a linguistic process, in which words are culture-specific and each language has an intrinsic grammar. I agree with Newmark's midway position that, "everything is translatable up to a point, but there are often enormous difficulties" (Newmark 1988: 72).

Once defined that translation consists in the replacement of textual meaning in one language (Source Language) by equivalent textual material in another language (Target Language) (Catford 1965: 20), and established that this process is possible, the following issue concerns the place of translated works in literature. The Romantic Movement defined the first position, which nowadays is still very current: the strict distinction between original work and simple translation leads to a neat line between authentic literature and translated literature, entailing an underestimation of the latter. According to Devy (1995), a literary translation has a double existence: "Those who do not know the original language tend to look at it as literature, those who know the original look at it as a secondary product of translation" (in Barnstone 1993: 10). This statement highlights that translation has the same potentialities of ordinary literature and can create high-level

works. Nevertheless, as Devy (1995) adds, the critics demonstrate greater attention to original products, overshadowing translated texts and limiting the translation essence to a “wandering existence in perpetual exile” (in Barnstone 1993: 10).

As Steiner (1978) sustains, literary translation is an “existential experience” more than a formal exercise, since the translator needs to re-experience the creative act that led to the original work. In this way, the translated text is not considered as a literary by-product: we do not have an original and a copy, but two works with equal artistic dignity. The commonplace of the superiority of the original work is also brought into question by the principle of the transformation of language through time (Molesini 2004: 18). The necessity of constantly retranslating literary works in order to adapt them to linguistic changes has to be combined with the idea that original texts are not static, as their words are semantically in movement, as well as their grammatical and syntactic structures mutate.

As far as poetry is concerned, things become more complicated, since it conveys many meanings in a quite small numbers of signs, and its low redundancy level defines a wider number of interpretations than in those literary genres with high redundancy (usually more explicit). Molesini (2004) affirms that poetry escapes definitions, being *self presenting*. In his opinion when a translator translates a poem, he writes a poem first of all:

Una traduzione è anche un commento, una interpretazione, una scelta tra diverse possibilità, e per questo motivo, saggiamente, si pensa che la traduzione comporti comunque la perdita di qualcosa. E l'originale resterà, compiuta la sfida, inalterato, irraggiungibile, protetto dalla lingua straniera in cui vive. Però la traduzione ha raggiunto qualcosa che prima non c'era, un testo – nel duplice senso di tessuto e di testimonianza – parallelo, che vive di vita propria e turba quella dell'originale (Molesini 2004: 766).

Every translated poem is a new poem, it is an experiment through which the translator offers his/her own interpretation to the target language readership. This means that the loyalty towards the original text is defined by the interpretation of the translator: different translations of the same poem may convey different meanings to the new readerships.

Translating poetry is so fascinating and at the same time so demanding, and as Denham (1656) states, what cannot absolutely be missing is the addition of a spirit to the final product:

“Poesie is of so subtle a spirit, that in pouring out of one Language into another, it will all evaporate; and if a new spirit be not added in the transfusion, there will remain nothing but a *Caput mortuum*” (Denham in Venuti 1995:49).

From this derives that the purpose of any translation of achieving the equivalent effect of the original can be considered as a desirable result rather than as the main aim of the translator (Newmark 1988: 48). Reaching equivalent effect means to produce the same effect (or one as close as possible) on the readership of the translation as was obtained on the readership of the original (Newmark 1988: 48). It is always important to consider that first of all the act of translating derives from the act of interpretation, and to interpret means to bet that the meaning we identify in the original text is somehow the meaning thought by the author.

The interpretative act then combines with the communicative aim, creating a balanced relationship between equivalence and adequacy. The translator interprets the original meanings and tries to find the right language to convey them, but at the same time he/she has to pay attention to how to reach the new readership and consequently to how to adapt the translation to its necessities. The act of translating needs to be placed in a wider context than the linguistic one, since translation is a combination of linguistic and extra-linguistic factors, it is the result of the comparison between two different linguistic systems, as well as two different cultures. As House (2009) states:

Translation is not only a linguistic act, it is also a cultural one, an act of communication across cultures. Translating always involves both language and culture simply because the two cannot really be separated (House 2009: 11).

In a few words, understanding and reproducing the original requires more than a merely mechanical process, more than the simple mechanical application of standard rules.

Spaziani (1989) depicts an appropriate and beautiful image of the process of translation, speaking about the distance and enchantment of the translator. The translator is distant from the original work since he/she is outside it, but at the same time, he/she needs to indulge completely in emotions. Translation is a creative process, equivalent to writing,

the only difference is that the starting sensation does not come from reality, but from the text itself.

2.2 TRANSLATION THEORY

2.2.1 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Defining a translation theory with specific and standard rules is almost impossible, since we need to consider different kinds of approaches according to the type of text being worked on. As Canali (1983) sustains, usually literary translators do not have a well-defined method, but their choices are determined by experience; he also adds that, as a long-time translator, he cannot say what has to be done, but only what it is better to avoid while translating.

Translation is a decision-making process (Levý 1957) both with regard to interpretation of the original and to its reproduction into the target language. Once he/she has identified his/her meaning of the text, the translator can choose how to convey it, having at his/her disposal a series of alternatives of expression. Rules work at the systemic level, “that is, the level determined by the comparative systems of two languages” (De Beaugrande 1978: 14), but criteria of equivalence are only partially based on rules, since great relevance is given to surrounding factors. Thus, translation theory does not provide patent solutions for all kinds of problems, but it rather supply strategies and principles useful to approach them. Newmark (1988) states that, first of all, translation theory identifies and defines translation problems, then it indicates factors to take into account in solving them and finally it lists the possible translation procedures.

The first step in the translation process is the act of reading the original in order to understand what it is about and to analyse the language, its features and contingent problems. Thus, reading is an act of interpretation and interpretation most of all depends on the reader’s expectations, which are formed through attitudes, beliefs, interests, habits, language experience and knowledge of ordinary grammar and lexicon (De Beaugrande 1978: 18). If the text contains too much unexpected material or new information, then the translator-reader’s comprehension may be difficult and this might lead to misinterpretation. Expectations may conduct the reader to believe having read something other than what is really on the page. This is the reason why it is more probable that errors

in translation derive from inaccurate reading than from inaccurate writing and so it is important to focus foremost upon reading, as the starting point of the translation is not the original text, but rather its representation in the translator's mind.

As Burton (1988) affirms, "the translator must first be able to decipher the "true" meaning of what he is translating. That is, the translator must first understand, as fully as possible, his text". The translator needs to analyse the source text from all points of view (genre, register, function, linguistic features, cultural features, philosophy, audience, etc.), without taking anything for granted; Robinson (2012) sustains that it is always better to never assume the perfect understanding of the source text, since there is always something to analyse more in depth.

In a few words, to translate is to read and to interpret. In the process of interpreting a text, attention shifts from the work to the reader-translator as human being: there is a shift from the semantics of the text to the pragmatics of the text interpretation (House 2009: 19). This means that while understanding a text, readers bring to it their subjectivity; their personal background, cultural heritage, contextual knowledge and surroundings have an active role in the process of interpretation. To think of the translator as an invisible being is an illusion, called by Venuti (1995) "the illusion of transparency", which is an effect of the translator's effort to ensure fluent readability.

After the reading and the resulting understanding and interpretation of the original, the process of translation begins:

Then the act of translation occurs, not by lingering on the page but in the mind, through interpretative readings and rereadings and the subsequent transformation of initial thought into new thought. Finally, the new thought becomes so dominant that it assumes its own authority, and then the translator transcribes this new creation onto papers as a translation of the thought into script (Barnstone 1993: 21).

Thus, the first place where the translation appears is in the reader's mind and only later becomes it tangible and appears in translator's papers. Author, translator and reader are involved in a series of dependent acts based on translation: the author translates his/her thoughts writing a text, which the translator reads, interprets and translates by writing a second text, which the reader reads and translates in his/her mind. It is rather difficult for the final reader to reach the original meaning, since translation is not an objective process but a creative one, like all other activities of writing.

Newmark (1988: 19) defines four more or less conscious levels in the translator's mind while he/she is translating: textual level, referential level, cohesive level and the level of naturalness. The base level while translating is that of the ST's language; the referential level is that of images of reality behind the text and it is built up while transforming the SL into the TL text; the cohesive level is more general and grammatical, and it follows the structure and the mood of the text; the level of naturalness ensures that the translation makes sense and it reads naturally. As we can deduct from what said above, the process of translation is not a merely mechanical process, which consists of the replacement of one word in the SL with the corresponding word in the TL. To use a nice image depicted by Newmark (1988), the translating activity can be compared to an iceberg: the translation is the tip – what is written on the page- all the work a translator does, many times much than what it is visible, is the iceberg.

Since an effective translation is one that is carried out from meaning to meaning, not from word to word, the concepts of co-text and context acquire great importance. Co-text and context allow the reader to identify which markers of the total meaning are to be activated for interpreting correctly the text. By *co-text* we mean items in the text which accompany the item under discussion; by *context* we refer to those elements of the extra-textual situation which are related to the text as being linguistically relevant (Catford 1965: 31). The meaning of words is influenced by what surrounds them at a linguistic, referential, cultural and personal level, and the process of narrowing down potential meaning into actual meaning is defined *contextualization*. Obviously this process does not solve all translating problems, but without it communication would not be effective. As Longacre (1958 in De Beaugrande 1978: 95) states, pointing out what all translators know, “one must translate items in context or not at all”.

Independently from the kind of approach to literary translation, all translators should start from the assumption that the author's view is the point of reference; this means that the writer and his/her thoughts and ideas are more important than any language rule as well as any translator's necessity. The translator does not have the right to twist the text, for example, he/she cannot overlook details, since, as Osimo (1998: 43) asserts, literature can be read without paying attention to details, but then it becomes a passive and lifeless product, similar to a non-literary text. The translator does not also have to try to improve the text, since that practice is named retelling and is another sort of writing (Eco 2010:

118). Words cannot be changed just because translators do not like plain one-to-one translations or like synonyms to show how resourceful they are (Newmark 1988: 36). Another important aspect concerns explicitation: often translators dislike ambiguities, unclear passages and linguistic structures and so they tend to make everything more explicit in the translation. It is better not to complete the text, filling in gaps and adding details, since the risk is to deprive it of its intentionally dynamic aspect (De Beaugrande 1978: 30). By doing so, the translator supplies the reader's task of making associations and does not respect the author's intention of indefiniteness.

To sum up, it is better to avoid all arrangements that betray the original, as there is the constant danger that the translator will create a text based on individual priorities, distorting the intentions of the author:

Fidelity is indeed of the very essence of translation, and the term itself implies it. For which reason, if we suppress the sense of the original, and force into its place our own, we may call our work an *imitation*, if we please, or perhaps a *paraphrase*, but, it is no longer the same author only in a different dress, and therefore it is not a translation (Barnstone 1993: 85).

As discussed at the beginning of this section, errors in translation can derive from inaccurate reading, but there are also other factors that determinate unfaithful translations. First of all, the lack of knowledge and experience in the source language, perhaps even in the target language, then a not sufficiently developed writing competence, ignorance or misguided knowledge of both cultures, “no awareness of writer-reader interaction as represented by the original text” (De Beaugrande 1978: 132), inability to find lexical and grammatical equivalents and, last but not least, lack of experience in translation.

Translation can be considered concluded only after the final revision stage. Usually translated works are the result of a variety of intermediate revisions, since translators, however skilled, cannot focus upon all aspects of the text and its translation on only one time. In order to avoid missing errors and working on many mental levels at once, Wagner (2002) recommends working on the main features (completeness, accuracy of spelling, clarity of syntax and style, transmission of the message) into separate phases. If the first version closely reflects the mental representation, little by little the translation acquires naturalness and artistic dignity and becomes a real literary product.

The final revision stage requires a certain level of distance from the product, since there is the necessity to observe it from an objective point of view. While being critical toward

their own work is hard, translators need to use some techniques to elude this obstacle; Osimo (1998: 52) defines the most effective ones:

- Reading the text on the screen
- Reading the printed text
- Reading the printed text out loud
- Reading the printed text out loud to someone else
- Listening to the text read aloud by someone else

These are five levels of perception of the text as other and translators can use all of them or just one, according to the level of distance required by the text at hand.

The relationship between translation theory and translation practice has always been problematic, but they are two interdependent identities, it may be almost impossible to think about the one without the other.

2.2.2 DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO LITERARY TRANSLATION

There are only two different methods of translation. Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him (Schleiermacher 1838 in Lefevere 1977: 74).

The nature of the translated text depends on the translator's approach toward the original text: he/she can mainly choose between a source-oriented translation and a target-oriented translation. In the first case the translator opts for foreignization methods, focusing on the original and manipulating it as little as possible; in this way the translated text registers, and therefor shows, the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text, valuing them "by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language" (Venuti 1995: 20). The reader enters a new world, glimpses a new culture and differences are preserved, seeking to restrain ethnocentrism. Osimo (1998) supports foreignization and makes a comparison between translation and food, stating that,

se il lettore standard non ha denti abbastanza robusti per masticare un testo letterario, questo non è un buon motivo per dargli sempre omogeneizzati (Osimo 1998: 45).

On the contrary, the translator has to help the reader to enjoy *the real thing*, with notes and explanations if necessary (Osimo 1988: 45). At the same time, source-oriented translation can be of difficult comprehension, since the new readership might get lost because of too many foreign elements.

Target-oriented translations are instead based on domestication methods; the original text is reduced and imprinted with target-language readership's values. Here "the ethnocentric violence of translation is inevitable" (Venuti 1995: 310): foreign language and culture undergo reduction and exclusion to the point that the reader does not realize that he/she is reading a translated text. This method appears efficient because of naturalness obtained in target language, but there is "the risk of reducing individual authors' styles and national tricks of speech to a plain uniformity" (Cohen 1962: 35).

Faced with the question of which of the two methods is most suitable, Eco (1995) replies that a rule does not exist and that foreignization and domestication have to be used alternately, according to the problems the translator needs to solve.

Newmark (1988) deals with the basic translation problem whether to translate literally or freely, defining a V diagram that summarizes all the possible translation methods:

Figure 1 Translation methods (Newmark)

SL emphasis	TL emphasis
Word-for-word translation	Adaptation
Literal translation	Free translation
Faithful translation	Idiomatic translation
Semantic translation	Communicative translation

As can be seen in Fig.1, word-for-word translation consists of translating words singly by their primary meaning, so out of context, preserving SL grammar and word order. In literal translation, words are still translated singly, but the SL grammatical constructions are converted into their nearest TL equivalents; Newmark believes it to be the basic translation procedure, since the longer the unit of translation is, "the rarer the one-to-one" (Newmark 1988: 69). Faithful translation attempts to preserve completely the writer's intentions, reproducing the contextual meaning of words within TL grammatical

structures' limits. The last SL oriented method, semantic translation, gives much importance to the original's aesthetic value (natural sound of language), reaching a compromise on meaning where possible in order to avoid repetitions, assonances and words-play. While faithful translation is dogmatic, semantic translation is more flexible and admits the exception to total fidelity to the original, encouraging an empathetic approach to it.

On the right side of Fig.1, at the top we find adaptation, which is the freest form of translation: themes, characters, plots are preserved, while the SL culture is converted into the TL culture. Free translation consists in the reproduction of the content without the form of the original; usually the resulting work does not seem a translation, but rather a paraphrase since it is much longer than the original text. Idiomatic translation reproduce the original, distorting the meanings by the introduction of idioms and colloquialisms. Finally, there is communicative translation, whose content and language are highly comprehensible to TL readers: through this method, the translator is able to convey the exact contextual meaning of the original text.

Newmark (1988) concludes his reflections on translation methods, conferring first place to semantic and communicative translation, since they are the only two that fulfil the main aims of translation, economy and accuracy. While semantic translation works at the author's linguistic level, following his/her authority, communicative translation furthers the TL reader's linguistic level, despite the readership being wide and not well defined, concentrating on the transmission of the message. On one hand, we have a method through which the translator interprets the original, on the other a method whose aim is to explain the writer's text.

2.2.3. TRANSLATING POETRY

The translation of poetry has traditionally been seen as more arduous than the translation of other genres. In poems the word has more importance than in any other kind of text and if it is the first unit of meaning, the second is the line, rather than the sentence in prose and drama. Another characteristic of poetry is the non-ordinary use of language and

grammar: the author usually does not arrange information into transparent forms, but seems to evade rules intentionally. Thus, besides the low redundancy level of poetry, also its unusual use of language, determines a wide range of interpretations among readers and this might compromise faithfulness to the original message of the writer.

De Beaugrande (1978) reports different considerations about the relationship between poetic and ordinary language: some researchers see poetic language as derivative from ordinary language; some consider them as two variations of the total language; according to others, poetic language is the greater realization of the language, while ordinary language is its by-product. The American linguist does not take a stand with regards to these viewpoints, he just underlines that “poetic language cannot be evaluated without reference to ordinary language” (De Beaugrande 1978: 23).

As far as translation is concerned, Newmark (1988) affirms his scepticism about the idea that the translator of poetry tries “to create the same effect on the target language readers as was created by the poet on his own readers” and sustains that his main attempt is to translate into words the effect the original poem has on himself.

An interesting approach to poetry translation is that of Lefevere (1975), who starts from making a list of translation methods, underlining strengths and above all weaknesses, and ends rejecting them. He believes that a list of exhaustive and effective rules does not exist, but defines a series of competences that the translator should own in order to perform satisfactorily when translating a poem. The first competence concerns the ability to comprehend the original as a whole, without focusing on one single aspect; beside linguistic knowledge, the translator should also be familiar with the text’s social, cultural, literary background. The second ability is that of measuring “the communicative value as well as the sense of the source text, and consequently the ability to replace it by a target text which approximates, as closely as possible, the same communicative value” (Lefevere 1975: 101).

Here we can introduce the concept of structuration and poetic competence, theorised by De Beaugrande (1978). Structuration competence is the ability to activate language structures for interpreting and producing texts, “together with an awareness of relative degrees of ordinariness and expectedness within these processes” (De Beaugrande 1978: 22). It requires knowledge of ordinary grammar and lexicon and strategies for dealing

with non-ordinary material. Poetic competence is the ability to interpret and produce poetic use of language.

Getting back to Lefevere, the third place is occupied by the ability to identify those elements of the text, which need to be adapted or explained; in the case of time-place-tradition elements understandable from the context or connected with analogous elements in the time, place and tradition of the TL reader, neither explanation nor adaptation are needed. The last ability concerns the selection, within the TL literary tradition, of a form that matches the position the original occupies in its literary tradition as much as possible; if the translator does not find an appropriate form, then he/she has to create one, developing the native literature. To the four competences, the translation theorist adds the fundamental ability to interpret the author's original meaning correctly; in order to achieve the ideal translation, the translator should remain faithful to the original on an overall level, having a comparatively freedom to treat details (Popovič 1975).

I share Lefevere's idea that often poetry translations fail because translators focus exclusively on one aspect of the original, rather than on its totality. Instead of being conditioned by a single aspect, which restricts the freedom of action, the translator should devote to the transmission of the global meaning. The aim of preserving the communicative value of the original text leads Lefevere to refuse all kinds of translation methods with strict rules.

Phonemic translation, that is correspondence sound for sound, rarely achieves a satisfactory rendering of the SL sound together with an acceptable reproduction of its sense. This method can work only with the translation of onomatopoeias, proper names and when SL words are replaced by TL words etymologically related to them; in these cases the translator can create the illusion of sound correspondence, by reducing the dissimilarities to a minimum. To reach the aim, the translator is forced to use obsolete words and the final product often seems a linguistic experiment: "By concentrating on sound only, the phonemic translation distorts all the other aspects of the source text, and reduces it to a curiosity, a bilingual parody incapable of survival the literature of the target language" (Lefevere 1975: 96).

Literal translation, correspondence sense for sense, requires the use of footnotes, notes within the text, explanatory comments, and these elements often become a sort of

improvement of the original text, an attempt to make the source text more explicit and therefore more complete. The primary of sense equivalence leads to the opposite result, the betrayal of the writer, and its illusory accuracy “strips the source text of all its genuinely literary characteristics” (Lefevere 1975: 96).

Metrical translation, correspondence metre for metre, tries to preserve the outward form of the source text, focusing too much on it and consequently distracting from the communicative value of the original sense. As Holmes (1969) states,

no verse form in any language can be entirely identical with a verse form in any other, however similar their nomenclatures and however cognate the languages (Holmes in Lefevere 1975: 38).

Moreover, being committed to a certain number of feet in a line, the translator is not free in the choice of words and needs to find out strategies to make them fit the line; as a consequence, also syntax becomes contorted. This way, metrical translation results not only misleading but also unintelligible. Lefevere excludes also the translation of poetry into prose, the translation focused on rhymes and some other approaches, since their products are not up to the writer because of the falsification of the original.

The common belief that poetry translation is impossible can be debunked, but as we have seen, the translator needs to have a series of well-defined competences, which allow him/her to immerse himself/herself into the poem in order to reproduce its original meaning, rather than follows specific methods and rules.

2.2.4. TRANSLATING AUTOBIOGRAPHIC WORKS

Autobiographic works belong to personal narrative, defined by Baker (2006) as the group of “stories that we tell ourselves about our place in the world and our own personal history” (Baker 2006: 28). In autobiographies, the main character is the *autobiographical I*, which is composed of the *real I* and the *narrating I* (Smith and Watson 2011). In the text, the real I, the author, is replaced by the implied real I, which is the narrating I, the narrator. If the difference between author and narrator is easy to catch in fictional literature, in personal narrative the matter is more complicated. Because of the authentic

nature of autobiographies, readers expect to come across the real experience of an existing person, but in reality, despite the identity of name of author, narrator and character, they do not have access to the real I: the autobiographical I is a constructed image of the author. It follows that in translation, the translator reframes the autobiographic I and not the real I, which seems to remain unattainable to everybody.

In particular, what characterizes the translation of autobiographies is the relationship between narrator and experience (Marshall 2013); while the original narrator has direct access to experience, since it is his/her own, in translation the connection between narrator and source of writing is interrupted. In a few words,

An original autobiography narrates the author's memories of personal experiences, whereas a translated autobiography narrates knowledge of the author's memories of personal experiences acquired by the translator from the source text (Marshall 2013: 11).

Author-knowledge and translator-knowledge relationships differ, since author and translator's identity do not coincide and while the mode of acquisition of knowledge of the former is direct, the latter acquires information indirectly.

This distance between translator and author may be attenuated by a process of identification of the first with the second, based on empathy. The Oxford English Dictionary defines empathy as "the power of identifying oneself mentally (and so fully comprehending) a person or object of contemplation". It is the ability to take up the perspective of another person, to understand someone else's experience as if it was our own. In this way, the translator accesses the author's knowledge, appropriating them as if they were his/her own. According to some scholars, translator-author empathy represents one of the aspects of translation competence. For example, Newmark (1981) considers it a prerequisite for successful translation: "A successful translation is probably more dependent on the translator's empathy with the writer's thought than an affinity of language or culture" (Newmark 1981: 54). Nida (1964) also suggests that a valuable translator should have the same empathetic spirit as the author. The translator needs to emotionally identify with the text he/she is translating in order to achieve satisfactory results, since as Untermeyer suggests, translation is not "merely a linguistic exercise", but "an adventure in empathy" (Untermeyer 1965 in Marshall 2013: 31).

Beside the difficulties I mentioned, another problem arises, that is the cultural dimension of language. When people write in a foreign language, part of what they want to tell (and

so part of themselves) is lost. This shows how deeply identity is bound up with natural language. Languages differ in sounds, grammar and vocabulary, but they also represent different kinds of thinking, of perception of the world and of ways of representing it. As Besemeres (2002) affirms,

A person is partly shaped by, and develops in response to, shared values and assumptions embodied by the natural language he or she lives in. [...]. A natural language is the source of concepts of what is to be a person, or of how one should relate to others, which make possible a particular interpretation of experience (Besemeres 2002:19).

If people writing in another language lose part of themselves, we can imagine how much is lost of authors in the process of translating their works from one language into another.

Autobiography is a delicate field in translation, since often this literary genre's aim is not that of entertainment, but writing functions as a means for identity representation. However, despite all difficulties, the translator accepts the "challenge" and tries to reduce the distance that keeps him/her away from the author, developing the empathy necessary to appropriate the original knowledge. In this way, he/she may also overcome language obstacles and find the more suitable words to convey the author's personal experience as if it was his/her own.

2.3 MY EXPERIENCE AS A TRANSLATOR

Translators can be considered as authors, since the competences and abilities they should have in order to translate literary works are the same as those who write them. Besides a good command of the SL and a broad knowledge of the culture and history of the author's country, they also need to write perfectly in their own language, knowing all its ordinary and non-ordinary usages.

Chesterman (2002) claims that a translator should have two main abilities:

One is the ability to come up with several possibilities, several potential equivalents. The second is the ability to select the best one, for the purpose in hand. The first skill needs divergent intelligence, imagination, creativity; the second needs convergent intelligence, the ability to criticize, analyse, compare, assess (Chesterman 2002: 81).

Translators do not only need specific abilities, but also particular personality traits. For instance, they have to be humble and accept that the author comes first, without taking the liberty of thinking "that it worked better my way rather than the original writer's way" (Burton 1988: 125); they also need to be intuitive to catch the right meanings and at the same time constantly vigilant because something can always pass unnoticed. They can never ignore anything, that is, they cannot neglect a word just because it seems nonsensical or because its meaning is unfindable in the dictionary. They have to decide the sense of each nuance, even if the interpretation, being subjective, might be wrong:

Non è mai possibile stabilire con certezza se una data interpretazione di un testo sia, o no, legittima, a meno che in soccorso del traduttore venga l'autore, l'unica autorità indiscutibile (Osimo 1988: 26).

