

Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice
in Translation and Gender Studies

Edited by

Eleonora Federici and Vanessa Leonardi

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CONTENTS

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Introduction	1
<i>Eleonora Federici and Vanessa Leonardi</i>	
Chapter One.....	4
Gender and Translation: A New European Tradition? <i>José Santaemilia</i>	
Chapter Two	15
Translating Dolls <i>Oriana Palusci</i>	
Chapter Three	32
Early Modern Translators ‘Juggling with the Word of God’ <i>June Waudby</i>	
Chapter Four.....	42
Aphra Behn: The Visible Translator <i>Annamaria Lamarra</i>	
Chapter Five	52
Rivera Garretas’s Translation of Virginia Woolf’s <i>A Room of One’s Own</i> : To What Extent Does Practice Meet Theory? <i>Susagna Tubau</i>	
Chapter Six	63
Can We Translate Ambiguity? <i>Vanessa Leonardi</i>	
Chapter Seven.....	75
Woman-identified Approach in Practice: A Case Study of Four Chinese Translations of the Novel <i>The Color Purple</i> <i>Elaine Tzu-Yi Lee</i>	

Chapter Eight.....	86
“Ah wants tuh utilize mahself all over”: Feminist Strategies in the Italian Translations of Zora Neale Hurston’s <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i> <i>Manuela Coppola</i>	
Chapter Nine.....	98
‘Thought of by you all day, I think of you’: Translating Carol Ann Duffy’s <i>Rapture</i> into Italian <i>Floriana Marinzuli</i>	
Chapter Ten	112
Bridging the Genders? Transgendering Translation Theory and Practice <i>Mirko Casagrande</i>	
Chapter Eleven	122
Translating Gender on Screen across Languages: The Case of <i>Transamerica</i> <i>Alessandra De Marco</i>	
Chapter Twelve	133
<i>My Place/La mia Australia</i> : Translating Sally Morgan’s Polyphonic and Gendered Text into Italian <i>Eleonora Federici</i>	
Chapter Thirteen.....	150
Turning Turtle and the In/visibility of Ecofeminist Metaphors in Italian Translations of Katherine Mansfield’s <i>At the Bay</i> <i>Katherine Russo</i>	
Postface	163
Gender and Translation, and Translation Studies: An Ongoing Affair <i>Luise Von Flotow</i>	
Notes on Contributors.....	165

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this work is to share information on two very interesting, yet debatable issues within the field of Translation Studies, namely gender and translation in an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Given the important relationship between translation and gender since the beginning of the theoretical debate in Feminist Translation Studies, the aim of this edited volume is to determine and analyse how this relationship has been approached in different countries, not only in Europe but also worldwide. Feminist translation is undoubtedly a very interesting and widespread phenomenon, which includes and combines questions of language, culture, gender, identity and sexual equality. Feminist Translation Studies have established themselves as a solid field of research and practice in many countries and their purpose is to reverse the subordinate role of both women and translators in society by challenging and fighting against what is perceived as patriarchal language. Although Feminist Translation Studies were born in Québec in the 1980s, as a direct consequence of women writers’ experimental writing wishing to re-inscribe femininity in language and to deconstruct the dominant patriarchal discourse through conscious manipulation of language, Canada and Spain seem to be two of the most important countries where the problems inherent to translation and the category of gender have been most fruitfully discussed by eminent scholars such as Barbara Godard, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow and José Santaemilia, among others. These theorists have given prominence to the translator, whether woman or man, to their choices and to the strategies outlined in order to unveil the gender-related aspects in translation. In Italy, however, the situation is different and a gap seems to exist between theory and practice. Aware of these differences in our country, it was our intention to explore what is the current situation of feminist translation practices also in other countries, to investigate what are the positions of translators who have dealt with gender issues and to determine whether there are translators who deliberately and openly proclaim themselves as feminist translators.

the investigation of *Transamerica*'s dialogues and of their audiovisual translation has allowed to examine how this specific translation modality preserves or alters the linguistic construction of Bree's gender identity by means of calques, translational routines, synchronization problems concerning lexical, semantic