Once defined the possible meanings, translators will inevitably find the words to convey them, since, as Jakobson (1995) sustains, languages do not differ in what they can express: "Each cognitive experience can be expressed and classified in every existing language" (in Nergaard 1995: 56).

With the translation of *The Adoption Papers*, I put myself to the test with a double challenge, as I dealt with a long autobiographical poem. Following the classification of translation methods outlined by Newmark (1988), I would say that the translation I propose displays characteristics that belong to two types of approach: semantic and

communicative. Semantic translation permits the translator to remain faithful to the sense and spirit of the source poem; in autobiographical works, this is fundamental, since the voice of the author needs to be placed first, remaining as intact as possible. I have tried to respect the authority of Jackie Kay, as the story I rewrote is her personal story, it represents her memories and bares her feelings.

The sense of the author is required, and we do not surrender it willingly even to the plea of necessity. Fidelity is indeed of the very essence of translation, and the term itself implies it. For which reason, if we suppress the sense of the original, and force into its place our own, we may call our work an *imitation*, if we please, or perhaps a *paraphrase*, but it is no longer the same author only in a different dress, and therefore it is not translation (Cowper 1979 in Barnstone 1993: 85).

Nonetheless, the translator has a double moral responsibility: if on the one hand, he/she has to preserve the original sense, on the other he/she has to consider the reader's reactions. Communicative translation works at the reader's linguistic level, in the attempt to get the same effect as the original. In order to render the text accessible to the new readership, I used different techniques dealing with culturally specific aspects, taking into consideration their nature and role in the text. As I will explain in chapter 3, section 3.3.4, in a few cases I opted to add explicative footnotes with additional cultural information, in other situations I adapted the culture-bound terms to the TL culture and in others I maintained them. Anyway, being an autobiographical text, my aim was to preserve as many original features as possible, but without imposing a totally unknown system of values on the reader.

Reading has been the first step in my translation process; I read the whole text several times, then I found the general meaning, I understood the linguistic register, I marked the difficult words and passages but also the distinctive features and, only after the analysis of sense and language, started I translating. After the first draft, I sat back and reviewed the poem stanza by stanza, trying to improve lines on both content and form. I found it very useful to read other works of the author, especially her autobiographical novel *Red Dust Road*, where Kay recounts her life in a more detail. Some episodes are dealt with in both the poem and the novel, so I could understand them better since the figurative language of poetry often leads to misinterpretations.

Since the final revision requires objectivity, I used all the techniques defined by Osimo (1998) and outlined in section 2.2.1 to reach a good level of distance from the translation.

I read it on the computer screen, I printed it out and read it aloud both to myself and to someone else, and finally I asked two Italian native speakers to read it to me. In this way, and also thanks to the two readers' suggestions about the natural usage of Italian, I could modify the last details and produce a satisfactory work. My translation includes a commentary, since I found it important to explain the choices I made in order to make them understandable.

My experience as a translator has given me the chance to learn new linguistic aspects of English and to further developing knowledge of my mother tongue; not only has my level of both languages been enriched but also my translating skills have improved. Moreover, Kay's reflections on identity and family relationships have driven me to meditate on my own experience, broadening the awareness of the meaning of human existence.

E tutto il piacere del traduttore (se piacere può dirsi); tutta l'impellente attrazione che lo spinge consiste nel sentire, grazie a quel certo testo, un allargamento della propria esperienza o coscienza (del proprio essere o esistere, più che del conoscere), giustappunto perché tale testo lo costringe ad esplorare zone del proprio io che altrimenti - forse - non avrebbe mai conosciuto (Caproni in Buffoni 2004: 33).

CHARTER 3

3.1 ANALYSIS OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT

The analysis of the original text is always an essential step in the translation process; it enables the translator to understand the work better and therefore to choose the more suitable translation strategies to adopt. The poetic sequence *The Adoption Papers* is characterized by the use of free verse. The author did not follow either rhyme schemes or metric forms: the text is devoid of any sort of rhyme and the number of syllables is completely random.

The autobiographic poem is divided into three parts and each section reflects different moments in the adoption experience. Every section is composed by chapters (five chapters in part one, two in the second one and three in the last section), in which the voices of the three characters come in succession without a specific order. Immediately after the title, a note states that the voices are distinguished by different typefaces; this graphic support facilitates the reader in understanding the multitude of thoughts. In the first page (we can define it as “the introductory page”) there are three stanzas, which introduce the three speakers and their stories to the reader: the adoptive mother discloses her infertility and announces the idea of adopting a child, the daughter tells of her traumatic birth and her survival, the natural mother still thinks of the baby she gave away twenty-six years before.

After a first glance at the general picture, the reader enters the story of the adoption. Every section makes reference to a precise period of time, but it is also possible to find stanzas which reflect events that come before or after those particular period. In Part One, the adoptive mother tells the troubled period she went through when she discovered she could not have children, her relationship with the adoption agencies and the social workers, and the very beginning of her maternity. The birth mother describes her pregnancy, the decision to give her baby up for adoption and the regrets deriving from it. The daughter is twenty-six and she is trying to discover something about her original family. Part two is mainly focused on the moment when the adoptive mother tells the daughter that she is

not her real mum. The girl suffers some racial insults at the hands of her schoolmates and of her teacher, and she starts to feel different from other children. In the last section, the daughter is twenty-six again. She reflects a lot on her identity and origins and she finally decides to contact her birth mother, who is still suffering for the loss of her child many years earlier. The girl speaks with her mother's sister, who promises that the woman will write her. After this call, the daughter dreams a meeting lacking in sentiment, but rich in embarrassment, and in the last scene of the poem we imagine the daughter staring at the post box, waiting for a letter.

The structure is not linear and sometimes it appears unclear. The narration occupies a period of time of about thirty years and fabula and syuzhet do not coincide. For example, the events of the first part happen between 1961 and 1962, that is when the baby was born, but when the daughter speaks, she is twenty-six. This way, the author announces what will happen in the last section (flash-forward). In the second part, where the events take place between 1967 and 1971, the birth mother remembers her Nigerian lover, going back to when she got pregnant (flashback).

As previously mentioned, the three main characters in the poem are the daughter, the adoptive mother and the birth mother and their reflections come one after another without a specific order. The text is a narrative poem, in which stream of consciousness plays a fundamental role; given the author's wish to convey her autobiographic experience, this technique is the best one "to depict the multitudinous thoughts and feelings which pass through the mind." (Cuddon 1982:661). As the lack of punctuation is a typical feature of stream of consciousness (Cuddon 1982:661), also in *The Adoption Papers* we find several examples: sometimes the question mark is omitted ("does she imagine me this way", introductory page; "Mammy why aren't you and me the same colour", Chapter 6), the direct speech is reported without inverted commas ("Well she says, you have an interesting home", Chapter 3; "my teacher shouts from the bottom/of the class Come on, show", Chapter 7) and commas and full stops are regularly left out.

In every chapter, the speakers tell a little piece of the adoptive experience from their point of view, creating a polyphony. In the poem the narration of the events prevails but great importance is given to intimate reflections, from which the characters' mood and attitudes emerge. For example, in some passages, the bond between the two mothers and the daughter arises touchingly. At the end of chapter six, the adoptive mother replies to those

who think that it is not like having a real child, saying that “she’s my child, I have told her stories/wept at her losses/laughed at her pleasures,/she is mine.”, and then “I listened to hear her talk/and when she did I heard my voice under hers” (Chapter 6). Also the birth mother expresses her affection for her daughter: “I still have the baby photograph/I keep it in my bottom drawer/She is twenty-six today”. As far as the reverse relationship is concerned, the daughter is faithful to her adoptive mother, since she considers the woman as her real mum (“Now I come from her,/the mother who stole my milk teeth/ate the digestive left for Santa”, Chapter 5). On the other hand, she feels contrasting feelings towards her natural mother; curiosity pushes her to search for information on the woman and to contact her (“I’d like my original birth certificate”; “I have had my grandmother’s Highland number”, Chapter 2 and 9), but fear restrains this impulse (“It is all so long ago. Does it matter?”, Chapter 5).

Another fundamental aspect to take into consideration is the language. To start, it is important to underline that the content of the poetic sequence defines the type of language used by the three characters. The subject of the poem is the personal experience of the adoption seen from three different points of view, and, as I have already mentioned, beside the narration of events, many stanzas represent the speakers’ thoughts and feelings. Thus, the language used is colloquial and informal and sometimes there are some dialectal expressions. This does not mean that the author made use of a banal terminology; she simply used this sort of language because it is the most suitable to convey private reflections and everyday life. Furthermore, colloquial language imparts a sense of realism to the work, and in this way, the author can relate a strong connection with her readers (Nergaard 1995).

It follows that the complexity of the poem is not given by terms, but it derives from the abstractness of the poetic language. On one side the difficulty lies in understanding the deep meaning behind words, on the other, the non-ordinary use of language may create some problems. In my opinion, the reading of Jackie Kay’s autobiographic novel *Red Dust Road* has been essential for the interpretation and comprehension of the poem. The main subject is the same in both works, but in the novel events and concepts are expressed in a more direct way through the ordinary use of language and, consequently, the reading is much easier.

Starting from the assumption that “Some researchers have suggested that a special grammar might be constructed for poetic texts” (De Beaugrande 1978: 47), also in *The Adoptive Papers* the non-ordinary use of language manifests itself in several ways. For example, besides punctuation, sometimes constituents of the sentence are intentionally omitted, creating an elliptical proposition (“left a gash down my left cheek”, Introductory page), or the subject is put at the end of a line and the verb is given in the following line (“The adoption papers/ can’t be signed.” ; “my hand/ would sweat down to his bone.”, Chapter 4 and 7), or to place emphasis on the object, it is placed before the subject and the verb (“All the copies of the Daily Worker/ I shoved under the sofa”, Chapter 3).

Furthermore, the text is characterized by the presence of some Scots dialectal expressions (“that there wasnie wan/ giveaway sign left”, Chapter 3), by several idiomatic expressions (“I’m on the home run”; “But just as we get to the last post”, Chapter 3) and by figures of speech commonly used in poetry, like similes and metaphors (“and watch her tiny eight-pound body/sink to shells and reshape herself”; “Land moves like driven cattle”; “and saw the ground move and swell/the promise of a crop”, Chapter 2,4,4).

The narration appears dynamic especially because the voices of the three speakers follow one after another, giving different pieces of information and perspectives on the adoptive experience. And, in relation to what said before, also this aspect defines the language, since each character has a dissimilar style of speaking. Reading Jackie Kay’s biography, I discovered that her adoptive mother was a waitress in her youth and then became the Scottish secretary of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, while her birth mother was a nurse. I think that they can both be considered working-class women, with the difference that the adoptive mother is socially and politically active. She uses a quite direct and clear language; the way in which she expresses herself does not create confusion to the reader, since she follows a logic sequence in her speeches. On the other hand, the natural mother speaks in a more enigmatic way; she uses many similes and her thoughts seem to be reproduced without written language mediation. The language of the daughter changes through the text, since she grows up. At the beginning of part two, she is a little girl who uses simple words and simple sentences, and sometimes she also mangles words (“Ma mammy picked me (I wiz the best)”, Chapter 6) and uses Scottish dialect terms like oot (out) and mibbe (maybe). In the same sequence, since time passes by, the girl’s way of speaking develops, becoming more structured. Her adult lines are characterized by deep

thoughts and reflections on identity, but despite the delicate issue, she uses strong images and speaks in a very direct way.

Culturally specific features are another trait of the poem; for instance, one of the first things that stands out is the use of the so-called Imperial system (miles, pounds, ounces, etc.). Other terms have to do with typical English food (e.g. digestive), rooms (e.g. airing cupboard), fabric (e.g. tweed), newspapers (e.g. Daily Worker), places (e.g. Aberdeen, Highlands), songs (e.g. Ye banks and braes, I gave my love a cherry). The author also mentioned some famous American people's names, which may not be familiar to the Italian readership, such as the actor Paul Robeson, the political activist Angela Davis, the singer Bessie Smith and others.

3.2 TRANSLATION OF THE ORIGINAL TEXT

After the analysis of the original English text, in the following pages I propose my Italian translation of The Adoption Papers. On the left page there is the translation, while on the right page I wrote the comment on my work in order to understand how I achieved the final text. I added numbers to lines both in the original and in the translation as it is useful to make the commentary clearer. Kay's original poem can be found at the end of the dissertation, in the appendix.

3.2.1 TRANSLATION

Documenti di un'adozione

Nella sequenza poetica *Documenti di un'adozione*, le voci dei tre personaggi sono distinte dal carattere tipografico:

Figlia: Carattere Palatino

Madre adottiva: Carattere Gill

Madre naturale: Carattere Bodoni

3.2.2 COMMENTARY ON THE TRANSLATION

In the translation I propose, great attention has to be given to language and in particular to the choice of words. As Newmark (1988: 163) states, “Poetry is the most personal and concentrated of the four forms, no redundancy, no phatic language, where, as a unit, the word has greater importance than in any other type of text”.

In my work, I have tried to be as faithful as possible to the original text, mainly because of its autobiographical nature. In order to obtain a respectable translation, besides an accurate translation of words, I also tried to maintain the same syntactic structure. The writer expresses his/her message not only through words, but also through the structure of sentences. It means that the way in which words are put together is the outcome of the writer’s will and it plays a fundamental role in the transmission and reception of the message (Munday 2009). As far as the length of lines is concerned, I managed to keep it very similar to the original one, despite English grammar is more concise than Italian.

Since the very beginning of the poetic sequence, that is the title, I had to focus on the meaning of the words used, contextualizing them. As De Beaugrande (1978) asserts in *Factors in a theory of poetic translating*, “When words occur in actual texts, the co-text and context allow the reader to determine which segments of the total possible meaning of all component words are to be activated for interpreting those texts. This process of narrowing down potential meaning into actual meaning can be termed *contextualization*. Without this process, language items cannot be used to communicate effectively.” (De Beaugrande 1978: 19). In the poem, the title *The Adoption Papers* is mentioned and it refers to the documents needed to go on with the adoption, but at the same time, the whole text reflects the thoughts of the subjects involved in this process. The title may refer both to the documents and to the collection of written memories and reflections. *Scritti di un’adozione* and *Documenti di un’adozione* are the two possible titles I thought about, but, since the word *scritti* is more representative of the concept of memories, *documenti* seems to convey both meanings better.

Translation

- 1.1 Ho sempre voluto donare la vita
fare quella straordinaria cosa naturale
che le donne fanno – Sono quasi crollata
quando ho saputo che non potevamo,
- 1.5 e poi il mio compagno disse
bè c'è sempre l'adozione
(non c'erano la procreazione assistita e il resto al tempo)
perfino agli albori degli anni sessanta
c'era qualcosa di scandaloso nell'adottare,
- 1.10 svelare al mondo il tuo intimo fallimento
allevare un alieno,
chi sapeva cosa sarebbe diventato

As in the three sections of the poetic sequence, also in the introductory page there are several aspects of the translation to take into consideration. In the following pages, I sum up briefly the content of each chapter before dealing with the analysis of my translation, as the understanding of the context has always an essential role in the translation process (De Baugrande 1978). In this first page, the adoptive mother speaks about the discovery of her infertility, the daughter describes the moment she came to life and the birth mother remembers the baby she gave away.

In the second line of the first stanza, I changed the typical English order adjective-noun: *natural things* (“Do that incredible natural thing”) becomes *cosa naturale*. In the Italian language the position of the adjective is not fixed by grammatical rules, but it is based on stylistic choices. Sometimes I changed the original order, while other times I maintained it: in line ten *secret failure* (“telling the world your secret failure”) is translated into *intimo fallimento*. In line six, I opted for the Italian discourse marker *bè* to translate *well*; in *well there is always adoption*, the discourse maker is used to acknowledge a situation, about which the speaker seems to express a feeling that keeps resignation together with hope. As far as brackets are concerned, I decided to keep them all, since the information contained is additional, but at the same time, important to understand the overall meaning of each passage. Even if the omission of brackets and the text contained within is one of the possible choice to make while translating, I never opted for it, since I consider all details important to the text. In line eight (“Even in the early sixties there was / something scandalous about adopting,”), the adverb *even* is used to underline the fact that even if it was the sixties, and so a decade of revolution, protests and change in society, there were anyway some prejudices, among which the scandal of adoption. In the translation I replaced it with the adverb *perfino*, which underlines the exceptionality of the fact, that astonished the adoptive mother: *perfino agli albori degli anni sessanta/c’era qualcosa di scandaloso nell’adottare*. Finally, I reflected a lot upon the expression *alien child* in *Bringing up an alien child*, since I was uncertain about the connotation given to it by the author. At first, I thought to use a more general expression like *bambino altrui*, because I did not want to misunderstand the original meaning; at a later stage, I supposed that the strong negative image could be voluntary, considering the personal disappointment of the adoptive mother, and I expressed the idea using the noun *alieno*. I made a transposition, changing the word class from adjective to noun: *allevare un alieno*

Translation

- 2.1 Sono stata estratta con il forcipe
mi ha lasciato una ferita sulla guancia sinistra
quattro mesi in incubatrice
ma lei venne fedele
- 2.5 da Glasgow a Edimburgo
e mi fissava attraverso il vetro
devo aver percepito che qualcuno desiderava sopravvivessi;
lei non avrebbe scelto un altro bambino
- 3.1 Ho ancora la sua fotografia
la tengo nel corredo
- 4.1 Oggi ha ventisei anni
i miei capelli sono grigi
- 5.1 La pelle attorno al mio collo è rugosa
chissà se mi immagina così

In the daughter's speech, the second line ("left a gash down my left cheek") is devoid of subject; but in the previous line she tells that, when she was born, she was pulled out with forceps and so the implied subject is the instrument ("Sono stata estratta con il forcipes / mi ha lasciato una ferita sulla guancia sinistra"). The other aspect I want to focus on is the verb tenses. When the adoptive mother arrived at the hospital, she started peering at the baby in the glass cot, and she went on doing it as long as she stayed there. I translated *came* ("but she came faithful") with the simple past *venne* ("ma lei venne fedele) and *peered* ("and peered through the glass") with the imperfect *mi fissava* ("e mi fissava attraverso il vetro"). Like in this situation, the imperfect can express a past action, focusing on its development (descriptive imperfect) (Duro 1986).

The last three stanzas belong to the birth mother. In the first line ("I still have the baby photograph"), I opted for a shift in word class: the noun *baby* became the possessive adjective *sua* ("Ho ancora la sua fotografia"). In the second line ("I keep it in my bottom drawer") we find the expression *bottom drawer*, which does not just have a literal meaning (the lowest drawer of a chest), but it also has a figurative use to refer to the items that a woman stores in readiness for marriage. Since in the poem the expression is preceded by the possessive article *my*, and since in *Red Dust Road* I found out that Jackie Kay's birth mother got married, I used the Italian term *corredo* to render it ("la tengo nel corredo"). In the second stanza I had to make another kind of grammatical shift from SL to TL, that is the change from singular to plural (Newmark 1988:85). In English *hair* is singular, while in Italian *capelli* are plural, so *My hair is grey* became *i miei capelli sono grigi*. The last consideration concerns the line "does she imagine me this way". The sentence is an interrogative form lacking in punctuation, and it may be rendered by the Italian translation *chissà se mi immagina così*, where the adverb *chissà* modifies the verb, indicating a lack of certainty. I preferred to choose this solution, since the literal translation *mi immagina così* without question mark could also express an affirmation, deviating the reader.

Prima parte : 1961-1962 Capitolo 1 : Il Seme

- 1.1 Non avrei mai pensato che sarebbe stato più veloce
di percorrere a piedi la strada principale

- 2.1 Voglio stare di fronte allo specchio
il pancione, il pancione enorme

- 3.1 Il momento, l'esatto momento
per quel particolare seme di essere scelto

- 4.1 Voglio dormire a pancia in su
voglio fare pipì tutto il tempo

- 5.1 fra tutti gli altri
come scegliere un compagno per danzare

- 6.1 Bramo il dolore come alcune donne
bramano il cioccolato o la terra o il fegato

- 7.1 Intanto queste settimane scorrono lentamente
non riesco a smettere di pensarci continuamente

- 8.1 Non posso credere di aver provato per cinque anni
quello che può accadere in cinque minuti

- 9.1 Ci volle solo una frazione di secondo
non un minuto o più.

- 10.1 Voglio il dolore
il dolore intenso che fa piangere

Part One – Chapter 1

Part one describes the events that happened between 1961 and 1962; it is composed by five chapters and the first one is entitled *The seed* (Il seme). The birth mother describes the moment she got pregnant and expresses sadness for the absence of her lover: she had an affair with a Nigerian student, but he had to go back to his country because he was betrothed. The adoptive mother deeply suffers for her infertility and she really would like to sense the same feelings of the other women; she feels incomplete.

The adoptive mother makes a list of daily actions and sensations, typical of pregnancy. For instance, in the second stanza she says that she wants to look at herself in the mirror and see the bump. The context makes clear the meaning of the second line *swollen bellied so swollen bellied*, and I expressed the idea translating it into *il pancione, il pancione enorme*. In the first line of the fourth stanza (“I want to lie on my back at night”) I got away from the surface structure of the source text, to express the intended meaning in the target language with different words. The idea of lying on the back at night can be rendered by the Italian expression *dormire a pancia in su* (“voglio dormire a pancia in su”).

The biological mother expresses her thoughts and feeling using many similes and metaphors. A simile is a figure of speech in which two things are explicitly compared through the use of words of comparison, such as *like* or *as*; whereas a metaphor is a figure of speech which makes an implicit comparison between two things that are different to each other but have some characteristics in common (Duro 1986). The first simile compares the way in which the sperm is selected at the moment of the conception to the way a person selects a dancing partner (stanza 3, “The time, the exact time / for that particular seed to be singled out / amongst all others / like choosing a dancing partner”). I decided to translate it literally, because I intended to maintain the originality of the idea: *Il momento, l'esatto momento / per quel particolare seme di essere scelto / fra tutti gli altri / come scegliere un compagno per danzare*.

Translation

- 11.1 Voglio che mi si rompano le acque
come il diluvio universale
- 12.1 Voglio spingere e spingere
e urlare e urlare
- 13.1 Quando fui sicura scrissi una breve nota
sei settimane dopo – una breve lettera
- 14.1 Era dispiaciuto; avremmo dovuto saperlo
lui non poteva lasciare la Nigeria.
- 15.1 Mi mancava lui, le cose sciocche
La sua improvvisa risata sguaiata,
- 16.1 I suoi occhi magnetici
la musica che mi suonava

The adoptive mother uses a simile to compare the strength of the water-break to that of Noah's flood (stanza 11, "I want my waters to break / like Noah's flood"). As far as this simile is concerned I chose to express the meaning without mentioning the Bible character, but using the most common term with which Italian speakers refer to the flood, that is "il diluvio universale": *Voglio che mi si rompano le acque / come il diluvio universale*.

This first chapter ends with another simile; the birth mother listed all the aspects of her lover that she missed, like the silly things they did together, his laugh, the music he played her and finally his eyes. The simile compares the gaze of the Nigerian man to a vortex, meaning that his eyes capture the woman. In my translation I used a metaphor to render the image the author wanted to convey: *I suoi occhi magnetici* ("His eyes intense as a whirlwind").

Capitolo 2: Il Certificato di Nascita Originale

1.1 Dico all'uomo al banco

vorrei il mio certificato di nascita originale

Hai idea di quale fosse il tuo nome?

Ride sotto i baffi. *Ebbene qual era?*

2.1 Lento come una tortura rivela a poco a poco

il nome di mia madre, il mio nome originale

l'ospedale in cui nacqui, il momento in cui venni al mondo.

Chapter 2

The second chapter of part one is entitled *The Original Birth Certificate* (Il Certificato di Nascita Originale) and the two main characters are the daughter and the birth mother. The daughter is twenty-six and she is searching for her original birth certificate in order to discover something about her origins. The mother comes back to when she was nineteen and describes the three nights after giving birth: the first night she thinks that she can not pretend the baby has never been because her body is a witness of what has happened; the second night she thinks how to free herself from the new-born; the third night she is worried for her daughter's life and she wills her to survive. The woman is very confused about the situation: she changes her mind every day.

In line four (“Close, close he laughs. *Well what was it?*”) there are two aspects I want to focus on: the first aspect concerns the meaning of the word *close* and the second one the interjection *well*. The term *close* can have different meanings depending on the context; as De Baugrande states, “the meaning of a word can be classed as a set of markers normally assignable to that word. When the word occurs in a text, not all of those markers are necessarily activated, because the potential meaning often exceeds in range the actual meaning in a particular context.” (De Baugrande 1978: 38). By reading the other lines I understood that the man the daughter is speaking to is not very polite (she says that he gives her information bit by bit, in a very slow way, as if he found it funny). Thus, I thought he is amused by the fact that she does not know her original name and I interpreted his laugh as a snigger. I translated *Close,close he laughs* with the Italian idiomatic expression *Ride sotto i baffi*, giving the meaning of secret/hidden to *close*. As far as *well* is concerned, I rendered it with the interjection *ebbene*. This kind of interjection can be used to press for a reply to something and in this specific context the girl wants to know her original name without wasting any time. In the first line of the second stanza we find a simile, which I translated literally, since it gives a clear image of how wearying the wait is: *Slow as torture he discloses bit by bit* is rendered with *Lento come una tortura mi rivela a poco poco*. In my translation I omitted the subject *he*, since in Italian the subject can be understood.

Translation

- 3.1 Edimburgo è impregnata di luce
parlo a me stessa passando davanti al castello.
E così, alla fine, sono figlia della mezzanotte.
- 4.1 Ho diciannove anni
La mia intera esistenza sta cambiando
- Prima notte
- 5.1 Vedo i suoi occhi chiusi nei miei sogni
- 6.1 Non posso fingere che non sia mai esistita
i punti mi tirano e minacciano di strapparsi
- 7.1 il mio corpo un testimone
rivversa sangue sulle lenzuola e latte sulle camicette
- Seconda notte
- 8.1 La soffocherò con un cuscino di piuma
- 9.1 La seppellirò sotto ad un salice piangente
O la porterò in mezzo al mare
- 10.1 e guarderò il suo minuto corpo di tre chili e mezzo
affondare tra le conchiglie e prendere forma nuova.
- 11.1 Molto meglio così piuttosto che il suo corpo
venga racchiuso in una teca come un pezzo da museo

In my work I never omitted details, I only left out some words which are superfluous to the overall meaning of lines; for example at the beginning of the third stanza I omitted the adverb *outside*, and I just translated *Outside Edinburgh is soaked in sunshine* into *Edimburgo è impregnate di luce*. In this last stanza we can identify a contrast between the “sunshine” and the “midnight”: the first image may refer to the light made on the girl’s origins, while the second one may allude to the black ethnicity she belongs to.

After the daughter’s reflections, all the other stanzas belong to the birth mother. Here we find several examples of adjective-noun order. In the second line of the fourth stanza (“my whole life is changing”) I kept the original order and so I translated it into *la mia intera vita sta cambiando*. In the following example we find the adjective postponed to the noun: *shuttered eyes* becomes *occhi chiusi*. Finally, I translated *her tiny eight-pound body* into *il suo minuto corpo di tre chili e mezzo*: in the translation the qualifying adjective comes before the noun while the complement indicating the measure comes after it. Here we meet a unit of measure (pound) of the so-called Imperial system, which I converted to the corresponding unit of the International System; 1 pound corresponds to 0.454 kilograms and so the eight pounds of the original text become three and a half kilograms in the translation.

In the line *my stitches pull and threaten to snap* (stanza 6), I turned the possessive adjective *my* into the personal pronoun *mi*, maintaining the idea that the stitches belong to the birth mother (“i punti mi tirano e minacciano di strapparsi”).

Among these lines we find one of the most strong image of the poetic sequence. The birth mother thinks of how to get rid of her daughter and she also considers takes to drown her, but despite the extreme thought, the author is able to create a positive image: the baby sinks to shells and becomes one of them. The woman tries to cheer up, thinking that her little baby could start a new life under a different shape. Given the originality of the line, I tried to translate it as faithful to the original as possible: *sink to shells and reshape herself* can be rendered with *affondare tra le conchiglie e prendere forma nuova* (stanza 10).

Translation

Terza notte

12.1 Mi rigiro nel letto non ho attraversato questi mesi

13.1 per vederti morire ora
la terza notte mi ritrovo

14.1 a desiderare la vita per lei
ad infonderla lungo tutto il corridoio

15.1 fino al vetro dell' incubatrice
attraverso cui faccio passare i miei capezzoli

In the first line of the last group of stanzas (“I toss I did not go through these months”, stanza 12) I translated *I toss* with *Mi rigiro nel letto*; I added the locative complement *nel letto*, since in Italian it is not implied in the verb and the verb by itself does not make sense.

The last aspect I want to analyse concerns the lines *on the third night I lie / willing life into her / breathing air all the way down the corridor* (stanza 13,14). From the context I understood that the birth mother is very anxious because she worries for her baby’s life, so I imagined her breathing life into the little daughter: *la terza notte mi ritrovo / a desiderare la vita per lei / infondendola lungo tutto il corridoio*.

Capitolo 3: Le Liste D'attesa

- 1.1 La prima agenzia a cui ci siamo rivolti
non ci ha voluto nelle sue liste,
non vivevamo abbastanza vicino ad una chiesa
né eravamo praticanti
- 1.5 (tenevamo però segreto il fatto di essere comunisti).
La seconda ci disse
che non guadagnavamo abbastanza.
Alla terza piacemmo
ma avevano una lista d'attesa di cinque anni.
- 1.10 Per sei mesi ho provato a non guardare
le altalene e i seggiolini dei carrelli della spesa,
né a pensare che il bambino che avrei voluto potrebbe avere cinque anni.
La quarta agenzia era al completo.
La quinta disse di sì, ma nuovamente niente neonati.
- 1.15 Proprio mentre stavamo uscendo dalla porta
dissi oh sapete che non ci importa del colore.
Bastò questo, l'attesa era terminata.

Chapter 3

In the third chapter, entitled *The Waiting Lists* (Le Liste d'Attesa), all stanzas belong to the adoptive mother, except for the second one, which reflects the daughter's thoughts. The adoptive mother and her partner went to several adoptive agencies before finding the one through which they adopted their baby, but this agency took them into consideration just because they said that the colour did not matter. The woman also describes what she did in order to make her home a non-communist house in the eyes of the social worker and tells of the meeting they had; the outcome was positive and they could go on with the adoption. The daughter gives a little information about her birth mother, which she obtained from some searches.

In the seventh line of the first stanza I made a shift of lexical category, as I changed the couple adjective (high enough) + noun (earners) into verb + adverb. In Italian there is not a generic noun that defines somebody who earns money (earner), since the noun *salariato* was used in the past and now it only refers to workers. *We weren't high enough earners* became *che non guadagnavamo abbastanza*. Both in line fifteen and seventeen we find the word *just*: *Just as we were going out the door* and *Just like that, the waiting list was over*. In both cases *just* is an adverb, but while in the first line it is followed by the conjunction *as*, meaning at the moment when, in the second one it forms a single expression with *like that*, signifying suddenly. In the translation *proprio mentre stavamo uscendo dalla porta*, the Italian adverb *proprio* stands for in that precise moment. As far as the second line is concerned, I chose to translate the adverb with the verb *bastare*, which corresponds to the English *to be enough*: *bastò questo, l'attesa era terminata*. In line sixteen ("I said oh you know we don't mind the colour") there is direct speech, which lacks speech marks (inverted commas). The author puts the words that are said inside inverted commas only in two cases (chapter 6 'ah but / it's not like having your own child though is it', chapter 9 'I used to work ages ago with your daughter / Elizabeth, do you have her present address?') and rarely separates the direct speech from the rest of the sentence with punctuation marks. I respected her choice: *dissi oh sapete che non ci importa del colore*.

Translation

- 2.1 Questa mattina ricevo una sottile busta di manila
inviata da Edimburgo: un foglio
sono riuscita a consultare le tue microschede
(dal momento che oggi giorno questo è tutto ciò che conservano gli archivi).
- 2.5 Dalle lettere di tua madre, le seguenti informazioni:
tua madre aveva diciannove anni quando ti ebbe.
Pesavi tre chili e settecento grammi.
Le piaceva l'hockey. Lavorava ad Aberdeen
come cameriera. Era alta un metro e settantadue.
- 3.1 Pensai di aver nascosto tutto
di non aver lasciato
alcuna traccia
- 4.1 Misi Marx Hegel Lenin (non Trotsky)
in caldaia –
sicuramente non controllerà tra gli asciugamani

In the second stanza there are only two aspects to focus on. In line seven and line nine there are some examples of Imperial units of measure; as before, I converted them into the International system units. Since 1 pound corresponds to 0.454 kilograms and 1 ounce corresponds to 28.35 grams, *eight pound four ounces* becomes *tre chili e settecento grammi*. As far as length is concerned, 1 foot is 0.308 meters and 1 inch is 2.54 centimetres, and so five foot eight inches becomes *un metro e settantaquattro*. Even if the readership of the poem is adult, it is improbable that everyone knows the various equivalences with precision, and so I preferred to transform the units. In line eight (“She liked hockey. She worked in Aberdeen”) we find the first geographic term of the poem: Aberdeen is one of the main city of Scotland and I left it untranslated since in Italian the Scottish city is known with the same name.

The last part of chapter three is composed by fifteen tercets. In the first we meet a Scottish dialectal expression: *that there wasnie wan / giveaway sign left* (stanza 3). This expression stands for *there was not one* and I opted to translate it into neutral language: *di non aver lasciato / alcuna traccia*. The author uses some Scottish words to foreground her cultural identity and to show a slang use of language (Newmark 1988: 195), underlining the colloquial register of the poetic sequence. In this case, as in the others, the dialectal terms are not idiomatic expressions or words with particular meaning.

In stanza four we meet a culturally specific term linked with the English context; an airing cupboard is a small place, which contains a water heater and where shelves are positioned above and around it to provide storage for clothing, usually for linen and towels. In Italian houses there is not a place like this, but we have the boiler room where it is also possible to dry clothes. I adapted the term to the target context, using the nearest local equivalent (Robinson 2012: 175), so I translated *in the airing cupboard* into *in caldaia*.

Translation

- 5.1 Tutte le copie del *Daily Worker*¹
le spinsi sotto al divano
la colomba della pace la tolsi dalla toilette
- 6.1 Un poster di Paul Robeson²
con scritto dategli il suo passaporto
lo staccai dalla cucina
- 7.1 Lasciai un busto di Burns
i miei gialli
e l'intera opera di Shelley
- 8.1 Arriva alle 11.30 in punto.
Le offro del caffè
con il mio nuovo servizio ungherese
- 9.1 E stupidamente prego
che non ne chiederà l'origine – questo bambino
mi sta davvero dando alla testa

1. Il *Daily Worker* fu un quotidiano britannico fondato nel 1930 dal Partito Comunista della Gran Bretagna. Nel 1966 il nome della testata venne cambiato ed oggi è conosciuto come *Morning Stars*.

2. Paul LeRoy Bustill Robeson fu un cantante e attore americano, nonché un membro del movimento per i diritti civili. La sua vicinanza al pensiero comunista e le critiche rivolte al governo degli Stati Uniti lo relegarono alla lista nera del presidente McCarthy. Nel 1952 vinse il Premio Stalin per la pace assegnatogli dall'Unione Sovietica, ma non poté ritirarlo per il sequestro del passaporto avvenuto due anni prima.

In the fifth stanza we find the name of a newspaper founded in Britain in 1930 by the Communist Party of Great Britain, the *Daily Worker*, which now is a tabloid newspaper and is known as the *Morning Star*. I did not replace it with an equivalent Italian newspaper, like *Il Manifesto*, but I kept it and I added a footnote, which gives a brief explanation.

I wrote a footnote also for the following stanza (6), where we find Paul Robeson, in order to illustrate who he is and why his poster states “Give him his passport”. In Italy Robeson is not a well-known personality and so I wanted to give some information about him. Furthermore, it is important that the reader knows him because this contributes to understanding the political orientation of the adoptive mother.

I did not write footnotes on Burns and Shelley, since they are world-famous writers.

In stanzas five and six of the original text the author put the object before the subject and the verb: *all the copies of the Daily Worker / I shoved under the sofa / the dove of peace I took down from the loo* and *A poster of Paul Robeson / saying give him his passport / I took down from the kitchen*. This kind of sentence structure is called left dislocation and it can be used to emphasize a topic, which in these cases is the object. In Italian we can have the same structure, but the object put at the beginning of the sentence is always followed by an unstressed personal pronoun or by a pronominal particle (<http://www.zanichellibenvenuti.it/wordpress/?p=7871>). In my translation I left the objects where I found them in the original text: *Tutte le copie del Daily Worker / le spinsi sotto al divano / la colomba della pace la tolsi dalla toilette* and *Un poster di Paul Robeson / con scritto dategli il suo passaporto / lo staccai dalla cucina*.

In the ninth stanza there is another dialectal expression, which stands for *will not*, that is *willnae*. Also in this case I chose to translate it into neutral language, since it is just an auxiliary verb: *And foolish pray she willnae/ask its origins* became *E stupidamente spero/che non ne chiederà l'origine*. In the last line of this stanza we find the idiomatic expression *go to someone's head* (“honestly/this baby is going to my head”), which I translated with the corresponding Italian idioms *dare alla testa* (“questo bambino/mi sta davvero dando alla testa”).

Translation

- 10.1 Accavalla le gambe seduta sul divano
mi immagino di sentire le copie del *Daily Worker*
frusciare sotto di lei
- 11.1 Bene dice, ha una casa interessante
Vede che alzo le sopracciglia.
È diversa precisa.
- 12.1 Maledizione e io ho trascorso tutta la mattinata
a farla apparire normale
- una casa graziosa per il pupo.
- 13.1 Si abbottona il cappotto tutta sorridente
penso
è fatta
- 14.1 Ma proprio all'ultimo istante
il suo sguardo così come il mio viene colpito
da un nastro rosso con una ventina di spille per la pace nel mondo

In the translation it is not possible to translate *Daily Workers* with *i Daily Worker*, since in the Italian language newspapers' names are uncountable (we can not say *i Manifesti*). The same meaning can be rendered by the use of the word *copie* (copies): *I fancy I hear the Daily Workers* can be translated into *mi immagino di sentire le copie del Daily Worker*. In the following stanza (11) there are two other examples of direct speech, without speech marks; also in these cases I respected the choice of the author and I did not add the inverted commas nor transform the direct speech into indirect. *Well she says, you have an interesting home* became *Bene dice, ha una casa interessante*; *It's different she qualifies* is translated into *È diversa precisa*. Here and in line ten, I put the adjectives that qualify the noun *home* after it, so we have *una casa interessante* and *una casa graziosa* instead of *an interesting home* and *a lovely home*.

In stanza thirteen and fourteen there are two idioms, which do not have an equivalent idiomatic expression in Italian and so I made use of the paraphrasing. This technique gave me the possibility to reproduce the author's meaning as closely as possible by using my own words (Munday 2009: 214). The expression *home run* is used when something or someone succeeds in achieving its/his/her goals and in my translation I rendered it with the Italian expression *è fatta*: *I'm thinking / I'm on the home run* became *penso / è fatta*. The idiom *last post* refers to the last step of something, in this case of the meeting between the adoptive mother and the social worker. I translated the line *But just as we get to the last post* into *Ma proprio all'ultimo istante*.

Translation

15.1 Esplicito come una falce e martello
appeso al muro.
Oh, dice è contro le armi nucleari?

16.1 Al diavolo. Bimbo o non bimbo.
Sì dico. Sì sì sì.
Vorrei che questo bambino visse in un mondo libero dal nucleare.

17.1 Oh. I suoi occhi si illuminano.
Sono molto favorevole alla pace dice,
e si siede per un'altra tazza di caffè.

In the following stanza (15) the first line is a simile, which compares the red ribbon with the world peace badges mentioned in the previous stanza with the hammer and sickle. The adoptive mother forgot to hide the ribbon and when the social worker notices the object, she thinks to have revealed her political ideals and to have wrecked everything. I translated the adjective *clear* with *evidente* (evident), since this is the acceptation of the word, which emerges from the context. I kept the original comparison: *Clear as a hammer and sickle* became *evidente come una falce e martello*. In the last line there is another example of direct speech without speech marks, which I maintained: *Oh, she says are you against nuclear weapons?* is rendered with *Oh, dice è contro le armi nucleari?*

Also in the last two stanzas (16, 17) we find direct speech which is not indicated by quotation marks. Since in English there is not a courtesy form to address to people like in Italian, choosing to translate the pronoun *you* with *tu* or *lei* is up to the translator. In the examples of the chapter there are two adult strangers, who converse in a formal situation and so I opted for the pronoun *lei* to render *you* in the direct speech.

Capitolo 4: Piccolo Lazzaro

1.1 La terra si muove come una mandria ordinata

I miei occhi afferrano qualche parola

titoli di prima pagina si susseguono:

MADRE AFFOGA IL SUO BAMBINO NEL FIUME CLYDE

Novembre

2.1 L'assistente sociale ci ha telefonato,

il nostro piccolo è una femmina ma non è sano

non supererà il controllo del dottore

finché non starà bene. I documenti dell'adozione

2.5 non possono essere firmati. Riagganciai.

Avvampai. Non agitiamoci.

Cosa aspetta? Non sono una madre

fino a quando non firmo quel pezzo di carta

Chapter 4

Chapter four is entitled *Baby Lazarus* (Piccolo Lazzaro) and is divided into three main parts indicated by the name of a month (November, December, March). The voices of the biological and the adoptive mothers alternate, expressing feelings and impressions on the same period of time but from different points of view. In November the adoptive mother discovers that the baby is a girl but not healthy and so that, for the moment, the adoption papers can not be signed; in December she and her partner go to Edinburgh to visit the baby at the hospital; in March they receive the good news and they go to pick up the baby. While the adoption develops, the birth mother keeps going over what she has done, to the point that she imagines that the spirit of the little baby visits her. She really suffers for the loss of her daughter, but she had no option but this, since she was an unmarried young woman and her family made her give the baby away to avoid disgracing the family's name.

The first line of the first stanza, that is *Land moves like driven cattle*, is a simile, which compares the movement of the land seen from a train to cattle driven by a stockman. Both movements are characterized by evenness. The literal translation of *driven* is *guidata*, but since cattle, when driven, moves in an orderly way, I expressed the idea by translating the term *driven* into *ordinata*. I kept the simile, making its sense more explicit: *La terra si muove come una mandria ordinata*. In the last line of this first stanza we find the proper name of a geographical element: *the Clyde*. In the translation I added *fiume* (river) to the *hydronym* to give an additional geographical information to state what the Clyde is.

In the first stanza (2) of the part entitled *November* the title of the poetic sequence appears for the first and only time. Here the adoption papers refer to the documents needed to go on with the adoption.

3.1 Il ritmo del treno mi conduce
attraverso la terra gelida
l'incessante sbuffo è un ciuccio
una culla a dondolo

4.1 Forse mi si legge
in faccia
un titolo a carattere sottile
MADRE DÀ IN ADOZIONE IL SUO BAMBINO

Dicembre

5.1 Abbiamo raggiunto Edimburgo in auto,
ero così emozionata che i sessantacinque chilometri
mi sembrarono una vita. Come pensi che sarà?
Non lo so dice il mio compagno.
5.5 Era nervoso quanto me. Sulla via del ritorno
aveva un grande sorriso sul volto anche se
non era entrato. Solo io l'avevo fatto.
Indossavo una maschera ma non sembrava importarle
le dissi *da un giorno all'altro tesoro mio da un giorno all'altro.*

6.1 Nessuno l'avrebbe mai immaginato.
Non avevo altra scelta
Ad ogni modo per lei è la cosa migliore,
La mia firma su una linea tratteggiata.

In the third stanza I inverted the adjective-noun order and I translated *frigid earth* into *terra gelida* (“over the frigid earth” became “attraverso la terra gelida”). The following two lines (3,4) consist in a metaphor, which compares the chug of the train to a pacifier and a rocking cradle. The author wants to convey the idea of something that calms down, relaxes the biological mother on the way back home after the childbirth. I translated the rhetorical figure literally, since it is an original metaphor invented by the author and I wanted to keep its subjectivity (Newmark 1988: 112). *The constant chug a comforter / a rocking cradle* can be rendered with *l’incessante sbuffo è un ciuccio / una culla a dondolo*.

In the following stanza (4) the birth mother expresses her worries; she fears that people could understand that she gave away her baby, just looking at her, since her face betrays emotions. This image is expressed using an idiomatic expression: *maybe the words lie across my forehead*. In Italian when someone’s face reveals his/her feelings, it is used the idiom *glielo si legge in faccia*: *forse mi si legge / in faccia*.

The second part (December) is composed by two stanzas. In the second line of the fifth stanza we meet a new length unit, that is the mile. As in the previous examples, I converted miles into kilometres; since 1 mile corresponds to 1.609 kilometres, the *forty miles* of the original text became *sessantacinque chilometri* in the translation. In the following lines (3,4) we meet two examples of direct speech, which differ in font: “What do you think she’ll look like? / I don’t know” is written in block letters, while “any day now my darling any day” (9) is written in italics. Both utterances are introduced by the reporting verb *to say* and *to tell*, but maybe in the second case the author used a different font, because it is a matter of intimate words told by a mother to a baby; it can be considered a sort of personal reflection.

In the last line of the sixth stanza (“Ma name signed on a dotted line”) I omitted the past participle and I translate *my name signed* into *la mia firma*, since a name written on a dotted line is a signature: *la mia firma su una linea tratteggiata*.

Marzo

- 7.1 La nostra bambina ce l'ha fatta.
Possiamo andare a prenderla tra un paio di giorni.
Due giorni per l'amor di Dio,
non potevano avvisarci prima?
- 8.1 La terra si muove come una mandria ordinata
- 9.1 Devo smetterla. Devo togliermela dalla mente.
È inutile continuare a rimuginare.
Sono felice che abbia trovato una casa in cui andare.
Questo panino è di plastica.
- 10.1 Mi sono scordata di mettere lo zucchero nella borraccia.
L'uomo dall'altra parte del tavolo continua a fissarmi.
Avrei dovuto comprare un altro libro -
tutto quello che fa questo personaggio è baciare e chiedere scusa
- 11.1 andarsene e ritornare,
siamo tutti sciocchi ad avere fiducia.
Mi piaceva l'inverno
i luoghi deserti, l'aria fresca.

In the first stanza (7) of the last part (March) the expression *for Christ's sake* is equivalent to the interjection *for God's sake* and in this context it expresses surprise mixed with worry, since the adoptive mother has been informed that she can pick her baby up in a pair of days. In Italian the expression *per l'amor di Cristo* is not used, but *per l'amor di Dio* is very common; *Two days for Christ's sake* became *Due giorni per l'amor di Dio*.

In the ninth stanza the pronoun *it*, in *Put it out my mind*, does not make reference to something mentioned before and so I had to interpret its meaning; it is likely that the pronoun refers to the daughter, since the mother has just given her away. The sentence can be rendered by *Devo togliermela dalla testa*.

In the second line of the eleventh stanza I replaced the couple preposition + noun with verb + noun: *we are all foolish with trust* became *siamo tutti sciocchi ad avere paura*.

- 12.1 Quando arrivai a casa
uscii in giardino –
la brina lasciava il segno sui miei vecchi stivali marroni –
e scavai un buco della grandezza della mia bambina
- 12.5 e vi seppellii i vestiti che le avevo comunque comprato.
Una settimana più tardi ero alla mia finestra
e vidi la terra muoversi e sperare
in un raccolto,
fu lì che iniziò a piangere.
- 12.10 Allora mi dedicai a lei, cantai
Ye banks and braes³, piantai
un cespuglio di rose, lessi il Libro di Giobbe,
mi maledissi per aver scavato un buco per la mia bambina
per aver sparso la cenere del focolare.
- 12.15 Tardi quella stessa notte
entrò dalla finestra,
il mio piccolo Lazzaro
e succhiò dal mio seno.

3 *Ye banks and braes* è una canzone popolare scozzese, che è stata scritta dal noto poeta e compositore Robert Burns nel 1791. Il titolo con cui è maggiormente conosciuta è *The Banks O' Doon*. La canzone ha come soggetto la triste storia d'amore di una ragazza scozzese, abbandonata dal suo innamorato dopo essere stata sedotta con l'inganno: (<http://www.borealismusic.co.uk/doonanalysis.html>).

In the parenthetical clause enclosed in dashes (“- the frost bit my old brown boots”) the verb *to bite* is used with a figurative sense, since frost can not snap at something. Instead of using the Italian equivalent verb *mordere*, I preferred to retain the image explicating it: - *la brina lasciava il segno sui miei vecchi stivali marroni* -. In this line I left the adjective *vecchi* before the noun, while I postponed to it the adjective *marroni*. In lines seven and eight it is described a vision of the birth mother, who feels so guilty for abandoning of her baby that she goes mad. She buries her baby’s clothes in the garden and a few days later she sees the ground moving and something arises; she starts to take care of her imaginary baby, who visits her at night. In the translation I did not sacrifice the original image, but I simplified the second part in terms of numbers of words: *e vidi la terra muoversi e sperare / in un raccolto* (“and saw the ground move and swell / the promise of a crop”). Halfway through this last stanza (line 11) we meet the title of a Scots song written by Robert Burns in 1791: *Ya banks and braes*, better known as *The banks o’ Doon*. I kept the original name of the song, but I put a footnote, where I explained who wrote it, when and what it is about. The Italian translators of Burns translated the title with *Le rive del Doon*, but since the overwhelming majority of the readers would not know this song, I preferred to maintain the Scottish title and remain faithful to the original text.

Capitolo 5: Il Sogno del Cappello in Tweed

1.1 Oggi chiamo l'agenzia di consulenza di Edimburgo.

Potete iniziare a rintracciarla attraverso i certificati di matrimonio?

Ci vorranno tre settimane cosa ti aspetti da tutto ciò.

Se mi vuole incontrare bene in caso contrario

1.5 andrà bene lo stesso.

2.1 Questa mattina telefona la consulente

ha trovato qualcuno che potrebbe essere lei

non ne è certa; conosco il nome di mia nonna?

Peccato. Si farà viva, non sa quando.

Chapter 5

The last chapter of part one (chapter five) is entitled *The Tweed Hat Dream* and it is composed by five stanzas; the voices belong to the daughter and the adoptive mother. The counselling agency communicates to the daughter that they have found someone who might be her birth mother, but the adopted woman wonders if finding out her origins has a meaning after so a long time; furthermore, she considers her adoptive mother her real mum, since she is the woman who has brought her up. The adoptive mother describes a dream she had. Her baby's birth mother turns up at the door with a tweed hat on and asks to see her baby; the woman is in the daughter's bedroom for a long time and so the adoptive mother goes to the room to check, but once there she only finds the woman's hat in the cot.

The second line of the first stanza is direct speech reported without speech marks ("Can you start to trace through marriage certificates?"), while the third is an example of free indirect speech, which lacks punctuation ("*It will take three weeks what do you expect from it.*"). I did not add the inverted commas to point out the direct speech (Potete iniziare a rintracciarla attraverso il certificato di matrimonio?), nor I put a full stop after *weeks* to divide the two sentences, making the passage more clear: *Ci vorranno tre settimane. Cosa ti aspetti da tutto ciò.* The lack of punctuation is one of the main traits of stream of consciousness, which, as a specific characteristic of the poetic sequence, has to be preserved.

In the last line of the second stanza there is another example of free indirect speech, which consists of one single word written in italics: *pity*. The word may be rendered with *peccato*: the counselling woman asks the daughter if she knows her grandmother's name, but she does not, and since the name could be useful to find the biological mother, the counsellor expresses her regret.

- 3.1 Sua madre compare alla porta
con un cappello di tweed. Penso
che il tweed non le si addica, è troppo giovane.
In tutti questi mesi non avevo mai dato un volto a colei
- 3.5 che assomiglia a mia figlia – perciò immaginatemi
quando vedo quelle labbra. Sembra il suo ritratto sputato
tranne per il fatto che è bianca; di un bianco luminoso.
Con il suo delicato tono delle Highlands dice
Mi permette di vederla? Me lo permette?
- 3.10 Cosa potevo fare? Arriva dal nulla
come il vento in una bufera, sale le scale
come se conoscesse già la casa,
prende in braccio la mia bambina e le accarezza di continuo le guance
finché mi stufo e dico, sarò giù.
- 4.1 Accendo il bollitore, forse
del tè caldo renderà più rosse quelle guance,
preparo un piatto di biscotti che continuano
a scivolare sul pavimento.
- 4.5 È stata al piano di sopra per un sacco di tempo.
Non so da dove mi sia venuta l'idea
ma all'improvviso mi ritrovo a salire le scale
con impeto. Il suo cappello di tweed
- 4.10 è nella culla. È tutto.
- 5.1 Quella notte mi sono rigirata fino all'alba
qualche gene, del sangue, un parto.
Tutta questa seccatura, questi certificati, queste carte.
Risale tutto a molto tempo fa. Ha davvero importanza?
- 5.5 Ora io discendo da lei,
dalla madre che ha rubato i miei denti da latte
che ha mangiato il biscotto per Babbo Natale

In the second line of the third stanza there is a culturally specific term, which refers to the kind of fabric of the birth mother's hat, that is tweed. Even if tweed is a typical Scottish woollen fabric, it is well known worldwide, and so I did not need to translate it, to find a cultural equivalent or to put a footnote to explain what it is. A few lines below (line 8) there is another cultural reference: the adoptive mother says that the birth mother speaks in a *soft Highland voice*, referring to a particular Scottish accent and way of speaking. In my translation I keep the cultural feature (*delicate tono delle Highlands*), since I want to keep all elements that define the autobiographical tendency.

In translating the request that the birth mother makes of the adoptive mother ("can you let me see her? Can you?", line 9), I used the polite form, since the two women do not know each other: *Mi permette di vederla? Me lo permette?*. In the following two lines (10,11) there is a simile, that compares the swift way in which the biological mother arrives to the wind in a storm: *What could I do? She comes in swift/as wind in a storm, rushes up the stairs.* I understood that the mother blows in and so I rendered the simile with *arriva dal nulla/come il vento in una bufera*.

In the fourth stanza there is another simile, which is used to make a comparison between the adoptive mother's way of going upstairs and thunder: *but suddenly I'm pounding the stairs/like thunder* (line 8,9). In this case I did not maintain the rhetorical device, but I paraphrased the comparison to give the reader the image of the original text (Chesterman, Wagner 2002: 66): *ma all'improvviso mi ritrovo a salire le scale/con impeto* (with rush).

In the last line of the last stanza (5) there is a culturally specific aspect linked with typical English food: a digestive biscuit is a round and hard semi-sweet biscuit, whose name derived from the sodium bicarbonate contained, which has digestive properties. In the translation I opted for the removal of the cultural reference and I translated *digestive* with its superordinate *biscuit*. *Ate the digestive left for Santa* became *che ha mangiato il biscotto per Babbo Natale*. Also Santa is a cultural feature, since this is the name with which Anglophones call the mythical man who brings gifts on 24 December, and I rendered it with its cultural equivalent Babbo Natale.

PARTE DUE: 1967-1971 Capitolo 6: La Rivelazione

- 1.1 La mia mamma mi ha comprata al negozio
La mia mamma dice che ero una bimba adorabile

- 2.1 La mia mamma mi ha scelto (Ero la migliore)
la tua mamma ha dovuto prendere te (non ha avuto scelta)

- 3.1 La mia mamma dice di non essere la mia vera mamma
(mi prende solo in giro)

Part Two – Chapter 6

Part two describes the events that happened between 1967 and 1971; it consists of two chapters and the first is entitled *The Telling Part* (La Rivelazione). The voices belong to the daughter and the adoptive mother, while the birth mother appears only indirectly in their narration. When the daughter is six years old, the adoptive mother decides to reveal that she is not her real mum; the topic of the chapter is the narration of this delicate moment and the description of the reactions and emotions of the two characters. The mother believes that the truth can not be kept secret and she is fully convinced that she would do the right thing in telling her daughter, but she suffers because this revelation is something that will upset her girl. She is also worried that she may lose her daughter now that she has the possibility to meet her other mother. The woman underlines that even if she is not her biological mother, it is as if she was: she cries at her losses, laughs at her pleasures and above all, she sees herself in her daughter's mannerisms and way of speaking. On the other hand, the little daughter has not really understood what her mother told her and she is scared that her mum could vanish at any moment. The girl starts to tell of herself as of a child who is different from her peers; she says that everyone thinks she and her best friend are old-fashioned girls.

In the first three stanzas there are some examples of mangled words, since the daughter is six years old and does not use Standard English: instead of *my* mummy, she says *ma* mammy, instead of *lovely*, she uses *luvly* and instead of *bought*, *bot*. Furthermore, her language is characterized by the use of Scottish dialect terms, which she has learnt from her mother (in the previous chapter we observed that sometimes the adoptive mother uses Scottish dialect). In *ma mammy bot me oot a shop* (stanza 1, line 1), the adverb *oot* stands for *out* and in *Ma mammy picked me (I wiz the best)* (stanza 2, line 1) the word *wiz* is the Simple Past *was*. In the translation I used a simple language, suitable for a child of six years old, but I did not mangle words or used dialect terms: *La mia mamma mi ha comprata al negozio / La mia mamma dice che ero una bambina adorabile / La mia mamma mi ha scelto (ero la migliore)*. As before, I decided to translate dialect terms into neutral language. As far as mangled words are concerned, I opted not to reproduce them in the Italian translation, because I considered them a matter of correspondence between written language and pronunciation. Since in Italian the pronunciation does not differ from written language like in English, I just used simple but correct words.

Translation

- 4.1 È un po' come una parte studiata molto a fondo
che poi non riesci a recitare la serata di apertura
Lei dice che la mia vera mamma è molto lontana da qui
Mamma perché tu ed io non siamo dello stesso colore
- 4.5 Ma io amo la mia mamma sia che lei sia vera sia che non lo sia
Il mio cuore iniziò a fare bum bum bum come un tamburo
tutte le parole decollarono verso un altro pianeta
Perché
- 5.1 Ma io amo la mia mamma sia che lei sia vera sia che non lo sia
- 6.1 Riuscivo a sentire la confusione nella sua voce
dico *non sono la tua vera mamma*,
eppure Cristo sa perché l'ho detto,
Se non lo sono io chi lo è, ma tutto il mio bel discorso
- 6.5 volò dalla finestra
- 7.1 Mi prese quando non avevo dove andare
la mia mamma è la miglior mamma al mondo OK.

In the sixth line of the fourth stanza there is an example of onomatopoeia, that is a word which phonetically reproduces sounds and noises (Cuddon 1982: 453). In this case the expression *rat tat tat* suggests the sound of a drum and it is compared through a simile to the beats of the adoptive mother's heart: she is all shook up because she has to explain to her daughter why they are not the same colour. In Italian when someone wants to evoke the sound of a drum it is used the onomatopoeic sound *bum bum bum*, which can be considered the equivalent of *rat tat tat*: *Il mio cuore iniziò a fare bum bum bum come un tamburo* ("My heart started rat tat tat like a tin drum").

In the sixth stanza (line 4) I expressed the meaning of planned speech with *bel discorso* (literally *nice speech*), since in Italian the expression can be used to indicate a speech that has been prepared for a long time, and so that it is perfect in all its details, that can not fail in its purpose. As far as the last line (5) is concerned ("went out the window"), I did not translate the verb to go out into *uscire* (literal translation), but I gave it the meaning of flying, since in the previous stanza the adoptive mother says that her words took off to another planet: *tutto il mio bel discorso / volò dalla finestra*.

8.1 Dopo che la mamma mi disse che non era la mia vera mamma
Ero terrorizzata che svanisse

o qualcos'altro o che magari scomparisse nel cuore
della notte e qualcuno avrebbe detto che era

8.5 una fata madrina. Così la mattina seguente toccai la sua pelle
per controllare che fosse carne, ma forse era solo
una buona imitazione. Come facevo a dire se la mia mamma
era un pupazzo con la voce di qualcun altro?

Così cercai per tutta la casa degli indizi

8.10 ma non trovai mai nulla. Comunque un giorno dopo
ricevetti il mio porcellino d' India e mi dimenticai di tutto.

9.1 Ho sempre creduto nell'essere sinceri in ogni situazione.

Non puoi tenere una cosa del genere segreta
volevo pensasse che lì fuori la sua altra madre
stava pensando a quella sua bambina che avrà

9.5 oggi sette anni oggi otto e così fino
a sa Dio quando. Ho detto a mia figlia –
sono sicura che tua madre non ha mai dimenticato il tuo compleanno,
come potrebbe?

In the eighth stanza we find other examples of Scottish dialect terms. In the first line (“After mammy telt me she wisnae my real mammy”), *telt* stands for *told* and *wisnae* stands for *was not*. In line two *she was gonnie melt* means *she was going to melt*, while in line three and six the word *mibbe* is the mangled word of *mebbe*, which means *may be*. In lines four we find the word *wis*, which stands for *was* and which is synonym of *wiz* (a term that I mentioned analysing the beginning of the chapter). I rendered all these dialect words with neutral language, as I did for the previous cases. In the last line (11) I translated guinea pig into porcellino d’ India, since this is the term with which the cavy is known in Italy. This animal is neither from Guinea nor from India, but it comes from the Andes; the two different names are two cultural specific terms, which indicate the same animal.

In the first line of the ninth stanza (“I always believed in the telling anyhow”) I made a shift, changing the word class from noun to verb + adjective: *the telling* has been translated into *essere sinceri*. Three lines below (4) I converted the first person narration into third person narration, making a significant shift from direct speech to indirect speech; I got rid of the direct speech of the biological mother, who became part of the narration of the adoptive mother. I translated *that child I had* into *quella sua bambina* (“I wanted her to think of her other mother/out there, thinking that child I had will be” became “volevo pensasse che lì fuori la sua altra mamma / stava pensando a quella sua bambina che avrà”).

Translation

- 10.1 Il viso della mamma è una ciliegia.
Mescola la zuppa di montone nel pentolone
cantando *Ho dato al mio amore una ciliegia
era senza nocciolo.*
- 10.5 Le arrivo al grembiule.
Salto sui suoi piedi e mi aggrappo alle sue gambe
come un enorme paio di pantaloni,
cammina per la cucina sollevandomi.
- 11.1 All'improvviso scivolo dai suoi piedi.
E la mamma cade sul pavimento.
Non smette di cantare la canzone
Ho dato al mio amore del pollo era senza osso.
- 11.5 Sono corsa alla porta accanto per chiedere aiuto.
Quando lo zio Alec ed io torniamo
La pelle della mamma è caramello appiccicato al pavimento
E le sue ossa sono sparpagliate come giocattoli.
- 12.1 Ora quando la gente dice "ah ma
non è come avere un figlio proprio vero",
io dico certo che lo è, cos'altro è?
lei è la mia bambina, le ho raccontato le storie
- 12.5 ho pianto per le sue sconfitte, ho riso per le sue gioie,
lei è mia.
- 13.1 Ero sempre la prima a sentirla durante la notte
tutta questa questione sul legame ombelicale non ha senso
- l'uomo può permettersi il sonno pesante è semplice.
Sono rimasta in ascolto per sentirla parlare,
- 13.5 e quando l'ha fatto ho riconosciuto la mia voce nella sua
e ora alcuni suoi modi di fare mi fanno piegare dal ridere

In the first line of stanza ten there is a metaphor, which compares the adoptive mother's face to cherries, meaning that it is flushed. In Italian when someone has a flushed face, he/she is compared to a tomato, but since this would not be a sweet and delicate image, I maintained the original comparison and I translated *mammy's face is cherries* into *il viso della mamma è una ciliegia*. Two lines below (3) we find the word *cherry* again and this is the reason why I chose not to find an equivalent Italian lullaby, but I translated the English one. The recurrence of the word in the same stanza can not be a chance, since in poetry nothing is nonsense and the author always knows what he/she wants to say (Newmark 1988: 34). *I gave my love a cherry / it had no stone* became *ho dato al mio amore una ciliegia / era senza nocciolo*.

The lullaby continues in the following stanza: *I gave my love a chicken it had no bone* turned into *ho dato al mio amore del pollo era senza osso*.

The proper name Alec is the Scottish version of Alex; in the translation I did not translate it or converted it to neutral language, since it is just a name of a person which does not have any particular meaning.

In the twelfth stanza we find the first example of direct speech indicated by speech marks: *Now when people say 'ah but / it's not like having your own child though is it'*.

In the translation I kept the direct speech, but instead of using the single quotation marks, I made use of the double marks, since in Italian they are more commonly used to report direct speech than in English: *ora quando la gente dice "ah ma / non è come avere un figlio proprio vero*.

Translation

- 14.1 La mia miglior amica ed io
non abbiamo Donny Osmond o David Cassidy
appesi alle pareti e nemmeno indossiamo i pullover
di Starsky e Hutch. In giro per casa sua accendiamo
- 14.5 il vecchio giradischi imitando Pearl Bailey
Stufo della vita che conduco, stufo del blues che produco
e Bessie Smith Sono persa senza il mio chef.
Poi ci esercitiamo con il ballo da sala ridacchiando,
tutti pensano che siamo del tutto fuori moda.

In the last stanza we find the names of four famous American people, who may not be familiar with the Italian readership: Donny Osmond and David Cassidy are two actors and singers who were famous in the '70s, Pearl Bailey was an actress and singer and Bessie Smith was the most popular black jazz singer of the '20s and '30s. I did not put a footnote to explain who they are, since it is clear from the context that the men are two examples of celebrity among young people, while the women are two examples of old-fashion icons. The author wants to convey the idea that the daughter is different from her peers and in order to understand it, explaining who these American people are is not necessary. Starsky and Hutch are the characters of the homonymous American television series, which has had a worldwide success and so the problem does not exist at all.

Capitolo 7: Black Bottom

- 1.1 Forse è il motivo per cui non mi piace
tutto questo parlare della sua pelle nera,
l'ho allevata come se fosse mia
come avrei fatto con qualunque altro bambino
- 1.5 il colore importa agli svitati;
ma lei dice mia figlia dice
che a lei importa
- 2.1 Credo ci sarebbero state cose
che non avrei capito con nessun bambino,
sapevamo che era di colore.
Prima ci avevano detto che non avevano bambini
- 2.5 e io azzardai che non importava di che colore fosse
e loro dissero *oh beh siete sicuri*
se è così abbiamo un neonato per voi –
pensare che non era nemmeno stata considerata una bambina,
la mia bambina, la mia bambina

Chapter 7

The second chapter of Part two (chapter 7) is entitled *Black Bottom* and I did not translate it, since it refers to a popular dance of the 1920s (Jazz Age), which is known with the same name everywhere. In this chapter we find the voices of all characters. The birth mother recalls her lover, Olubayo, and describes their passionate love with nostalgia, saying that she looked for him in her daughter. The daughter tells of some episodes of racialism she suffered at school not only at the hands of her mates, but also of her teacher: children call her Sambo or Dirty Darkie and the teacher compares her to coal and makes fun of her in front of the whole class. As a consequence, during primary school, she starts to feel different and suffers. The girl dedicates many lines to Angela Davis, the only woman she has seen who looks like her and who has become her heroine: on her bedroom wall there is a big poster of her and she wears a badge which says Free Angela Davis. The adoptive mother reflects upon the ignorance of people who care about colour and expresses her difficulties in trying to comfort her daughter.

In the first line (“Maybe that’s why I don’t like) I made a shift, changing the word class from conjunction to noun; instead of translating *why* into *perchè* I used the word *motivo* (reason): *forse è il motivo per cui non mi piace*. With the following line (“all this talk about her being black”) we understand that the colour of the daughter will be a factor, which will contribute to her reflections on her identity and which will influence her relationship with people and more generally her life.

In the second stanza (line 6) we find an example of direct speech, which does not have speech marks but which is indicated by the use of italics (“and they said *oh well are you sure / in that case we have a baby for you-*“). Since the English pronoun *you* can refer both to the second person singular and to the second person plural, I had to interpret it and I chose to give it the plural acceptation, as if the social workers are not answering the mother, but are speaking to both parent. I rendered the two lines with “e loro dissero *oh beh siete sicuri / se è così abbiamo un neonato per voi-*“.

Translation

- 3.1 Dal cancello della scuola inseguo il suo *Sambo Sambo*⁴ fino in fondo.
Afferro la giacca a vento - Come mi hai chiamato? Dillo di nuovo.
Sam-bo. Pronuncia la parola come una palla che rimbalza
ma i suoi occhi si muovono veloci come una pallina da ping-pong.
- 3.5 Lo spingo contro il muro,
dillo un'altra volta piccola merda. *Sambo, sambo*, ora sta piangendo
- 4.1 Gli do una ginocchiata sulle palle. Cos'è che hai detto?
Il mio pugno è d'acciaio; lo colpisco e ricolpisco allo stomaco.
Scusa non ti ho sentito? Le sue lacrime gocciolano come cera.
Niente emette a fatica *non ho detto niente*.
- 4.5 Lo lascio andare. È un ratto che corre. Si volta
e grida *Sporca Negra* lo seguo di nuovo.
Dei capelli biondi nella mia mano. Ma insomma!
Questa maestra di quinta elementare ci ferma.
Nomi? Domani vi porterò dal preside.
- 4.10 Ma maestra. Risparmialo per il Signor Thompson dice

4. Sambo è un termine che veniva utilizzato in età coloniale per indicare individui con origini miste, africane e amerindie, o persone nate da uno schiavo nero e un bianco. Oggigiorno è considerato un termine dispregiativo e dunque offensivo.

At the beginning of the third stanza we find the word *Sambo*, a racist term for a person with African heritage or mixed with Native American heritage, that came into the English language in colonial times. I opted to put a footnote where I explained the meaning of the epithet and its connotation, since the offensive term is unknown to Italian speakers. In the second line (“A fistful of anorak”) I replaced the noun *fistful* with the verb *afferrare* (to snatch), getting the translation *afferro la giacca a vento*; I preferred to express the action through a verb rather than through a noun. In lines three and four there are two similes, which concern the boy that offended the daughter: the first one compares his way of pronouncing the word *sambo* to a bouncing ball, while the second one makes a comparison between the movement of his eyes and a ping-pong ball. He is shameless and insolent, but at the same time he is alert because he knows that he is irritating her and she will revenge. In the original text the author refers to the game of ping-pong without mentioning the ball, while in my translation I made explicit the reference to it: *Sam-bo. He plays the word like a bouncing ball/ but his eyes move fast as ping pong became Sam-bo. Pronuncia la parola come una palla che rimbalza / ma I suoi occhi si muovono veloci come una pallina da ping pong*. In the last line (6) we find an example of foul language: the girl calls the boy *wee shite*. The presence of swearwords underlines once more the informal register used in the text. Sometimes translating swearwords from one language to another can be difficult, since literal correspondence does not always exist, but in this case, like in the following one, the equivalence is obvious. *Shite* corresponds to the Italian word *merda*, so I translated *say that again you wee shite* into *dillo un'altra volta piccola merda*.

At the beginning of the fourth stanza the girl used the colloquial term *balls* instead of the formal term *testicles*; also in Italian we use the same expression and so I literally translated *I knee him in the balls* into *gli do una ginocchiata sulle palle*.

A few lines below (8) we find a cultural reference, which concerns the Scottish scholastic system. In Scotland primary school lasts seven years and children attend it until they are eleven years old; the last year (7) of primary school in Scotland corresponds to the last year (5) of elementary school in Italy. In the text the daughter mentions primary seven year and I translated it with its cultural correspondent: *questa maestra di quinta elementare ci ferma* (“This teacher from primary seven stops us”).

Translation

- 5.1 Il viso della mia maestra abbozza un sorrisetto
Le sue lunghe unghie tamburellano sulla nota bene bene
vedo che ieri hai litigato, di nuovo.
Fra pochi anni diventerai una giovane delinquente.
- 5.5 Sai cosa significa? Cerca nel dizionario.
Fa lo spelling di ogni lettera compiacendosi lentamente.
Leggilo alla classe.
Criminale. Vandalò. Teppista. Alza la voce. Hai perso la lingua?
- 6.1 Ad essere onesti non ci penso quasi mai
tranne quando accade qualcosa, sapete
stupide chiacchiere sui negri. Razzismo.
Madri che mi suonano il campanello con i loro bambini
- 6.5 in lacrime Glielo dica. Glielo dica. Glielo dica.
-No. Lei dica alla sua bimba di smettere di chiamare
con nomignoli la mia piccola e io dirò alla mia piccola
di smettere di importunare la sua bimba.
- 7.1 Stiamo facendo le prove per lo spettacolo scolastico
sto cercando di ballare il Cha Cha e il Black Bottom
ma non riesco a fare i passi giusti
il mio piede destro a sinistra e il mio piede sinistro a destra
- 7.5 la mia insegnante grida dal fondo
della classe Dai, facci vedere

In the fifth stanza the direct speech and the narration alternate and speech marks are not used to distinguish the first from the second. In the line *her long nails scratch the note well well / I see you were fighting yesterday, again*, the direct speech begins all of a sudden, it seems part of the narration, since it is not separated from it by a full stop or capital letter. My translation is faithful to the original text, since the unclear structure is not accidental, but it is expression of the author's will: *le sue lunghe unghie tamburellano sulla nota bene bene / vedo che ieri hai litigato, di nuovo*. Translators usually tend to explicit things, to make them more explicit than they are in the source text, risking betraying it. "You can see this in the way translators tend to dislike ambiguities and unclear structures, the way they use pronouns and connectors, the way things that were implicit in the original often become more explicit in the translation, and so on." (Chesterman 2002: 30).

In the third line of the sixth stanza the adoptive mother addresses the reader: *you know / daft talk about darkies. Racialism*. Since the personal pronoun *you* can refer to a second person both singular and plural, I had to choose how to render it in the Italian version. I imagined she would direct to the whole readership, so I opted to convey the pronoun a plural connotation: *sapete / stupide chiacchiere sui neri. Razzismo*.

A pair of lines below (5), I replaced the gerund *crying* ("Mothers ringing my bell with their kids/crying.") with the expression *in lacrime* (in tears), since the word *tear* belongs to the same semantic field of the verb *to cry*.

In the seventh stanza the daughter tells of the school show she is practising for and she mentions the Cha Cha and the Black Bottom. They are two different kinds of dance, which are known worldwide with their original names, so I did not need to translate them or to find their Italian equivalents.

Translation

- 8.1 Cosa sai fare pensavo
che la gente come te ce lo avesse nel sangue.
La mia pelle è calda come un carbone ardente
tipo quella volta in cui disse i negri sono come il carbone
- 8.5 di fronte all'intera classe – il mio sangue
cosa intende? Pensavo
- 9.1 che avrebbe smesso con tutto ciò dopo che l'ultima volta
mio papà le ha parlato al colloquio con i genitori
gli altri bambini sono tranquilli fino a quando lei non inizia;
i miei piedi vanno fuori tempo, il mio cuore inizia
- 9.5 a perdere battiti come quando la sera non riesco a dormire –
Cosa c'è nel mio sangue? La campanella suona, è ora.
- 10.1 A volte è difficile trovare le parole giuste
per dare conforto. Noi due sulla poltrona;
aspetta che le dica qualcosa, ' sono ignoranti
beviamoci del tè e mangiamoci un po' di torta, dimenticali'.

In line four we find an ethnic slur, *darkies*, which is used by the teacher to insult the girl on the basis of her skin colour; this word has a negative connotation and can be rendered with the Italian term *negri*, which causes deep offence among black people.

The word *coal* appears two times in similes within two lines: after the umpteenth offense, the girl feels hot as if she was a burning coal, like that time when the teacher said that black people are like coal in front of the class. The repetition is intentional, as in the previous chapter, where the author mentioned the word *cherry* two times in the same stanza. Thus, in the translation I did not resort to a synonym to render one of the two occurrences, but I use the equivalent Italian term *carbone*: *my skin is hot as burning coal / like that time she said Darkies are like coal* turned into *la mia pelle è calda come un carbone ardente / tipo quella volta in cui disse i negri sono come il carbone* (lines 3, 4).

In the third line of the ninth stanza (“the other kids are all right till she starts”) I understood that the girl’s schoolmates do not make fun of her until the teacher begins with her racist comments. The context defines the meaning of “all right kids” and I used the adjective *tranquilli* (quiet) to convey the original image: *gli altri bambini sono tranquilli fino a quando lei non inizia*.

- 11.1 Forse è proprio Bette Davis che voglio essere
la gemella buona o ancora meglio quella cattiva
o una tata che annega un neonato in una vasca.
Non sono sicura forse preferirei che Katherine
- 11.5 Hepburn mi scompigliasse i capelli rossi, con la sua
irascibilità. Dico alla mia insegnante Non è che potrei essere
Elizabeth Taylor, alcolizzata e grassa e lei
si limitò a ridere, ben poche possibilità.
Andai ad un'audizione per *La strana voglia*
- 11.10 *di Jean*. Non ottenni una parte
anche se recitavo da più a lungo
di Beverley Innes. È così. Davvero.
- 12.1 Olubayo aveva il colore della torba
quando passeggiavamo le teste si voltavano
come quelle dei cavalli, la gente restava impalata come alberi
i loro occhi fissi su di noi – mi faceva
- 12.5 avvampare, quello sguardo attraente; il sudore
della mia mano penetra fino alle sue ossa.
Infine, soli, ci siamo fusi
niente, niente avrebbe importato
- 13.1 Non l'ha mai vista. L'ho cercato in lei;
per un attimo è stato come se fosse stato lì
in quell'incubatrice a guardarmi attraverso lei.

Bette Davis, Katherine Hepburn and Elizabeth Taylor were three very famous actresses, the first two were American, while the last one came from Britain. Since they played important parts in well-known films, they are familiar also to the Italian readership; I did not need to put any footnote to explain who they are and moreover knowing them is not essential in order to understand the meaning of the stanza.

The prime of Miss Jean Brodie has a double translation in Italian: if we consider the novel written by Muriel Spark the title is *Gli anni fulgenti di Miss Brodie*, if we talk about Jay Presson Allen's theatrical piece or Ronald Neame's film we refer to it with *La strana voglia di Jean*. Since the girl is speaking about an audition and says that she has been acting longer than the girl who got the part, she is referring to theatre and I translated the original title with *La strana voglia di Jean*.

In the translation of the lines *my hand / would sweat down to his bone* (stanza 12, lines 5,6) the subject became genitive case and the verb turned into subject: *il sudore / della mia mano penetra fino alle sue ossa*. The author uses a metaphor to portray the intensity of the love relationship between the biological mother and Olubayo, the man with which she had the baby.

Translation

- 14.1 Sulla parete della mia camera c'è un grande poster
di Angela Davis⁵ che è in prigione
proprio ora per non aver fatto nulla
tranne non volersi rassegnare.
- 14.5 Mia mamma dice che ha *solo* 26 anni
a me sembra molto vecchia
ma mia mamma dice che è giovane
prova ad immaginare, dice, di essere
nella Lista delle Dieci Persone Più Ricercate d'America a 26 anni!
- 14.10 Non ci riesco.
Angela Davies è l'unica persona di sesso femminile
che ho visto (tranne un' infermiera in tv)
che mi assomiglia. Ha un cespuglio di capelli come il mio
che si allarga attorno alla testa invece che crescere in lunghezza.
- 14.15 Mia mamma dice che si chiama *Afro*.
Se potessi essere coraggiosa quanto lei da grande
sarei felice.
La scorsa notte le ho dato di nuovo il bacio della buonanotte
e mi sono chiesta se riuscisse a sentire i baci
- 14-20 in prigione fin dalla Scozia.

5. Angela Davies è un'attivista del movimento afroamericano statunitense. Il 7 agosto 1970 un gruppo di attivisti delle Pantere Nere, un'organizzazione rivoluzionaria afroamericana, rapisce il giudice Harold Haley durante il processo contro tre detenuti neri appartenenti alla medesima organizzazione. Il sequestro finisce in tragedia, poiché nella fuga vengono tutti uccisi dai colpi di pistola esplosi dai poliziotti. Alcune delle armi utilizzate nel sequestro sono intestate alla donna e viene così accusata di rapimento, costrizione e omicidio. Dopo un breve periodo di latitanza viene catturata e rinchiusa in carcere con la condanna alla camera a gas; al processo, tenutosi circa tre mesi dopo l'arresto, viene assolta con formula piena (Davis 1975).

The last two stanzas of the seventh chapter are devoted to Angela Davis. She is an American political activist, who was a leader of the Communist Party in the 1960s and who was involved in the Civil Rights Movement. The adoptive parents belong to the same political group and embrace her cause: in 1970 she was unjustly charged of conspiracy in the attack of a Californian courtroom, in which four people were killed and she was arrested. Angela Davis became the daughter's heroine because of her story and because she is the first female person she has seen who looks like her: she is a black woman. Since this personality is of great importance for the daughter, I considered essential to put a footnote with some information about her life. I opted for this solution also because the Italian readership may not be familiar with the story of the politician, being part of American history.

- Anche la sua pelle è la stessa come sapete.
Vedo che la mia pelle è di quel colore
ma il più delle volte lo dimentico,
così talvolta quando mi guardo allo specchio
- 14.25 mi viene un colpo
e mi dico *Sei davvero così?*
come se fossi qualcun altro. Mi chiedo se anche lei lo faccia.
- 15.1 Non credo che abbia ucciso qualcuno.
È solo un mucchio di false bugie.
Mio padre dice che è stata incastrata.
Gli ho chiesto se dovrà andare sulla sedia elettrica
- 15.5 come quei Roseberry di cui mi parlava.
No dice che il mondo è dalla sua parte.
Beh e com'è che è finita lì allora penso.
Ho paura che la manderanno alla sedia.
Ho paura che abbia paura della sedia.
- 15.10 Mio papà dice che si farà coraggio.
Mi ha portato a casa una spilla che ho indossato
a scuola. Dice LIBERATE ANGELA DAVIS.
E tutti i miei compagni dicono 'Chi è?'

In line twenty one the daughter addresses the reader (“Her skin is the same too you know”) and, as in the previous case, I opted to give to the personal pronoun *you* the plural form, as if she is speaking to the whole readership: *anche la sua pelle è la stessa come saprete*.

In the second line of the last stanza (“It is all a load of phoney lies”, stanza 5) the adjective *phoney* is used to strengthen the concept of lie, since lies are inherently untrue; in my translation I gave the term *phoney* the meaning of false: *è solo un mucchio di false bugie*.

In the following line (“Ma dad says it’s a set up”) I made a shift in word class, from noun to verb, and I changed subject: instead of translating the noun *set up* with *imbroglio*, I used its corresponding verb *incastrare* and therefore the subject turned from *it* into *she* (“Mio padre dice che è stata incastrata”).

A few lines below (10) we find the idiomatic expression *to put on a brave face*, which means acting confident in a difficult situation without showing other people your real feelings. In my translation I rendered it with the Italian expression *farsi coraggio*: *my dad says she’ll be putting on a brave face* became *mio papà dice che si farà coraggio*.

Parte tre: 1980-1990 Capitolo 8: Generazioni

- 1.1 Il sole si spense all'improvviso
quasi come se non ci fosse mai stato,
ora è difficile immaginare come scese
sui rami più alti, sui tetti di paglia, sui volti delle persone.
- 1.5 Tutto d'un tratto gli alberi persero le forze
e il prato percorse il vento
filo d'erba dopo filo d'erba, veloce come i pettegolezzi
- 2.1 Anni dopo, le voci si fanno ancora sentire
soprattutto nei sogni, non sono echi distanti
forti – un martello pneumatico- più profonde ancora.
Ho vissuto la vergogna, l'ho indossata con disinvoltura
- 2.5 come un vestito estivo, come dei sandali alla schiava.
Tutto tranne il bisbiglio più delicato:
ha perso un' incredibile quantità di peso.

Part Three – Chapter 8

Part three describes the events that happened between 1980 and 1990. It consists of three chapters and the first (Chapter 8) is entitled *Generations* (Generazioni). The voices belong to the daughter and the biological mother, while the adoptive mother never appears, not even indirectly, in the narration. The daughter is in her twenties and reflects on her origins and identity; she would like to meet her birth mother, even only for one time, just to know what she looks like, how she speaks, moves and to discover something about her relatives and their lives. The young woman cannot understand why people give so much importance to lineage, since she states that the only blood that matters is the one which flows through the body. Many years later the biological mother is still stricken with remorse and she believes that somewhere her daughter thinks of her often, but that she has formed a wrong idea about who her real mother is.

In the third line of the first stanza (“hard to imagine now the way it fell”) I made a shift of lexical category, as I changed the noun *way* into the Italian adverb *come*, which corresponds to the English *how*: *ora è difficile immaginare come scese*.

Two lines below (5) we find the idiomatic expression to lose one’s nerves (“Suddenly the trees lost their nerves”), which means to lose courage, to become timid or frightened. Moreover, the idiom is used to create a personification since trees are not human and cannot feel emotions; trees lose courage in the sense that they lose their strength because the sun sets. In my translation I did not use an equivalent idiomatic expression, but I maintained the personification, even if I expressed the original image in a more direct way with ordinary language: *tutto d’un tratto gli alberi persero le forze*.

In the second stanza we find the word *scandal* (line 4), which can refer both to a shocking event, as can be the birth of a black child from an unmarried white woman in the ‘60s, and to the feeling of disgrace that derives from a such situation because of people’s judgement. I chose to translate the term into *vergogna* (disgrace), since I preferred to stress the feelings of the biological mother instead of the event in itself: *ho vissuto la vergogna, l’ho indossata con disinvoltura* (“I lived the scandal, wore it casual”).

- 3.1 Ora il mio segreto è il silenzio di pesanti tende tirate.
Temo le calligrafie sconosciute
qualche volta sobbalzo quando squilla il telefono,
ormai ha diciannove anni ed è legalmente capace.
- 3.5 La notte sto distesa ad esercitarmi con le mie scuse
ma 'scusa' non sembra mai abbastanza
e nemmeno ' Non posso vederti, sì, ti manderò una fotografia'.
- 4.1 Sono stata estratta con il forcipe
mi ha lasciato una ferita sulla guancia sinistra
quattro mesi in incubatrice
ma
- 4.5 lei venne fedele da Glasgow a Edimburgo
e mi fissava attraverso il vetro
lei non avrebbe scelto un altro bambino.
- 5.1 Non so quali malattie
derivino dalla mia discendenza;
quando il dentista e i dottori mi fanno
le solite vecchie domande sulla parentela
- 5.5 io dico loro: non ho naso o bocca o occhi
da confrontare, nessun ritratto sputato né certezze assolute,
il mio volto sì riflette sullo specchio.

In the second line of the third stanza (“I dread strange handwriting”) the adjective *strange* does not mean unusual but unfamiliar. The birth mother is afraid of being contacted by her daughter now that she is grown-up; she dreads receiving a phone call from an unknown number or finding a letter written in unknown handwriting. I rendered *strange* with *sconosciuto: temo le calligrafie sconosciute*.

The following stanza (4) is almost identical to the second stanza of the introductory page. Instead of being part of the following line, here the conjunction *but* in itself forms a line, which seems to divide the negative images from the positive ones. The daughter says that she was pulled out with forceps and that she stayed inside a glass cot for four months, but her adoptive mother went faithfully and hopefully to visit her and this gave her the strength to survive.

In the last line of the fifth stanza we find the noun *glass*, which in this context can stand for *mirror*; the daughter does not have any face to match with her own, but she is just what she can see in the mirror watching herself. *My face watches itself in the glass* became *il mio volto si riflette sullo specchio*.

- 6.1 I miei genitori non sono del mio stesso albero
e voi continuate a dargli importanza,
il sangue, il legame, le trasmissioni
generazionali.
- 6.5 Abbiamo tutti le nostre contraddizioni,
quelli con il naso della madre e gli occhi del padre
ce le hanno;
il sangue non pone ordine alla confusione,
eppure confesso la mia contraddizione
- 6.10 io voglio conoscere il mio sangue.
- 7.1 Io conosco il mio sangue.
È rubino rosso scuro e arriva
regolare e uso gli O.B.
Conosco il mio sangue quando mi taglio un dito.
- 7.5 So com'è il mio sangue.
- 8.1 È la fonte, il grembo, quel seme del cazzo.
Qui, sono molto lontana dall'immaginare –
come erano i loro visi
chi erano le mie nonne
- 8.5 com'erano i giorni
trascorsi in Scozia
il paese da cui vengo
la terra del mio sangue.

The line *I have my parents who are not of the same tree* (stanza 6, line 1) is composed by a main clause and a relative clause; “a relative clause is a special kind of subordinate clause whose primary function is as modifier to a noun or nominal” (Huddleston, Pullum 2005: 183). The relative clause here is introduced by the relative pronoun *who*, whose interpretation is provided by its antecedent *parents*. “The relation between a pronoun and its antecedent is called anaphora and it is a crucial property of relative clause that they always contain an element – actually present or understood – that is anaphorically related to an antecedent from which it derives its interpretation” (Huddleston, Pullum 2005: 183). In the translation I made a shift, transforming the original relative clause and its main clause into a simple sentence, since the literal translation is grammatically possible, but it may not correspond to the natural usage of Italian (Newmark, 1988: 85): *I miei genitori non sono del mio stesso albero*.

In the second line, the personal pronoun *you* may refer to the dentist and the doctors mentioned in the previous stanza, so I did not give the pronoun the singular form, but I translated it into *voi*. The personal pronoun can also be used to address those readers who attach too much importance to parentage.

In the following stanza (7) we find the name of an English brand which produces feminine hygiene products, among which tampons: Lillies. For the translation I found an equivalent Italian brand, that is O.B.

In the first line of the eighth stanza (“It is the well, the womb, the fucking seed”) the adjective *fucking* is an example of swear word, which in this context stands for *damned*. The daughter is fed up with people who cares about blood relationships and pours out her feelings and thoughts. The equivalent Italian words for *fucking* are *fottuto* and *del cazzo*; in my version (è la fonte, il grembo, il fottuto seme) I chose to translate it into *del cazzo*, since this equivalent seems to express at best the vulgarity of the expression used by the daughter: she is really at the end of her tether with those kind of people and their ideas.

Translation

- 9.1 Mettiamola così:
so che mi pensa spesso
quando il giorno si fa vivo
o il buio si nasconde dietro le colline,
- 9.5 lei mi fa apparire o compaio e basta
quando mi entra in testa, le mie pantofole
sono silenziose e vago da un stanza all'altra.
- 10.1 Lei è distesa a letto; la sveglio
un pizzicotto sulla guancia è sufficiente,
poi la faccio pensare a me per ore.
La miglior cosa che riesco a rubare è il sonno.
- 10.5 Mi metto proprio sotto al piumone e sussurro
Non conoscerai mai davvero tua madre.
So chi pensa che io sia – si sbagliata.
- 11.1 È senza volto
Non ha un naso
È alta un metro e settantadue
La cosa che preferisce è l'hockey
- 11.5 Oggi ha ventisei anni
Era una cameriera
I miei capelli sono grigi
Non indossa un vestito particolare
La pelle attorno al mio collo è rugosa
- 11.10 Mi immagina così?

In the ninth stanza the lines *when the light shows its face / or the dark skulls behind hills* (lines 3,4) represent two examples of personification; this figure of speech is very frequent in literature – especially in poetry – and it is used to attribute human qualities or abilities to inanimate elements (Cuddon 1982: 501). In the translation I turned *the light* into *the day*, since in this context they can be considered synonyms, but I maintained the original personification of both lines: *quando il giorno si fa vivo / o il buio si nasconde dietro le colline*.

Two lines below (6) I translated *when I take the notion* into *quando mi entra in testa*. When the biological mother starts to imagine that her daughter is thinking of her, she cannot get this thought out of her head and cannot sleep: *quando mi entra in testa, le mie pantofole / sono silenziose e vago da una stanza all'altra* (“When I take the notion, my slippers / are silent and I walk through doors”).

The eleventh stanza is where the thoughts of the daughter and the biological mother alternate at random. In the third line we find another example of Imperial units, which I converted into International system units. Feet are transformed into metres and inches into centimetres: *she is five foot eight inches tall* became *è alta un metro e settantaquattro*, since 1 foot corresponds to 0.308 meters and 1 inch is equivalent to 2.54 centimetres.

Lines five, seven, nine and ten (birth mother’s voice) are identical to the final lines of the introductory page, except for the question mark that follows the question *does she imagine me this way*, which previously was lacking in punctuation.

Da poco disegno suoi ritratti

Eppure riesco a vedere

È alta e magra

le sue mani minute, Sì

11.15 I suoi capelli sono riccioli sciolti

un opale sul suo dito medio

Stendo le braccia per afferrarla

Si sente molto il suo accento di Glasgow?

Ma non ha importanza quanto veloce

11.20 Forse si sono trasferiti anni fa

La inseguo

È senza volto, non piange

mai. Non ha né occhi né

zigomi definiti

12.1 Una volta potrebbe bastare,

soltanto per ascoltare la sua voce

guardare il modo in cui muove le mani

quando parla.

In line twelve I made a shift of word class, transforming the noun *smallness* into an adjective, since the corresponding Italian noun *minutezza* is very rarely used. I employed the adjective *minute* (minute) to describe the biological mother's hands, so the lines *But I can see the smallness/ of her hands* became *Eppure riesco a vedere/ le sue mani minute*.

In the first line of the last stanza (12) I translated the adverb *enough* into the verb *bastare* instead of using the corresponding Italian adjective *sufficiente*; in this way I made a shift in word class and the line *once would be enough* became *una volta potrebbe bastare*.

In the following line (“just to listen to her voice”, line 2) the adverb *just* means *merely*; the daughter would like to meet her mother and she says that one time could be enough, since the only wish she has is to have the opportunity to meet her: *soltanto per ascoltare la sua voce*.

Capitolo 9: La Telefonata

- 1.1 Ho il numero delle Highland di mia nonna
da quattro mesi nella mia agenda pronto all'uso.
- 2.1 Qualcosa questa mattina mi dà il coraggio
di chiudere la porta e comporre il numero.
- 3.1 La voce di mia nonna suona molto più giovane
'Anni fa lavoravo con sua figlia
- 4.1 Elizabeth, ha il suo indirizzo attuale?
Mi dispiace, dice. No, ma una delle mie figlie
- 5.1 *ce lo avrà.* Mi dà un altro numero delle Highland
augurandomi buona fortuna. *Come hai detto che ti chiami?*
- 6.1 Trenta minuti più tardi la sorella di mia madre
mi riempie di domande – *Dove lavoravi?*
- 7.1 *Quanti anni fa? Quanti anni hai?*
Quaranta mento. Per un attimo ho pensato..
- 8.1 *Ma se hai quarant'anni non puoi essere tu.*
So che lo sa. Il gioco è finito.

Chapter 9

The second chapter of Part three (chapter 9) is entitled *The Phone Call* (La telefonata) and consists of eleven couplets attributed to the daughter and a longer single stanza that expresses the adoptive mother's voice. The first part reproduces the phone conversations between the daughter and the birth mother's mother and sister: even if the daughter hides her identity, the grandmother understands who is speaking and gives the daughter the phone number of her aunt, who asks her many questions and finally leads her to reveal herself. The woman does not give the daughter her mother's address but she says that the mother will contact her at the appropriate time. The adoptive mother is afraid of being abandoned now that her daughter has got in touch with her biological mother and she bursts into tears in a fit of depression.

In the first couplet the daughter states that she had her grandmother's number for four months in her agenda and that it is waiting to be used; this image is conveyed by the number burning a hole in the daughter's filofax. Usually the expression *burn a hole* is combined with the word *pocket* in *have something burning a hole in one's pocket*, meaning that someone wants to spend his/her money as soon as possible when he/she has any. I turned *I have had my grandmother's Highland number / for four months now burning a hole in my filofax* into *Ho avuto il numero delle Highlands di mia nonna / da quattro mesi nella mia agenda pronto all'uso*.

In the second line of the fourth stanza ("Sorry, she says, *No, but one of the girls / will have it.*") I translated *sorry* into *mi dispiace* and not into *scusa*, since in this context it does not express an excuse but regret; *mi dispiace dice, no, ma una delle ragazze / ce lo avrà*.

In the eighth stanza we find an example of Scottish slang, that is *The game's a bogey*, meaning that the game is up. I translated it with the corresponding Italian idiom *Il gioco è finito*; the daughter hides her real identity from her mother's sister, but the woman understands who she is and so she can not pretend anymore, she has to come clear.

Translation

- 9.1 In realtà ne ho 26. *Lo avevo immaginato tesoro.*
Avevo immaginato che fossi tu. Anche mamma lo sapeva.
- 10.1 *Mi aveva appena telefonato per dirmi che avresti chiamato.*
Come stai? Com'è la tua vita?
- 11.1 *Le darò io il tuo. Ti scriverà.*
Sono sicura che capisci. È così. È così.
- 12.1 Ora lei se ne è andata. Ricevo chiamate con regolarità.
Non è che penso di rimetterci ma
ciò nonostante mi sono sorpresa;
devo smetterla di dire 'riaggancia,
12.5 ne soffrirai'. Mi preoccupa
certo che lo faccio, ma sono io che soffro.
Questa sera ho pianto guardando quel dannato Adam
Carrington scoprire di non essere più un Carrington.
Stupida. Sto andando nel pallone.

In both lines of the ninth stanza we find the past simple of the verb think: *I thought so love. / I thought it was you. Mam knew too.* In this context *think* stands for imagine/suppose, so in the translation I used the Italian verb *immaginare*: *lo avevo immaginato tesoro. Avevo immaginato che fossi tu. Anche la mamma lo sapeva.* I maintained the repetition of the term instead of using two synonymic verbs, since as Osimo (1998: 46) states, “Non importa se il purista si irrita per le ripetizioni di parole: volute o non volute, erano nell’originale”.

In the following stanza (“She just rang to warn me you’d ring”, stanza 10) the adverb *just* stands for a short time before; the mother’s sister tells the daughter that the grandmother called a few minutes earlier to warn her about the call she would receive (“mi aveva appena telefonato per dirmi che avresti chiamato”).

In the last stanza (12) there are various aspects to point out. In the second line (“It’s not that I’m losing out”) the phrasal verb *to lose out* means to suffer a disadvantage. The adoptive mother tries to convince herself that she is not scared of being replaced by the biological mother, now that her daughter has discovered her origins: *Non è che penso di rimetterci ma.* In the following line (“I’ve surprised myself just the same”, line 3) the adverbial expression *just the same* stands for *nevertheless*, which corresponds to the Italian adverbial phrase *ciò nonostante*: *ciò nonostante mi sono sorpresa.*

A few lines below (7) the adoptive mother mentions Adam Carrington, who is a fictional character on the American TV series *Dynasty*; since the series was also well known in Italy and the names of the characters were the same, I did not put a footnote to give additional information. Furthermore, knowing the character of Adam Carrington is not essential, since the only important detail is given by the mother in her outburst: *questa sera ho pianto guardando quel dannato Adam / Carrington scoprire di non essere più un Carrington* (“Tonight I cried watching bloody Adam / Carrington discover he’s not a Carrington / any more”).

In the final line (9) we find the English idiomatic expression *to get into a tizzy*, which means to get in a state of confusion: *Daft. Getting myself into a tizzy.* In Italian, a possible idiom to use when someone gets in a confused condition and cannot think straight is *andare nel pallone* (to freak out): *Stupida. Sto andando nel pallone.*

Capitolo 10: Il Sogno dell'Incontro

1.1 *Se me lo immagino così fa meno male*

Siamo entrambe timide
nonostante i nostri occhi non lo siano,
trapassano la pelle.

1.5 Non siamo come avevamo immaginato:

io sono più bassa, grassa, scura
Io sono più alta, più magra
e avevo sempre immaginato i suoi capelli castano scuro
non grigi. Vedo il mio mento nel suo

1.10 è tutto, ma non ci sono dubbi

dirà mia mamma, guardando la foto,
è la tua sosia lo è davvero

2.1 Non c'è sentimento in questo salotto,

un semplice tavolo in legno e qualche libro.
Non ci abbracciamo né ci stringiamo la mano
ma all'improvviso sorridiamo come un fuoco ardente

2.5 che poi si spegne.

Le sue mani giocano con la fede,
ho ricominciato a fumare.
Non ci facciamo grandi domande nemmeno dopo alla spiaggia.
Camminiamo lentamente, esitanti come granchi

2.10 No, così che hai fatto negli ultimi 26 anni.

Solo a cosa stai lavorando, cose del genere.

Chapter 10

The final chapter of the poetic sequence (chapter 10) is entitled *The Meeting Dream* (Il Sogno dell’Incontro) and here we find the last thoughts of the three female characters. The daughter tells of her dreams about her biological mother: they are both different from what they imagined and there are no emotions during their meetings. She dreamt of the woman so many times that now she has too many images of her mother. Every time the woman appears different from the previous dream, so the daughter is not able to think of her as if she was a real person. After the call with her aunt, every day that goes by the daughter looks at the letterbox, hoping to receive a letter from her mother, which never arrives. The birth mother throws the picture of her baby down an old well near her home; it seems that she wants to cut ties with her past, which still bothers her after so many years. The adoptive mother tries to reassure herself about her relationship with her daughter, affirming that the reason which drove the girl to get in touch with her origins is simple curiosity and that another close mother-daughter couple like theirs is impossible to find, since they are inseparable.

In the eleventh line of the first stanza (“my mum will say, when she looks at the photo”) I turned the explicit temporal clause introduced by the adverb *when* into an implicit temporal clause using the gerund: *dirà mia mamma, guardando la foto*.

In the ninth line of the second stanza (“We walk slow, tentative as crabs”) we find a simile that compares the way of walking of the daughter and the biological mother to the movement of crabs on sand; they are insecure and their uncertainty reflects on their movement. Since this is an original simile which represents well the frame of mind of the two characters, I maintained it in the translation: *camminiamo lentamente, esitanti come granchi*.

Translation

- 3.1 Secoli dopo raccolgo un sasso
 e la getto nel mare,
 è così che te lo eri immaginato?
 Non lo avevo mai immaginato.
- 3.5 Oh. Sento il tonfo smorzato.
 Immaginare mi avrebbe fatto impazzire,
 26 anni sono lunghi.
- 4.1 Dentro casa ancora una volta sorseggio del tè caldo
 noto una foto in una cornice di legno.
 L'aria è antica come il mare.
 Fisso il suo mento fino a quando non mi costringe ad abbassare lo sguardo.
- 4.5 Le sue mani sono goffe come rocce.
 I miei occhi sono pietre indifferenti.
- 5.1 *Se me lo immagino così fa meno male*
- 6.1 Un sogno eviscera l'altro come un pesce sezionato
 niente è quello che era;
 è troppe fantasie per essere di carne e ossa.
 Non resta altro da dire.
- 6.5 Nessuna delle due accenna a rivedersi.

In the fourth stanza we find two rhetorical figures, a simile and a metaphor. In the fifth line the daughter compares her mother's hands to rocks through a simile ("Her hands are awkward as rocks"): the woman is embarrassed and her mood can be felt in the way she moves her hands. I translated the adjective *awkward* into *goffe* (clumsy), maintaining the simile: *le sue mani sono goffe come rocce*.

In the following line (6) there is a metaphor, through which the daughter compares her eyes to stones ("My eyes are stones washed over and over"): wash over is a phrasal verb that can have a figurative sense, meaning to leave someone insensitive to something. In the second stanza the daughter describes the meetings with her mother as lacking in sentiment, so I imagined her watching the woman with emotionless eyes: *I miei occhi sono pietre indifferenti*.

The sixth stanza opens with another figure of speech, a simile: *one dream cuts another open like a gutted fish*. The daughter dreams of her biological mother very often, but each time she appears different and so every dream annuls the image created by the previous one. This simile gives a picture of the confusion the daughter has in her head and I translated it faithfully: *ogni sogno eviscera l'altro come un pesce sezionato*.

Two lines below (3) we find the English idiom *to be flesh and blood*, meaning to be a living human body; the daughter has too many images of her mother for her to be real. The corresponding Italian idiomatic expression makes reference to flesh and bones instead of flesh and blood: *è troppe fantasie per essere di carne ed ossa* ("she is too many imaginings to be flesh and blood").

Translation

- 7.1 Quando sono da sola guardo la tv
è sorprendente quanto spesso salti
fuori; che lui o lei non ne sapevano nulla
e ora chi è lui o lei davvero
- 7.5 amano chi pensavano di amare
eccetera. Avete capito la situazione.
Lei sapeva. Non appena possibile
ho iniziato a ripeterglielo di continuo, se mai vorrai,
non mi dispiacerò. Non stavo cercando di farmi forza
- 7.10 – se fosse toccato a me, lo avrei fatto.
Curiosità. È naturale. Origini.
Quel tipo di cose. Guardate me e lei
non ci sono madre e figlia che si assomigliano di più
Siamo sulla stessa lunghezza d'onda, ecco come siamo.
- 7.15 Io so subito se lei è triste.
E vice versa. Più intime del sangue.
Più profonde dell'oceano. Mia figlia ed io.

In the first line of the seventh stanza (“When I’m by myself watching the box”) the word *box* is an example of an English colloquial term for television. In Italian there is not a colloquial term for television, but the most common way to call it is TV, which is an abbreviation used in many languages, including English: *quando sono da sola guardo la TV*.

In lines four and five we find two questions which lack question marks: *and now who is he or she really / do they love who they thought they loved*. As I wrote before, the lack of punctuation is a typical feature of stream of consciousness, and this stanza represents a clear example of “flow of inner experiences” (Cuddon 1982: 661). The adoptive mother depicts her thoughts as they occur in her mind and I reported them as they are in the original text: *e ora chi è lui o lei davvero / amano chi pensavano di amare*.

In the following line (6) the idiomatic expression *to get the picture* means having understood the situation; the adoptive mother is describing what happens to people who discover that they are adopted late in life and she asserts that the reader should have understood the situation she is speaking about: *et cetera. You’ve got the picture*. The equivalent Italian idiom is *avere il quadro della situazione*, but in the translation I preferred to use a more direct language: *eccetera. Avete capito la situazione*.

In the last two lines (16,17) of the stanza we find two metaphors which describe the relationship between the adoptive mother and the daughter: *Closer than blood. / Thicker than water*. In the previous lines the mother states that they are very similar and that they always understand each other in the twinkling of an eye. As far as the first line is concerned I gave the meaning of *intimate* to the adjective *close*, translating into *più intime del sangue*. The second metaphor is more difficult to interpret and I translated it, giving my personal idea about its meaning. I compared the deepness of their relationship to the depth of the ocean, transforming the hyperonym *water* into its hyponym *ocean*: *più profonde dell’oceano*. The two metaphors recall the English idiomatic expression *blood is thicker than water*, which means that family ties are always more important and strong than any other kind of tie; I made reference to it for the interpretation and translation of figurative devices.

Translation

- 8.1 Mi sono coperta per bene e sono uscita prima
Che gli uccelli iniziassero le loro ciance rituali
- 9.1 L'ho avvolta in carta da regalo viola
E l'ho gettata nel vecchio pozzo qui vicino.
Non ci fu alcun rumore, non è più
Utilizzato – anni – lei è stata nel mio cassetto
- 9.5 Ora è sbiadita, non è più una bambina
- 10.1 Ancora buio pesto. Non importava.
Conosco ogni curva. Non ho più il terrore.
Tornando a casa, la luce si infiltrava come acqua.
- 11.1 Sua sorella mi disse che mi avrebbe scritto una lettera.
Il mattino mi sveglio con gli uccelli
aspetto il rumore della cassetta delle lettere
seguito dal soffice tonfo delle parole sullo zerbino.
- 11.5 Sto distesa lì, il piumone attorno alle spalle
fantastico sul colore della carta
mi chiedo se sottolineerà Raccomandata 1
oppure se la sua 'o' sarà un ampio cerchio.

In the third line of the tenth stanza there is a simile, through which the biological mother compares the way in which the light of the sun breaks the day to the movement of water on the ground: *Going home, the light spilled like water*. Since water seeps into the ground, I gave to the verb *spill* the meaning of infiltrate, translating the simile into *tornando a casa, la luce si infiltrava come acqua*.

In the fourth line of the last stanza (“Then the soft thud of words on the matt”, stanza 11) instead of translating the adverb *then* into the corresponding Italian adverb *poi*, I turned it into the past participle of the verb to follow (in Italian *seguire*): *seguito dal soffice tonfo delle parole sullo zerbino*. The daughter waits a letter from her biological mother and so every day she hopes to hear the crash of the letterbox followed by the thud of the letter on the doormat.

In the seventh line the daughter mentions the First Class Mail, which is *a quick and affordable way to send letters and lightweight packages across the United Kingdom* (<http://www.royalmail.com/personal/uk-delivery/1st-class-mail>). The corresponding fastest system of delivery in Italy is called *Raccomandata 1*, so in the translation I used the cultural equivalent: *mi chiedo se sottolineerà Raccomndata 1* (“whether she’ll underline First Class”). The following line makes reference to the previous one, since the daughter wonders if the ‘i of First Class will have a large dot over it. In my translation there is not any ‘i to refers to, as instead of First Class we have *Raccomandata 1*, so I had to adapt the line and I changed the ‘i into a ‘o, maintaining the reference to the “large circle”: *oppure se la sua ‘o sarà ad ampio cerchio*.

3.3 TRANSLATION – RELEVANT ASPECTS

3.3.1 METAPHORS and SIMILES

As Cuddon states in his book entitled *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* a metaphor is “a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another”. In the same text he defines a simile as “a figure of speech in which one thing is linked to another, in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. It is an explicit comparison (as opposed to the metaphor where the comparison is implicit) recognizable by the use of the words ‘like’ or ‘as’” (Cuddon 1980: 391; 629). These two figurative devices are very common in verse and in fact there are several examples in the poetic sequence *The Adoption Papers*.

Usually literary authors make use of figurative devices to catch the attention of the reader and to create evocative images. As Newmark (1988) asserts metaphors have two purposes, the first is referential while the second is pragmatic:

Its referential purpose is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language; its pragmatic purpose, which is simultaneous, is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify ‘graphically’, to please, to delight, to surprise. The first purpose is cognitive, the second aesthetic. In a good metaphor, the two purposes fuse like (and are parallel with) content and form; (Newmark 1988: 104).

The aim of the translator is that of reproducing the effect of the original figure of speech, which, as we mentioned above, derives from the combination of content and form. As a result of this, both elements - message and stylistic element – need to be recreated in the TL. In the approach to metaphors and similes, the translator suffers a double difficulty; first of all, he/she has to understand the figurative meaning in the language in which the metaphor appears, secondly he/she has to find out an equivalent meaning and a similar function of the expression in the TL.

The representation of the metaphorical expression has to be as efficient as the original one, but in order to achieve this result, some changes would necessarily be introduced in the translation. This is the reason why Faini (2009:85) defines the metaphor as an ‘element at risk’.

According to a preliminary classification, there are two types of metaphors and similes: lexicalized and original. The meaning of the first is relatively clearly fixed and this allows it to be subjected to dictionary definitions, while those of the second kind are created by the author, they are authentic and therefore unique.

Chesterman (2002: 66) summarizes the translating-strategies for metaphors and similes, making a classification based on and adapted from Newmark's work (1988). He pointed out seven standard solutions:

- Reproducing the same image
- Using a different image
- Using a different rhetorical device (i.e. a simile instead of a metaphor)
- Using a different rhetorical device plus a paraphrase to give the sense (i.e. a simile instead of a metaphor)
- Using a paraphrase alone, with no rhetorical device
- Deletion: omit the whole bit
- Literal translation plus a gloss

The choice of the appropriate solution depends on several factors, for example on the kind of metaphor/simile, on the nature of the text and on the global translation strategy adopted by the translator.

The autobiographic nature of the poetic sequence has influenced the translation strategy I adopted, defining the loyalty of the translated version to the original text. The metaphors and similes found in *The Adoption Papers* are original and as such, in the majority of cases, I translated them literally, since my aim was to preserve the writer's personal message.

In the following tables are some examples of translation-solutions I opted for:

Table 1 Metaphors

And saw the ground move and swell / the promise of a crop (Ch.4)	E vidi la terra muoversi e sperare / in un raccolto	I did not sacrifice the original image, but I simplified it
--	---	---

My eyes are stones washed over and over (Ch.10)	I miei occhi sono pietre indifferenti	I kept part of the original metaphor, comparing the eyes (occhi) to stones (pietre) and I gave the phrasal verb <i>to wash over</i> figurative sense instead of literal meaning. Stones are not covered by water but are emotionless since inanimate.
Closer than blood. / Thicker than water. (Ch.10)	Più intime del sangue. Più profonde dell’oceano.	I maintained the figurative devices and for the interpretation of the meaning of words I made reference to the context (family relationships) and to the English idiomatic expression <i>blood is thicker than water</i> (the corresponding Italian expression is <i>Il sangue non è acqua</i>), which they recall.

Table 2 Similes

I want my waters to break / like Noah’s flood (Ch.1)	Voglio che mi si rompano le acque / come il diluvio universale	I maintained the simile, but I substituted the biblical character with the most common Italian expression used to refer to the Flood (“il diluvio universale”)
--	--	--

<p>His eyes intense as whirlwind (Ch.1)</p>	<p>I suoi occhi magnetici</p>	<p>I transformed the simile into a metaphor, avoiding the explicit comparison; the men's eyes are charming, the biological mother cannot stop looking at them, so I compared them to a magnet</p>
<p>Land moves like driven cattle (Ch.4)</p>	<p>La terra si muove come una mandria ordinata</p>	<p>I kept the simile, making its sense more explicit. The movement of the land seen from a train is compared to cattle driven by a stockman: both movements are characterized by evenness. Since cattle, when driven, moves in an orderly way, I expressed the original image, translating <i>driven</i> into <i>ordinate</i> (orderly)</p>
<p>She comes in swift / as wind in a storm (Ch.5)</p>	<p>Arriva dal nulla / come il vento in una bufera</p>	<p>I reproduced the same image using the same simile. The swift way in which the biological mother arrives is compared to the wind in a storm: they both arrive unexpectedly</p>
<p>But suddenly I'm pounding the stairs / like thunder (Ch.5)</p>	<p>Ma all'improvviso mi ritrovo a salire le scale / con impeto</p>	<p>I preferred to use a paraphrase alone, with no rhetorical device. The literal translation would be</p>

		<i>ma all'improvviso mi ritrovo a salire le scale / come un tuono</i>
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In most cases I used the strategy of reproducing the original figurative devices trying to evoke in the TL readership the same response as the SL text does in its readers (Nida in Al-Hashawi 2007). Almost all metaphors and similes can be considered original and this is the main reason for trying to keep them as they appear in the starting text. Original metaphors and similes express the writer's personality and her creative writing as well as her worldview. Moreover, the translation of the poetic sequence, and therefore of its figures of speech, deserve loyalty for its autobiographic nature, since in her work the poetess recounts her personal experience and her feelings.

In order to reproduce the original meaning of the metaphorical expressions, sometimes I had to renounce to linguistic loyalty, since a mere linguistic transference from one language to another is deemed to result in a bad product (Al-Hasnawi 2007).

3.3.2 DIALECT

In literature many writers show interest in dialect, producing different kinds of literary works in the language of their origins. Several important names of both Italian and English literature could be mentioned, for example on one hand Carlo Goldoni, Luigi Pirandello and Andrea Zanzotto, and on the other William Barnes, Robert Burns and Edwin Muir. Bonaffini (1997) affirms that there can be psychological motivations that account for the choice to write in dialect, since through language the writer represents his/her identity. He also observes that through dialect poets represent not only the places and events of their memory, but also a conception of the world closer to their own personal experience.

Replacing dialect in the SL with a dialect of the TL is an awkward task, especially because the translation must reflect in some way the uniqueness and diversity of the original dialect.

In *The Adoption Papers* there are only a few Scottish dialectal forms; the author has used them to foreground her cultural identity (Wallace 1998: 257) and to further underline the colloquial register of the poetic sequence. The content of the work determines the kind of language used by the three characters; they create empathy in the reader, not only telling their personal experiences and feelings, but also conveying them with the use of a colloquial and informal language. The use of some dialect expressions helps the writer to lend realism to her piece of literature and it represents the research for a more intimate expressive vehicle (Sabatini 1998: 21-23).

In the translation I did not make a geographical transposition, choosing a roughly equivalent region in the TL and picking one of its dialects, but I preferred to replace non-standard forms with standard forms of neutral language. Translating the Scottish expressions into any of the Italian dialects would be nonsensical, since the poetic sequence is set in Scotland both in the original and in the Italian version and the three characters are Scottish.

Dealing with dialect translation, the translator has to make a choice between neutralization and transposition: he/she has to choose which SL dialect words may be replaced with TL neutral language, and which of them have to be rendered with a TL dialect. The first strategy is adapted because of the widely agreed prospective of untranslatability of specific linguistic and cultural contents of dialects, since translatability may be possible only where non-standard SL expressions do not find similar terms in TL non-standard varieties (Berezowski 1997: 28); specific SL connotations are inaccessible to the readers of the TL text. Levý (1957: 127) states that non-standard regional dialects bear too close connotations of a particular place to be appropriate for a substitution. The solution is that of reducing the SL dialect markers, making a neutral TL work. In this way the linguistic peculiarity of the original text is lost, but the TL version is comprehensible to all its readers.

Those who support the substitution of SL dialect with similar dialect in TL translation base their strategy on universal objective factors (geographical, social and cultural) that are common to all countries (Catford 1965). For similar dialect they mean a dialect which

represents an equivalent region in the target culture (e.g. north or south) and the same social and/or economic class. They believe that ignoring dialect is an easy solution but that dismissing the choice of the author is not respectful of his/her work. At the same time the technique of substitution may be considered disturbing since it may create wrong connotation within the TL readers.

Newmark (1988: 194) has defined another point in the development of dialect translating strategies: according to him, the translator should be completely at home in a dialect when using it in a substitution of a SL dialect. The linguist identifies three main functions of dialect in literature: to show a slang use of language; to stress social class contrasts; to indicate local cultural features. These functions should be taken into consideration before dealing with dialect translation, since only in this way is it possible to recreate the effects of the original use of language.

In the table below I transcribed the Scottish terms, their standard English equivalents and the Italian translation.

Table 3 Dialect terms

That there <u>wasnie wan</u> / giveaway sign left (Ch.3)	was not one	Di non aver lasciato / alcuna traccia
And foolish pray she <u>willnea</u> / ask its origins (Ch.3)	will not	E stupidamente prego / che non me ne chiederà l'origine
Ma mammy <u>bot</u> me <u>oot</u> a shop (Ch.6)	bought, out	La mia mamma mi ha comprata al negozio
I <u>wiz</u> the best (Ch.6)	was	Ero la migliore
After mammy <u>telt</u> me she <u>wisnae</u> my real mammy (Ch.6)	told, was not	Dopo che la mamma mi disse che non era la mia vera mamma
Or <u>mibbe</u> disappear in the dead / of night (Ch.6)	may be	O che magari scomparisse nel cuore / della notte

The dialectal words of the text are not idiomatic expressions or words with particular meanings, and this is the reason why I followed the norm for translating dialect, which tends to be that of adopting the “homogenizing convention” (Sternberg 1981).

3.3.3 SHIFT OR TRANSPOSITION

Catford (1965: 76) was the first scholar to use the expression translation shifts, defining them as “departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL to the TL”. Translation shifts are carried out to get the natural equivalent of the source text message into the target text; as we construct the translation, the textual strategies alter the various linguistic aspects of the original text. Shifts or transpositions can be obligatory when there is no correspondence between the two language systems (grammar imposes them) or they can be the result of the translator’s discretion.

Newmark (1988: 85) defines four main types of “obligatory” shift. The first type concerns the change from singular to plural, e.g. from *cutlery* to *posate*, and the change in the position of the adjective, e.g. *the white house* corresponds to *la casa bianca*. A second type of transposition is needed when a SL grammatical structure does not exist in the TL, e.g. the English gerund can be translated by verb-noun, by a subordinate clause or by an infinitive. The third kind of shift may occur when literal translation is grammatically possible but may not correspond to the natural usage of the target language, e.g. for SL adjective, TL verb, for SL verb, TL noun or for SL complex sentence, TL simple sentence. The last kind of strategy is the replacement of a virtual lexical gap by a grammatical structure, e.g. the Italian expression *sbarrare con una diga* corresponds to the English verb *to dam*.

Here we find some examples of shifts I had to adopt while translating.

Table 4 Transpositions

my <u>hair</u> is grey (introductory page)	i miei <u>capelli</u> sono grigi	From singular to plural (1 st type)
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I'll suffocate her with a <u>feather pillow</u> (Ch.2)	La soffocherò con un <u>cuscin</u> <u>o di piuma</u>	Change in the position of the adjective (1 st type)
bury her under a <u>weeping willow</u> (Ch.2)	la seppellirò sotto ad un <u>salice piangente</u>	Change in the position of the adjective (1 st type)
<u>telling</u> the world your secret failure (introductory page)	<u>svelare</u> al mondo il tuo intimo fallimento	English gerund translated by an infinitive (2 nd type)
he is a rat <u>running</u> (Ch.7)	è un ratto <u>che corre</u>	English gerund translated by a relative clause (2 nd type)
I have my parents who are not of the same tree (Ch.8)	i miei genitori non sono del mio stesso albero	SL complex sentence TL simple sentence (3 rd type)
once would <u>be enough</u> (Ch.8)	una volta potrebbe <u>bastare</u>	SL adjective TL verb (3 rd type)
the <u>tearing</u> searing pain (Ch.1)	il dolore intenso <u>che fa piangere</u>	Lexical gap (4 th type) replaced by a relative clause
we weren't high enough <u>earners</u> (Ch.3)	Non <u>guadagnavamo</u> abbastanza	Lexical gap replaced by a verb(4 th type)

Vinay and Darbelnet (1950) defined two different kind of translation, direct and oblique. Direct or literal translation “is the direct transfer of a SL text into a grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text in which the translator’s task is limited to observing the adherence to the linguistic servitudes of the TL” (Venuti 1995: 86). When direct translation is impossible, the translator has to resort to oblique translation; its techniques are used when the elements of the SL cannot be directly translated without altering the meaning and upsetting the grammatical and stylistic elements of the TL. As a result of the divergence between language systems, transposition is one of the first steps towards oblique translation, since it allows the translator to alter words without semantic change. In the text I used all the four kinds of shift strategies defined by Newmark; in particular I had to make many changes in the position of adjectives and in the translation of gerunds.

The changes I produced did not only concern shifts of word class (one word at a particular linguistic level has an equivalent at a different level) but also various and more considerable parts of the text, like sentences, clauses or group of words. My attempt was to write a faithful and at the same time grammatically correct Italian translation.

3.3.4 CULTURALLY SPECIFIC ASPECTS

Newmark (1988: 94) defines culture as “the way of life and its manifestation that are peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression”. Culture is essential to understanding all the aspects of the literary translation; this means that the translator should be familiar with the manifestations of the source culture in order to translate them appropriately in the target culture.

In translation, different terms are used to refer to these manifestations of culture: Vlahov and Florin (in Osimo 1998: 63) define them as *realia*, Newmark (1988: 94) speaks of cultural words and Baker (1992: 21) of culture-specific items, Nord (1997: 34) refers to *culturemes* and Katan (in Munday 2009: 79) to culture-bound terms. Culturally specific aspects are words that are grounded in one culture and that most of the time do not have a direct equivalent in the terms of another, causing cross-cultural translation problems. They cover a wide range of semantic fields: from food, clothes, geography and ecology to institutions, habits and traditions.

As far as cultural terms are concerned, Venuti (1995) identifies two main opposite translation procedures: domestication and foreignization. Domestication (also called naturalization or adaptation) is the technique by which the translator adopts the cultural words to the target context and eliminates the original foreign element; foreignization (also called exoticization or estrangement) is the opposite procedure, whereby such words are kept, and thus introduced to the target readers, reminding them that they are dealing with a translation.

According to Shleiermacher (1838):

Either the translator leaves the author 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 author towards him.

(in Venuti 1995: 19)

Another theory about the translation of cultural words can be found in Katan's essay (in Munday 2009: 80), who summarizes the strategies elaborated by Kwjeciński (2001) into four groups. "Exoticising procedures" bring the foreign term into the target language (foreignization), "rich explicatory procedures" consist in using explanatory brackets or in adjectivizing the source text, "recognized exoticism" concerns well-known geographical and personal names and titles that have accepted translations in different languages and "assimilative procedures" find out equivalent target terms (domestication).

In the poetic sequence there are some culturally specific aspects linked with the British context. In translating culture specific terms in Italian, I used different techniques according to their nature and to their role in the text, but the main strategy I opted for is that of replacing the items with terms that are likely to have a similar impact on the target readership. Baker (1992: 20) suggests to give the readers a concept with which they can identify something familiar and in my translation I followed this strategy. In this way I supported the domestication method in place of the foreignization one.

Table 5 shows some examples of culture-bound terms and I briefly explained how I translated them for the Italian readers.

Table 5 Cultural specific terms

airing cupboard (Ch.3)	In Italian houses there is not the airing cupboard, but usually there is the boiler room (<i>caldaia</i>) where it is also possible to dry clothes; I adapted the term, using the nearest local equivalent <i>caldaia</i> .
tweed (Ch.5)	Even if tweed is a typical Scottish woollen fabric, it is well known worldwide and so I maintained it in the translation. The term has been brought into the target language.

digestive (Ch.5)	Here I opted for the removal of the cultural reference and I replaced it with its superordinate <i>biscuit</i> (biscotto).
primary 7 (Ch.7)	The last year (7) of primary school in Scotland corresponds to the last year (5) of elementary school in Italy. I used the local equivalent <i>quinta elementare</i> .
Lillets (Ch.8)	<i>Lillets</i> is the name of an English brand which nowadays produces all kinds of feminine hygiene products, but in the 70s its only product was the tampon without applicator. I found an equivalent Italian brand which is specialized in the production of that kind of product: O.b.
First Class (Ch.10)	<i>First Class Mail</i> is a quick way to send letters and lightweight packages across the United Kingdom and I rendered it with the corresponding Italian fastest system of delivery <i>Raccomandata 1</i> .

In the text we find some units of measure of the so-called Imperial system, which I converted to the corresponding units of the International System (IS). Even if the readership of the poem is adult, it is improbable that everyone knows the precise equivalences, and this is the reason why I preferred to transform the units. For example, in chapter two I converted eight pounds into three and a half kilograms (*tre chili e mezzo*), since 1 pound corresponds to 0.454 kg, while in chapter five I used kilometres instead of miles, translating forty miles into sixty-five kilometres (*sessantacinque chilometri*), since 1 mile is equivalent to 1.609 kilometres.

As far as cities are concerned, I used the names with which they are known in Italy: Glasgow remains unchanged in Italian, while Edinburgh's accepted translation is Edimburgo. In chapter four the name of a Scottish river appears, that is the Clyde; in the translation I added the classifier *river* (*fiume*) to the hydronym, giving an additional geographical information which states what the Clyde is.

In *A Textbook of Translation* Newmark (1988: 91) states that the additional information a translator adds to his/her version is usually cultural, technical or linguistic. Furthermore, the additions depend on the requirements of the target readership, as opposed to the

original one. In my translation I put five footnotes and all of them concerns additional cultural information. In chapter three I made a note about the *Daily Worker*, explaining that it was a newspaper founded by the Communist Party of Great Britain since this is the significant information. In the same chapter I wrote a few words on Paul Robeson's story in order to explain why on his poster it states "Give him his passport". I found it important to give some pieces of information about the newspaper and Robeson, since they contribute to understanding the political orientation of the character. In chapter four I wrote a footnote on the Scottish song *Ya banks and braes*, where I explained who wrote it, when and what it is about. In my version I maintained the original title even if the Italian translators of Burns translated it with *Le rive del Doon*, since the great majority of the readers would not know it. The last two footnotes belong to chapter seven; the first illustrates the meaning and connotation of the racist term *Sambo*, which came into the English language in colonial times. The second explains who Angela Davis is and why she was imprisoned; Italian people may not be familiar with Davis's life, being an American politician.

Another side of cultural matters is represented by idioms or idiomatic expressions; Cuddon (1982: 321) defines them as "a form of expression, construction or phrase peculiar to a language and often possessing a meaning other than its grammatical or logical one". Idioms are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and which has to be taken as one unit to be understood. The main problem that a translator may encounter while dealing with these parts of speech are related to their interpretation, and to the difficulties involved in the research for an equivalent expression in the target language (Baker 1992: 63). This explains why in machine translation the translation of idioms is considered a problematic area.

Translating idiomatic expressions without any sort of adaptation, translators risk producing grammatically correct statements, which improperly convey the meaning of the original idiom; sometimes the target expression may result even incomprehensible. In these cases linguistic inaccuracy allows cultural accuracy (Eco in Nergaard 1995: 123).

In the poetic sequence we find several examples of English idioms and in the translation I employed equivalent TL units which express the ST meaning as closely as possible. In table 6 I reported some original idioms, their literal translation and the possible equivalent units which are naturally present in the TL.

Table 6 Idiomatic expressions

Original idioms	Literal translation	Possible equivalent unit
This baby is going to my head (Ch.3)	Questo bambino sta andando alla mia testa.	Questo bambino mi sta dando alla testa
I'm on the home run (Ch.3)	Sono fuoricampo	É fatta
But just as we get to the last post (Ch.3)	Ma proprio quando arriviamo al silenzio	Ma proprio all'ultimo istante
The game's a bogey (Ch.9)	Il gioco è uno spauracchio	Il gioco è finito
Getting myself into a tizzy (Ch.9)	Sto entrando in agitazione	Sto andando nel pallone
To be flash and blood (Ch10)	Per essere carne e sangue	Per essere di carne ed ossa

3.3.5 FLOW OF THOUGHTS

The poetic sequence makes use of the modern technique of stream of consciousness, so-called because it tries to reproduce the continuous flow of human thought. The three characters present themselves without the guiding presence of an author or narrator, but “it seems that the reader can enter directly into their thoughts without any external point of view” (Maglioni et al., 2010: 317). The direct interior monologue attempts to simulate the workings of the consciousness in several ways and this influences the ordinary use of language; for example in the text we can find incomplete sentences (ellipsis), sudden changes of tense and sentences which often lack punctuation.

Ellipsis enables the writer to reduce the structure of clauses; it is a device of simplification that can be defined as “the omission of elements which are recoverable from the linguistic context or the situation” (Biber et al., 2002: 230). The meaning of a clause is condensed into a smaller number of words and the addition of ellipsed elements would not bring any change in terms of meaning and grammatical structure.

In the poetic sequence we find a few examples of ellipsis. In the line *left a gash down my left cheeks* (introductory page, stanza 2, line 2) the subject is omitted, but from the context the reader understands that the verb *left* refers to the last word of the previous line *forceps* (“I was pulled out with forceps”). In the translation (“mi ha lasciato una ferita sulla guancia sinistra”) I made the reference to the instrument clear, since Italian verbs inflects for person and number, but the clause remains devoid of subject. In the line *my own body a witness* (chapter 2, stanza 7, line 1) the missing word is the third person singular of the verb to be (is), which can easily be supplied by the context. In the translation I maintained the ellipsis: *il mio corpo un testimone*. In the line *sometimes jump when the phone rings* (chapter 8, stanza 3, line 3) there is another ellipsis which concerns the subject and the missing word can be found in the preceding line *I dread strange handwritings*. In this case the ellipsis “is a means of avoiding unnecessary repetition” (Biber et al., 2003: 230). In my version *qualche volta sobbalzo quando squilla il telefono* I omitted the subject, keeping the ellipsis. In Italian the subject can be either explicit or implicit, since person, number and gender are expressed by the verb and so the presence of the subject could be redundant; this is the reason why the ellipsis of the subject is very frequent in Italian written language.

Punctuation supplies the instructions for the interpretation of the text (Faini 2009: 66); this is the reason why the translator should consider the function of the punctuation marks in the source text and avoid changes in the translation. Newmark (1988: 163) asserts that after the word, the second unit of meaning in poetry is the line and that the integrity of both of them can be preserved with an accurate translation of metaphors and a corresponding punctuation, since it reproduces the tone of the original text.

Poetic use of language differs from ordinary use of language and this non-ordinariness concerns also punctuation. In our text, punctuation does not often follow standard rules, nevertheless, in the translation I kept it as in the original, as it was not my intention to distort the tone created by the writer. The clearest example of non-ordinary punctuation is given by direct speech, since the author does not follow the various punctuation conventions that are used to separate the quoted words from the rest of the text. Words are enclosed in inverted commas just once in the whole poetic sequence (chapter 6, stanza 12, line 1 and 2: *Now when people say ‘ah but / it’s not like having your own child though is it’*), while in the other cases they are part of the rest of the text or sometimes they are

identify by the use of the italics. Furthermore, the poetess almost never uses the comma which is duly put after the verb of speaking, if the speech comes after it, or before it, if it comes before.

Another consideration concerns the omission of the question mark at the end of a certain number of questions even if they are direct. The author got rid of them especially in the direct interior monologue, while the questions of the reported dialogues are almost always complete. In my translation I respected the choice of the writer, omitting the punctuation marks and maintaining the direct questions, except in one situation. The last line of the introductory page *does she imagine me this way* expresses an uncertainty of the biological mother, who states that her hair is grey and her skin wrinkling and tries to imagine if her daughter could imagine her with those features. The literal translation *mi immagina così* without the question mark can also express an affirmation, deviating the reader; I preferred to convert a direct question into an indirect question using the adverb *chissà*, which modifies the verb indicating lack of certainty.

Finally, the text is characterized by sudden changes of tense; when verbs are switched from one tense to another within a sentence or paragraph without a valid reason we can speak of tense shift (Cuddon 1982: 702). Generally, writers maintain one tense for the main discourse and change it in order to help readers to understand the relationship among various narrated events, but it can also happen that they use sudden or inconsistent tense shifts for stylistic purposes. In the poetic sequence the tense shift is determined by the technique of stream of consciousness; the three characters alternate the description of memories to the expression of feelings and thoughts and this causes the random passage from present to past and vice versa. For example, in the first chapter the biological mother tells of her pregnancy using the simple past (I never thought it would be quicker / than walking down the mainstreet; it only took a split second / not a minute or more), then she uses the simple present to describe her feelings (Now these slow weeks on / I can't stop going over and over) and finally she goes back to simple past to speak about her lover (I missed him, silly things /his sudden high laugh). In chapter three the adoptive mother is waiting for the social worker to come and she describes what she did in order to make her house a perfect home for the baby using the simple past (All the copies of the *Daily Worker* / I shoved under the sofa / the dove of peace I took down from the loo), but then she depicts her meeting with the woman shifting to present tense (She comes at 11.30

exactly. / I pour her coffee / from my Hungarian set). Same thing happens at the beginning of chapter six, where she describes when she reveals to her daughter that she is adopted; she uses the simple past (I could hear the upset in her voice), then all of a sudden the tense shifts to present (I says I'm not your real mother) and again to past (all my planned speech / went out the window). The sudden shift from past to present in the middle of the narration is a technique commonly used among modern writers; this way they make a particular action or feeling more vivid; thus, this technique, reproducing the way the human mind works, contributes to emphasise the realism of the poetic sequence.

In the translation I kept all the shifts of tense, since they are intentional and therefore peculiar to the text and to the author's style.

CONCLUSION

Before dealing with the translation of *The Adoption Papers*, I analysed the text under all points of view, as this is the first step towards a satisfactory result. Careful reading allowed me to understand the meaning of the long autobiographic poem, focusing on both linguistic features and content.

The low redundancy level of the poem and the figurative use of language might determine a wide range of interpretations and I tried to convey my own interpretation putting into words the effect the original text had on myself. Because of the autobiographic nature of the poem, I tried to remain as faithful as possible to its sense and spirit, attenuating the distance between Kay and me by taking up her perspective and developing the necessary empathy to appropriate her experience.

The double moral responsibility of the translator led me to consider also the readership's needs. In order to render the poem accessible to the new readers, not wanting to impose a totally unknown system of values on them, in some cases I had to adapt or explain culturally specific aspects, but always in the attempt to preserve as much of the original as possible. I supported my work with an explanatory comment of my choices, since the analysis of the decision-process is necessary to make understand how I reached this specific translation. Finally, I developed a section where I analysed the main problematic features I met throughout the text and I illustrated the solutions I opted for in order to solve difficulties.

The poem is rich in metaphors and similes and their translation sometimes made me suffer a double difficulty: first of all I had to understand the figurative meaning and secondly I had to find out an equivalent meaning and a similar function of the expression in the TL. In the majority of cases, the figures of speech of the poem are original (unique), so I preferred to translate them literally, preserving the writer's personal message; in this way I tried to evoke in the TL reader the same response as the SL text does in its readership.

As far as dialect is concerned, in the poem there are a few Scottish dialectal forms used by Kay to foreground her cultural identity and to further underline the colloquial register of the poetic sequence, lending realism to it. In the translation I did not make a geographical transposition, choosing a roughly TL equivalent region and picking one of its dialects, but I opted for replacing non-standard forms with standard forms of neutral language, since also in the Italian text, the setting is Scotland and characters are Scottish.

In *The Adoption Papers* there are some culturally specific aspects linked with the British context; in translating these items the main strategy I used is that of replacing them with familiar terms that are likely to have a similar impact on the new readers (domestication method).

Also idiomatic expressions represent an aspect of cultural matters. Since the idiom is peculiar to a language and possesses a meaning other than its logical one, translating it literally without any sort of adaptation may convey an improper meaning. In the translation I employed equivalent TL units which express the SL meaning as closely as possible, supporting cultural accuracy rather than linguistic preciseness.

I dedicated a chapter to translation theory, holding in due consideration the approaches to translation of poetry and autobiographic works, two very personal genres which require a high level of loyalty to the author.

I realized that a translation theory with standard rules does not exist, since the translator has to consider different approaches according to the type of text he/she is dealing with. Translation theory supplies principles and strategies useful to approach problems, but it is the translator himself/herself that runs the game thanks to his/her competences and experience.

I can affirm that the work I carried out let me reach my initial aims, that is understand how to deal with an autobiographic poem and conclude the translation of a text that gives the chance to reflect on the literary production of contemporary Britain, besides than on ourselves.

Translation is not a merely mechanical linguistic process, or a simple formal exercise, but it is an “existential experience” (Steiner 1978), which involves the translator completely. Working on this text, I have widen and improved my language knowledge, both in

English and in Italian, and developed my translation skills, but I have also reflected on my personal experience through a long journey of self-discovery.

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APPENDIX 1 (ORIGINAL TEXT)

THE ADOPTION PAPERS

In The Adoption Papers sequence, the voices of the three speakers are distinguished typographically:

Daughter: Palatino typeface

Adoptive mother: Gill typeface

Natural mother: Bodoni typeface

THE ADOPTION PAPERS

- 1.1 I always wanted to give birth
do that incredible natural thing
that women do — I nearly broke down
when I heard we couldn't,
- 1.5 and then my man said
well there's always adoption
(we didn't have test tubes and the rest then)
even in the early sixties there was
something scandalous about adopting,
- 1.10 telling the world your secret failure
bringing up an alien child,
who knew what it would turn out to be
- 2.1 I was pulled out with forceps
left a gash down my left cheek
four months inside a glass cot
but she came faithful
- 2.5 from Glasgow to Edinburgh
and peered through the glass
I must have felt somebody willing me to survive;
she would not pick another baby

3.1 I still have the baby photograph
I keep it in my bottom drawer

4.1 She is twenty-six today
my hair is grey

5.1 The skin around my neck is wrinkling
does she imagine me this way

PART ONE: 1961-1962

Chapter 1: The Seed

1.1 I never thought it would be quicker
than walking down the mainstreet

2.1 I want to stand in front of the mirror
swollen bellied so swollen bellied

3.1 The time, the exact time
for that particular seed to be singled out

4.1 I want to lie on my back at night
I want to pee all the time

5.1 amongst all others
like choosing a dancing partner

6.1 I crave discomfort like some women
crave chocolate or earth or liver

- 7.1 Now these slow weeks on
I can't stop going over and over
- 8.1 I can't believe I've tried for five years
for something that could take five minutes
- 9.1 It only took a split second
not a minute or more.
- 10.1 I want the pain
the tearing searing pain
- 11.1 I want my waters to break
like Noah's flood
- 12.1 I want to push and push
and scream and scream.
- 13.1 When I was sure I wrote a short note
six weeks later — a short letter
- 14.1 He was sorry; we should have known better
He couldn't leave Nigeria.
- 15.1 I missed him, silly things
his sudden high laugh,
- 16.1 His eyes intense as whirlwind
the music he played me

Chapter 2: The Original Birth Certificate

- 1.1 I say to the man at the desk
I'd like my original birth certificate
Do you have any idea what your name was?
Close, close he laughs. *Well what was it?*
- 2.1 So slow as torture he discloses bit by bit
my mother's name, my original name
the hospital I was born in, the time I came.
- 3.1 Outside Edinburgh is soaked in sunshine
I talk to myself walking past the castle. D
So, so, so, I was a midnight baby after all.
- 4.1 I am nineteen
my whole life is changing
- 5.1 On the first night
I see her shuttered eyes in my dreams
- 6.1 I cannot pretend she's never been
my stitches pull and threaten to snap
- 7.1 my own body a witness
leaking blood to sheets, milk to shirts
- 8.1 On the second night
I'll suffocate her with a feather pillow
- 9.1 Bury her under a weeping willow
Or take her far out to sea

- 10.1 and watch her tiny eight—pound body
sink to shells and reshape herself.
- 11.1 So much the better than her body
encased in glass like a museum piece
- 12.1 On the third night
I toss I did not go through these months
- 13.1 for you to die on me now
on the third night I lie
- 14.1 willing life into her
breathing air all the way down the corridor
- 15.1 to the glass cot
I push my nipples through

Chapter 3: The Waiting Lists

- 1.1 The first agency we went to
didn't want us on their lists.
we didn't live close enough to a church
nor were we church-goers
- 1.5 (though we kept quiet about being communists).
The second told us
we weren't high enough earners.
The third liked us
but they had a five-year waiting list.
- 1.10 I spent six months trying not to look
at swings nor the front of supermarket trolleys,
not to think this kid I've wanted could be five.
The fourth agency was full up.
The fifth said yes but again no babies.

- 1.15 Just as we were going out the door
I said oh you know we don't mind the colour.
Just like that, the waiting was over.
- 2.1 This morning a slim manilla envelope arrives
postmarked Edinburgh: one piece of paper
I have now been able to look up your microfiche
(as this is all the records kept nowadays).
- 2.5 From your mother's letters, the following information:
Your mother was nineteen when she had you.
You weighed eight pounds four ounces.
She liked hockey. She worked in Aberdeen
as a waitress. She was five foot eight inches.
- 3.1 I thought I'd hid everything
that there was no giveaway sign left
- 4.1 I put Marx Engels Lenin (no Trotsky)
in the airing cupboard — she'll no be
checking out the towels surely
- 5.1 All the copies of the *Daily Worker*
I shoved under the sofa
the dove of peace I took down from the loo
- 6.1 A poster of Paul Robeson
saying give him his passport
I took down from the kitchen
- 7.1 I left a bust of Burns
my detective stories
and the Complete Works of Shelley

- 8.1 She comes at 11.30 exactly.
I pour her coffee
from my new Hungarian set
- 9.1 And foolishly pray she willnae
ask its origins — honestly
this baby is going to my head.
- 10.1 She crosses her legs on the sofa
I fancy I hear the *Daily Workers*
rustle underneath her
- 11.1 Well she says, you have an interesting home
She sees my eyebrows rise.
It`s different she qualifies.
- 12.1 Hell and I`ve spent all morning
trying to look ordinary
— a lovely home for the baby.
- 13.1 She buttons her coat all smiles
I`m thinking
I`m on the home run
- 14.1 But just as we get to the last post
her eye catches at the same times as mine
a red ribbon with twenty world peace badges
- 15.1 Clear as a hammer and sickle
on the wall.
Oh, she says are you against nuclear weapons?
- 16.1 To Hell with this. Baby or no baby.
Yes I says. Yes yes yes.
I`d like this baby to live in a nuclear free world.

- 17.1 Oh. Her eyes light up.
I'm all for peace myself she says,
and sits down for another cup of coffee.

Chapter 4: Baby Lazarus

- 1.1 Land moves like driven cattle
My eyes snatch pieces of news
headlines strung out on a line:
MOTHER DROWNS BABY IN THE CLYDE

November

- 2.1 The social worker phoned,
our baby is a girl but not healthy
she won't pass the doctor's test
until she's well. The adoption papers
2.5 can't be signed. I put the phone down.
I felt all hot. Don't get overwrought.
What does she expect? I'm not a mother
until I've signed that piece of paper.
- 3.1 The rhythm of the train carries me
Over the frigid earth
The constant chug a comforter
A rocking cradle.
- 4.1 Maybe the words lie
across my forehead
headline in thin ink
MOTHER GIVES BABY AWAY

December

- 5.1 We drove through to Edinburgh,
I was that excited the forty miles
seemed a lifetime. What do you think she'll
look like? I don't know my man says. I could tell
- 5.5 he was as nervous as me. On the way back his face
was one long smile even although
he didn't get inside. Only me.
I wore a mask but she didn't seem to mind
I told her *any day now my darling any day.*

- 6.1 Nobody would ever guess.
I had no other choice
Anyway it`s best for her,
My name signed on a dotted line.

March

- 7.1 Our baby has passed.
We can pick her up in two days.
Two days for Christ's sake,
could they not have given us a bit more notice?
- 8.1 Land moves like driven cattle
- 9.1 I must stop it. Put it out my mind.
There is no use going over and over.
I'm glad she's got a home to go to.
This sandwich is plastic.
- 10.1 I forgot to put sugar in the flask.
The man across the table keeps staring.
I should have brought another book —
all this character does is kiss and say sorry

- 11.1 go and come back,
we are all foolish with trust.
I used to like winter
the empty spaces, the fresh air.
- 12.1 When I got home
I went out into the garden —
the frost bit my old brown boots —
and dug a hole the size of my baby
12.5 and buried the clothes I'd bought anyway.
A week later I stood at my window
and saw the ground move and swell
the promise of a crop,
that's when she started crying.
- 12.10 I gave her a service then, sang
Ye banks and braes, planted
a bush of roses, read the Book of Job,
cursed myself digging a pit for my baby
sprinkling ash from the grate.
- 12.15 Late that same night
she came in by the window,
my baby Lazarus
and suckled at my breast

Chapter 5: The Tweed Hat Dream

- 1.1 Today I ring the counselling agency in Edinburgh.
Can you start to trace through marriage certificates?
It will take three weeks what do you expect from it.
If she wants to meet me that's fine if she doesn't
- 1.5 that is also fine

- 2.1 This morning the counselling woman rings
she's found someone who might be her
she's not sure; do I know my grandmother's name?
Pity. She'll be in touch, not sure when.
- 3.1 Her mother just turns up at the door
with a tweed hat on. I think
she doesn't suit tweed, she's too young.
In all these months I've never put a face to her PI
- 3.5 that looks like my daughter — so picture me
when I see those lips. She looks a dead spit
except of course she's white; lightning white.
She says in her soft Highland voice
con you let me see her? Con you?
- 3.10 What could I do? She comes in swift
as wind in a storm, rushes up the stairs
as if she knows the house already,
picks up my baby and strokes her cheeks endlessly
till I get tired and say, I'll be downstairs.
- 4.1 I put the kettle on, maybe
hot tea will redden those white cheeks,
arrange a plate of biscuits which keep
sliding onto the floor.
- 4.5 She's been up there helluva long.
I don't know where the thought comes from
but suddenly I'm pounding the stairs
like thunder: Her tweed hat
- 4.10 is in the cot. That is all.
- 5.1 That night I turn it through till dawn
a few genes, blood, a birth.
All this bother, certificates, papers.
It is all so long ago. Does it matter?
- 5.5 Now I come from her,
the mother who stole my milk teeth
ate the digestive left for Santa

I PART TWO: 1967-1971

Chapter 6: The Telling Part

- 1.1 Ma mammy bot me oot a shop
Ma mammy says I was a luvly baby
- 2.1 Ma mammy picked me (I wiz the best)
your mammy had to take you (she'd no choice)
- 3.1 Ma mammy says she's no really ma mammy
(just kid on)
- 4.1 It's a bit like a part you've rehearsed so well
you can't play it on the opening night
She says my real mammy is away far away
Mammy why aren't you and me the same colour
- 4.5 But I love my mammy whether she's real or no
My heart started rat tat tat like a tin drum
all the words took off to another planet
Why
- 5.1 But I love ma mammy whether she's real or no
- 6.1 I could hear the upset in her voice
I says *I'm not your real mother*
though Christ knows why I said that,
If I'm not who is, but all my planned speech
- 6.5 went out the window
- 7.1 She took me when I'd nowhere to go
my mammy is the best mammy in the world OK.

- 8.1 After mammy telt me she wisnae my real mammy
I was scared to death she was gonnie melt
or something or mibbe disappear in the dead
of night and somebody would say she wis a fairy
8.5 godmother. So the next morning I felt her skin
to check it was flesh, but mibbe it was just
a good imitation, How could I tell if my mammy
was a dummy with a voice spoken by someone else?
So I searches the whole house for clues
8.10 but I never found nothing. Anyhow a day after
I got my guinea pig and forgot all about it.
- 9.1 I always believed in the telling anyhow.
You can't keep something like that secret
I wanted her to think of her other mother
out there, thinking that child I had will be
9.5 seven today eight today all the way up to
god knows when. I told my daughter —
I bet your mother's never missed your birthday.
how could she?
- 10.1 Mammy's face is cherries.
She is stirring the big pot of mutton soup
I singing *I gave my love a cherry*
it had no stone.
- 10.5 I am up to her apron.
I am up onto her feet and grab her legs
like a huge pair of trousers,
she walks round the kitchen lifting me up.
- 11.1 Suddenly I fall off her feet.
And mammy falls to the floor.
She won't stop the song
I gave my love a chicken it had no bone.
- 11.5 I run next door for help,

When me and Uncle Alec come back
Mammy's skin is toffee stuck to the floor.
And her bones are all scattered like toys.

12.1 Now when people say 'ah but
it's not like having your own child though is it',
I say of course it is, what else is it?
she's my child, I have told her stories

12.5 wept at her losses, laughed at her pleasures,
she is mine.

13.1 I was always the first to hear her in the night
all this umbilical knot business is nonsense
-the men can afford deeper sleeps that's all.
I listened to hear her talk,

13.5 and when she did I heard my voice under hers
and now some of her mannerisms crack me up

14.1 Me and my best pal
don't have Donny Osmond or David Cassidy
on our walls and we don't wear Starsky and Hutch
jumpers either. Round at her house we put on
14.5 the old record player and mime to Pearl Bailey
Tired of the life I lead, tired of the blues I breed
and Bessie Smith I can't do without my kitchen man.
Then we practise ballroom dancing giggling,
everyone thinks we're dead old—fashioned.

Chapter 7: Black Bottom

- 1.1 Maybe that's why I don't like
all this talk about her being black,
I brought her up as my own
as I would any other child
- 1.5 colour matters to the nutters;
but she says my daughter says
it matters to her
- 2.1 I suppose there would have been things
I couldn't understand with any child,
we knew she was coloured.
They told us they had no babies at first
- 2.5 and I chanced it didn't matter what colour it was
and they said *oh well are you sure
in that case we have a baby for you —*
to think she wasn't even thought of as a baby,
my baby, my baby
- 3.1 I chase his *Sambo Sambo* all the way from the school gate.
A fistful of anorak — What did you call me? Say that again.
Sam-bo. He plays the word like a bouncing ball
but his eyes move fast as ping pong.
- 3.5 I shove him up against the wall,
say that again you wee shite. *Sambo, sambo*, he's crying now
- 4.1 I knee him in the balls. What was that?
My fist is steel; I punch and punch his gut.
Sorry I didn't hear you? His tears drip like wax.
Nothing he heaves *I didn't say nothing*.
- 4.5 I let him go. He is a rat running. He turns
and shouts *Dirty Darkie* I chase him again.
Blonde hairs in my hand. Excuse me!
This teacher from primary 7 stops us.
Names? I'll report you to the headmaster tomorrow.

- 4.10 But Miss. Save it for Mr Thompson she says
- 5.1 My teacher's face cracks into a thin smile
Her long nails scratch the note well well
I see you were fighting yesterday, again.
In a few years time you'll be a juvenile delinquent.
- 5.5 Do you know what that is? Look it up in the dictionary
She spells each letter with slow pleasure.
Read it out to the class.
Thug. Vandal. Hooligan. Speak up. Have you lost your tongue?
- 6.1 To be honest I hardly ever think about it
except if something happens, you know
daft talk about darkies. Racialism.
Mothers ringing my bell with their kids
6.5 crying *You tell. You tell. You tell.*
—No. You tell your little girl to stop calling
my little girl names and I'll tell my little girl
to stop giving your little girl a doing.
- 7.1 We're practising for the school show
I'm trying to do the Cha Cha and the Black Bottom
but I can't get the steps right
my right foot's left and my left foot's right
7.5 my teacher shouts from the bottom
of the class Come on, show
- 8.1 us what you can do I thought
you people had it in your blood.
My skin is hot as burning coal
like that time she said Darkies are like coal
8.5 in front of the whole class — my blood
what does she mean? I thought

- 9.1 she'd stopped all that after the last time
 my dad talked to her on parents' night
 the other kids are all right till she starts;
 my feet step out of time, my heart starts
- 9.5 to miss beats like when I can't sleep at night —
What Is In My Blood? The bell rings, it is time.
- 10.1 Sometimes it is hard to know what to say
 that will comfort. Us two in the armchair;
 me holding her breath, 'they're ignorant
 let's have some tea and cake, forget them'.
- 11.1 Maybe it's really Bette Davis I want
 to be the good twin or even better the bad
 one or a nanny who drowns a baby in a bath.
 I'm not sure maybe I'd prefer Katharine
- 11.5 Hepburn tossing my red hair, having a hot
 temper. I says to my teacher Can't I be
 Elizabeth Taylor, drunk and fat and she
 just laughed, not much chance of that.
 I went for an audition for *The Prime*
- 11.10 *of Miss Jean Brodie*. I didn't get a part
 even thought I've been acting longer
 than Beverley Innes. So I have. Honest.
- 12.1 Olubayo was the colour of peat
 when we walked out heads turned
 like horses, folk stood like trees
 their eyes fixed on us — it made me
- 12.5 burn, that hot glare; my hand
 would sweat down to his bone.
 Finally, alone, we'd melt
 nothing, nothing would matter

- 13.1 He never saw her. I looked for him in her;
for a second it was as if he was there
in that glass cot looking back through her.
- 14.1 On my bedroom wall is a big poster
of Angela Davis who is in prison
right now for nothing at all
except she wouldn't put up with stuff.
- 14.5 My mum says she is *only* 26
which seems really old to me
but my mum says it is young
just imagine, she says, being on
America's Ten Most Wanted People's List at 26!
- 14.10 I can't.
Angela Davis is the only female person
I've seen (except for a nurse on TV)
who looks like me. She had big hair like mine
that grows out instead of down.
- 14.15 My mum says it's called an *Afro*.
If I could be as brave as her when I get older
I'll be OK.
Last night I kissed her goodnight again
and wondered if she could feel the kisses
- 14.20 in prison all the way from Scotland.
Her skin is the same too you know.
I can see my skin is that colour
but most of the time I forget,
so sometimes when I look in the mirror
- 14.25 I give myself a bit of a shock
and say to myself *Do you really look like this?*
as if I'm somebody else. I wonder if she does that.

- 15.1 I don't believe she killed anybody.
It is all a load of phoney lies.
My dad says it's a set up.
I asked him if she'll get the electric chair
- 15.5 like them Roseberries he was telling me about.
No he says the world is on her side.
Well how come she's in there then I thinks.
I worry she's going to get the chair.
I worry she's worrying about the chair.
- 15.10 My dad says she'll be putting on a brave face,
He brought me a badge home which I wore
to school. It says FREE ANGELA DAVIS.
And all my pals says 'Who's she?'

PART THREE: 1980-1990

Chapter 8: Generations

- 1.1 The sun went out just like that
almost as if it had never been,
hard to imagine now the way it fell
on treetops, thatched roofs, people's faces.
- 1.5 Suddenly the trees lost their nerves
and the grass passed the wind on
blade to blade, fast as gossip
- 2.1 Years later, the voices still come close
especially in dreams, not distant echoes
loud — a pneumatic drill — deeper and deeper still.
I lived the scandal, wore it casual
- 2.5 as a summer's dress, Jesus sandals.
All but the softest whisper:
she is lost an awful lot of weight.

- 3.1 Now my secret is the hush of heavy curtains drawn.
I dread strange handwriting
sometimes jump when the phone rings,
she is all of nineteen and legally able.
- 3.5 At night I lie practising my lines
but 'sorry' never seems large enough
nor 'I can't see you, yes, I'll send a photograph.'
- 4.1 I was pulled out with forceps
left a gash down my left cheek
four months inside a glass cot
but
- 4.5 she came faithful from Glasgow to Edinburgh
and peered through the glass
she would not pick another baby.
- 5.1 I don't know what diseases
come down my line;
when dentist and doctors ask
the old blood questions about family runnings
- 5.10 I tell them: I have no nose or mouth or eyes
to match, no spitting image or dead cert,
my face watches itself in the glass.
- 6.1 I have my parents who are not of the same tree
and you keep trying to make it matter,
the blood, the tie, the passing down
generations.
- 6.5 We all have our contradictions,
the ones with the mother's nose and father's eyes
have them;
the blood does not bind confusion,
yet I confess to my contradiction
- 6.10 I want to know my blood.

- 7.1 I know my blood.
It is dark ruby red and comes
regular and I use Lillets.
I know my blood when I cut my finger.
- 7.5 I know what my blood looks like.
- 8.1 It is the well, the womb, the fucking seed.
Here, I am far enough away to wonder —
what were their faces like
who were my grandmothers
- 8.5 what were the days like
passed in Scotland
the land I come from
the soil in my blood.
- 9.1 Put it this way:
I know she thinks of me often
when the light shows its face
or the dark skulks behind hills,
- 9.5 she conjures me up or I just appear
when I take the notion, my slippers
are silent and I walk through doors.
- 10.1 She's lying in bed; I wake her up
a pinch on her cheek is enough,
then I make her think of me for hours.
The best thing I can steal is sleep.
- 10.5 I get right under the duvet and murmur
you'll never really know your mother.
I know who she thinks I am — she's made a blunder.

- 11.1 She is faceless
She has no nose
She is five foot eight inches tall
She likes hockey best
- 11.5 She is twenty-six today
She was a waitress
My hair is grey
She wears no particular dress
The skin around my neck is wrinkling
- 11.10 Does she imagine me this way?
Lately I make pictures of her
But I can see the smallness
She is tall and slim
of her hands, Yes
- 11.15 Her hair is loose curls
an opal stone on her middle finger
I reach out to catch her
Does she talk broad Glasgow?
But no matter how fast
- 11.20 Maybe they moved years ago
I run after
She is faceless, she never
weeps. She has neither eyes nor
fine boned cheeks
- 12.1 Once would be enough,
just to listen to her voice
watch the way she moves her hands
when she talks.

Chapter 9: The Phone Call

- 1.1 I have had my grandmothers Highland number
for four months now burning a hole in my filofax.
- 2.1 Something this morning gives me courage
to close the kitchen door and dial.
- 3.1 My grandmother's voice sounds much younger
'I used to work ages ago with your daughter
- 4.1 Elizabeth, do you have her present address?'
Sorry, she says, No, but one of the girls
- 5.1 *will have it.* She gives me another Highland number
wishing me luck. *What did you say your name was?*
- 6.1 Thirty minutes later my mother's sister
asks lots of questions — *Where did you work?*
- 7.1 *How long ago was that? What age are you?*
Forty I lie. For a minute I thought.
- 8.1 *But if you're forty, you can't be.*
I know she knows. The game's a bogey.
- 9.1 Actually I'm 26. *I thought so love.*
I thought it was you. Mam knew too.

- 10.1 *She just rang to warn me you'd ring.
How are you? How's your life been?*
- 11.1 *I'll give her yours. She'll write.
I'm sure you understand. I do. I do.*
- 12.1 Now She's gone. I get phone calls regularly
It's not that I think I'm losing out but
I've surprised myself just the same,
I've had to stop myself saying, 'drop
12.5 it,you'll get hurt'. I do worry
of course I do, but it's me that's hurt.
Tonight I cried watching bloody Adam
Carrington discover he's not a Carrington
any more. Daft. Getting myself into a tizzy.

Chapter 10: The Meeting Dream

- 1.1 *If I picture it like this it hurts less
We are both shy
though our eyes are not,
they pierce below skin.*
- 1.5 We are not as we imagined:
I am smaller, fatter, darker
I am taller, thinner
and I'd always imagined her hair dark brown
not grey I can see my chin in hers
- 1.10 that is all, though no doubt
my mum will say when she looks at the photo,
she's your double she really is.

- 2.1 There is no sentiment in this living—room,
a plain wood table and a few books.
We don't cuddle or even shake hands
though we smile sudden as a fire blazing
- 2.5 then die down,
Her hands play with her wedding—ring,
I've started smoking again.
We don't ask big questions even later by the shore.
We walk slow, tentative as crabs
- 2.10 No, so what have you been doing the past 26 years.
Just what are you working at, stuff like that.
- 3.1 Ages later I pick up a speckled stone
and hurl it into the sea,
is this how you imagined it to be?
I never imagined it.
- 3.5 Oh. I hear the muffled splash.
It would have driven me mad imagining,
26 years is a long time.
- 4.1 Inside once more I sip hot tea
notice one wood—framed photo.
The air is as old as the sea.
I stare at her chin till she makes me look down.
- 4.5 Her hands are awkward as rocks.
My eyes are stones washed over and over.
- 5.1 *If I picture it like this it hurts less*
- 6.1 One dream cuts another open like a gutted fish
nothing is what it was;
she is too many imaginings to be flesh and blood.
There is nothing left to say.
- 6.5 Neither of us mentions meeting again.

- 7.1 When I'm by myself watching the box
it's surprising how often it crops
up; that he or she didn't know anything about it
and now who is he or she really
- 7.5 do they love who they thought they loved
et cetera. You've got the picture.
Mine knew. As soon as possible
I always told her, if you ever want to,
I won't mind. I wasn't trying to be big
- 7.10 about it - if that was me, that's how I'd be.
Curiosity. It's natural. Origins.
That kind of thing. See me and her
there is no mother and daughter more similar
- 7.15 We're on the wavelength so we are.
Right away I know if she's upset.
And vice versa. Closer than blood.
Thicker than water Me and my daughter.
- 8.1 I wrapped up well and went out before
The birds began their ritual blether
- 9.1 I wrapped her up in purple wrapping paper
And threw her down the old well near here.
There was no sound, its no longer
in use —years— she's been in my drawer
- 9.5 Faded now, she's not a baby any more
- 10.1 Still pitch dark. It didn't matter.
I know every bend. I've no more terror.
Going home, the light spilled like water.
- 11.1 Her sister said she'd write me a letter.
In the morning I'm awake with the birds
waiting for the crash of the letter box
then the soft thud of words on the matt.
- 11.5 I lie there, duvet round my shoulders
fantasising the colour of her paper

whether she'll underline First Class
Or have a large circle over her 'i's.

RIASSUNTO

Il seguente elaborato vuole essere una proposta di traduzione della poesia autobiografica intitolata *The Adoption Papers* composta nel 1991 dalla scrittrice scozzese Jackie Kay.

Il mio interesse per le sue opere è nato durante il corso di Letterature Contemporanee in Lingua Inglese, in occasione del quale ci è stata proposta la lettura di un altro testo della scrittrice, *The Lamplighter*, che vede come protagoniste delle donne vittime della tratta atlantica degli schiavi. La sensibilità con cui viene affrontato questo argomento molto delicato mi ha colpito e ha suscitato in me grande curiosità nei confronti della scrittura di Kay.

Determinata a rifuggire una categorizzazione come scrittrice, Kay ha scritto opere di vario genere, come collezioni di racconti e di poesie, opere per il teatro, la televisione e la radio, romanzi e letteratura per bambini. Ciò che caratterizza la maggior parte dei suoi testi è la capacità di partire da esperienze realmente vissute per far riflettere il lettore sulla propria esistenza. Il suo obiettivo è quello di rendere le sue opere accessibili a tutti esplorando la condizione umana a partire dal tema dell'identità.

L'esperienza personale ha determinato il soggetto di scrittura fin dall'inizio della sua carriera letteraria. Kay è nata dalla breve storia d'amore tra uno studente nigeriano e una infermiera scozzese, la quale è stata obbligata dalla famiglia a darla in adozione; a pochi mesi dalla nascita una coppia scozzese è diventata la sua famiglia. Fin da bambina ha dovuto lottare per scoprire la sua vera natura, riflettendo in particolar modo sull'importanza dei legami di sangue. Nonostante il profondo legame con la famiglia adottiva, crescendo ha iniziato a sentire il bisogno di conoscere i genitori biologici per ricostruire una parte della sua storia. A complicare ulteriormente questo già complesso background si aggiunge la sua omosessualità, fonte anch'essa di riflessione sulla propria identità. I testi di Kay spesso rappresentano un viaggio alla scoperta di sé, nei quali dipinge l'identità come un processo fluido, le cui sfaccettature coesistono senza oscurarsi le une con le altre: lei si definisce una donna scozzese con radici africane, una madre lesbica e una scrittrice che fa la docente universitaria.

Kay ha iniziato ad ottenere dei riconoscimenti dalla critica proprio con *The Adoption Papers*, la sua prima collezione di poesie del 1991, grazie alla quale ha ricevuto il Scottish Arts Council Book Award, il Saltire First Book of the Year Award e il Forward Prize. Il nome della collezione è il medesimo della poesia principale, i cui versi autobiografici raccontano la storia dell'adozione attraverso tre voci narrative, madre biologica, madre adottiva e figlia, che si susseguono senza un ordine preciso.

La poesia è suddivisa in tre parti e ognuna di esse riflette momenti diversi dell'esperienza adottiva, descrivendone non solo i principali eventi ma anche i sentimenti e le sensazioni dei soggetti coinvolti. Da un lato leggiamo la storia di una donna che considera la sua infertilità un fallimento personale e che nel momento in cui diventa madre è terrificata dall'idea che la figlia possa preferirle la madre biologica, dall'altro lato conosciamo il dolore di un'altra donna che viene costretta ad abbandonare la sua bambina e che vive tutta la vita con il rimorso per averlo fatto. Nel mezzo troviamo la figlia, la cui vita è stata determinata dalle loro scelte e che deve fare quotidianamente i conti con la propria complicata identità.

Il testo è caratterizzato dal verso libero, l'autrice infatti non segue né uno schema di rime (non ve ne è alcuna) né un metro preciso, il numero di sillabe infatti è casuale. La struttura non è lineare e a volte appare poco chiara: la narrazione descrive gli eventi che avvengono nell'arco di trent'anni, ma la fabula e l'intreccio non coincidono poiché spesso viene fatto ricorso all'analepsi e alla prolessi. Il flusso di coscienza riveste un ruolo fondamentale all'interno del poema narrativo; questa tecnica permette di descrivere pensieri e sentimenti senza filtri, conferendo realismo al testo. Il senso di realismo è impartito anche dal tipo di linguaggio utilizzato, colloquiale ed informale. Questo non significa che la scrittrice abbia fatto uso di un vocabolario banale, ma semplicemente che è ricorsa al linguaggio più adatto per trasmettere riflessioni personali e descrivere la quotidianità. I temi affrontati e il modo in cui vengono presentati permettono a Kay di creare una forte empatia nei lettori, coinvolgendoli nella propria storia e condividendo con loro parte di sé.

L'ammirazione per la scrittrice scozzese e il mio personale coinvolgimento nella sua storia mi hanno spinto ad analizzare e tradurre questo testo emotivamente potente. Mi sono così messa doppiamente alla prova dovendo affrontare un testo al contempo poetico e autobiografico.

La traduzione della poesia è da sempre stata considerata più ardua rispetto alla traduzione di altri generi letterari; questo perché nella poesia la parola ha più importanza che in qualunque altro tipo di testo e inoltre viene fatto un uso non ordinario della lingua e della grammatica. Spesso il poeta non organizza le informazioni in modo trasparente, ma sembra evadere le regole intenzionalmente. Il basso livello di ridondanza della poesia e l'uso insolito della lingua possono determinare un'ampia gamma di interpretazioni e ciò potrebbe compromettere la fedeltà al messaggio originale. Nella traduzione ho cercato di trasmettere la mia interpretazione della poesia, trasformando in parole l'effetto che il testo originale aveva prodotto in me.

Lefevere (1975) crede che non esista una lista esaustiva di regole, ma definisce una serie di competenze che il traduttore dovrebbe possedere per ottenere una traduzione soddisfacente di una poesia. Innanzitutto dovrebbe avere la capacità di comprendere il testo nella sua totalità, senza focalizzarsi su un unico aspetto; oltre alle competenze linguistiche, il traduttore dovrebbe anche avere un buon bagaglio di conoscenze culturali, letterarie e sociali della lingua di partenza. La seconda abilità riguarda la capacità di comprendere il valore comunicativo del testo e di riproporlo il più fedelmente possibile. Il traduttore dovrebbe anche essere in grado di identificare quegli elementi del testo che necessitano di essere adattati o spiegati in base alle necessità dei nuovi lettori. Infine troviamo l'abilità di selezionare, all'interno della propria tradizione letteraria, un tipo di testo che rispecchi il più possibile quello del testo di partenza; le due opere devono occupare la stessa posizione nelle rispettive letterature.

Spesso la traduzione poetica fallisce perché il traduttore si focalizza esclusivamente su un aspetto del testo originale invece di dedicarsi alla trasmissione del suo significato globale; l'obiettivo numero uno deve essere dunque quello di preservare il valore comunicativo di partenza.

Per quanto riguarda invece la traduzione di opere autobiografiche, l'aspetto su cui vale la pena soffermarsi è il rapporto tra narratore ed esperienza. Mentre il narratore originale ha accesso diretto all'esperienza, poiché è la sua medesima, nella traduzione la connessione tra narratore e fonte di scrittura è interrotta; il traduttore narra l'esperienza dell'autore e dunque il suo accesso alle informazioni è indiretto. La distanza tra traduttore e autore potrebbe essere attenuata dall'attuazione di un processo di identificazione del primo con il secondo, basata sull'empatia. Vivere l'esperienza dell'autore come se fosse propria,

permette al traduttore di accedere in modo più diretto alle informazioni, appropriandosene. Secondo alcuni teorici della traduzione, l'empatia deve essere un prerequisito del traduttore; Newmark (1981) afferma che una traduzione di successo probabilmente dipende più dall'empatia del traduttore verso l'autore che da una particolare affinità con la lingua o la cultura di partenza.

L'autobiografismo è un ambito delicato della traduzione, poiché il suo scopo non è l'intrattenimento, ma la rappresentazione di sé; la scrittura diviene un mezzo attraverso cui l'autore, mettendosi a nudo di fronte al pubblico, prende consapevolezza di sé e riesce così a definirsi in modo autentico.

Seguendo la classificazione dei metodi traduttivi elaborata da Newmark (1988), posso dire che la traduzione di *The Adoption Papers* presenta delle caratteristiche che appartengono a due tipi di approccio: semantico e comunicativo. L'approccio semantico permette al traduttore di restare fedele al senso e allo spirito del testo di partenza; nelle opere autobiografiche questo è importante in quanto il messaggio dell'autore deve restare inalterato. Nella traduzione ho cercato di rispettare l'autorità di Kay, poiché la storia che ho tradotto è la sua vicenda personale, rappresenta il suo passato e trasmette le sue emozioni.

Il traduttore ha però una doppia responsabilità morale: se da un lato deve preservare il senso originale, dall'altro deve tenere in considerazione le necessità del lettore. L'approccio comunicativo non opera perciò sul livello linguistico dell'autore, ma sul livello linguistico del lettore, nel tentativo di ottenere lo stesso effetto del testo originale. Essendo un testo autobiografico, il mio scopo è stato quello di preservare più tratti originali possibili, ma senza imporre al lettore un sistema di valori completamente sconosciuto; a volte ho dovuto perciò adattare o spiegare qualche termine del testo.

Nella poesia ci sono degli aspetti culturo-specifici riguardanti il contesto Britannico; nel tradurre queste voci la principale strategia da me adottata è stata quella di sostituirli, dove necessario, con termini familiari che potessero avere lo stesso impatto sul nuovo lettore. Così ad esempio, le unità di misura del sistema imperiale sono state convertite in unità di misura del sistema internazionale, mentre il tessuto scozzese *tweed*, conosciuto in tutto il mondo, è rimasto invariato.

Anche le espressioni idiomatiche rappresentano un aspetto della questione culturale. Poiché gli idiomi sono peculiare ad una lingua e il loro significato è altro da quello

puramente logico o grammaticale, tradurli letteralmente senza alcun tipo di adattamento porterebbe a deviarne il significato. Nella traduzione ho privilegiato la fedeltà culturale piuttosto che l'accuratezza linguistica, impiegando unità linguistiche che esprimessero il significato originale il più fedelmente possibile. Ad esempio, ho tradotto l'espressione inglese *to get oneself into a tizzy* (Ch. 9) con la corrispondente espressione italiana *andare nel pallone*.

Un'altra caratteristica del testo originale è la presenza di un elevato numero di metafore e similitudini, le quali mi hanno speso messa in difficoltà; prima di tutto ho dovuto capire il significato figurato e in secondo luogo ho dovuto trovare significati e funzioni equivalenti dell'espressione nella lingua di arrivo. Nella maggior parte dei casi, le figure retoriche incontrate sono originali, ossia nascono dall'autore stesso e dunque sono uniche nel loro genere; per questo motivo ho preferito tradurle letteralmente, preservando il messaggio personale della scrittrice.

Nella poesia inoltre sono presenti alcuni termini dialettali scozzesi utilizzati da Kay per enfatizzare la propria identità culturale e per sottolineare il registro colloquiale del testo, conferendogli realismo. Nella traduzione non ho optato per una trasposizione geografica, considerando una regione grossomodo equivalente e scegliendo in modo casuale uno dei suoi dialetti, ma ho preferito sostituire le forme dialettali con l'italiano standard. Convertire il dialetto dell'originale in uno dei dialetti italiani non avrebbe avuto senso poiché anche il testo tradotto è ambientato in Scozia e i suoi protagonisti sono scozzesi.

Prima di procedere con la traduzione ho letto il testo accuratamente diverse volte, individuandone il significato generale, analizzandone il registro linguistico e identificandone i tratti distintivi e le principali difficoltà. Dopo una prima stesura, ho ripreso in mano il testo e, strofa dopo strofa, ho cercato di migliorare i versi sia sul piano del contenuto che su quello della forma.

La lettura del romanzo autobiografico di Kay, *Red Dust Road* (2010), nel quale la scrittrice racconta l'incontro con i genitori biologici e il rapporto che si viene ad instaurare tra loro, è stato molto utile, poiché alcuni passaggi della poesia sono raccontati in modo molto più dettagliato nell'opera successiva.

La revisione finale della traduzione richiede obiettività e per cercare di ottenere un buon livello di distacco tra me e il mio prodotto ho utilizzato le tecniche descritte da Osimo (1998): lettura del testo a video, lettura del testo stampato su carta, lettura del testo

stampato ad alta voce in solitudine e ad un'altra persona e infine ascolto del testo letto ad alta voce da un'altra persona. Infine ho chiesto a due madrelingua italiani di leggere la traduzione e i loro feedback sull'uso naturale dell'Italiano mi hanno permesso di fare gli ultimi accorgimenti e di concludere così il processo traduttivo.

La mia traduzione è accompagnata da una commento poiché lo ritengo fondamentale per spiegare le mie scelte al fine di rendere comprensibile come ho raggiunto il prodotto finale.

Ho realizzato che una teoria della traduzione con regole standard non esiste, poiché il traduttore deve considerare approcci diversi a seconda del tipo di testo su cui si trova a lavorare. La teoria traduttiva fornisce principi e strategie utili per affrontare i problemi, ma è il traduttore che conduce il gioco grazie alle sue competenze e alla sua esperienza.

Questa esperienza come traduttrice mi ha dato la possibilità di ampliare e migliorare le mie conoscenze linguistiche, sia dell'inglese che dell'italiano, così come ha permesso di sviluppare le mie competenze traduttive. Inoltre le riflessioni di Kay sull'identità e sui legami familiari mi hanno dato l'opportunità di meditare sulla mia esperienza personale di esplorare zone del mio io che altrimenti – forse non avrei mai conosciuto (Caproni in Buffoni 2004: 33).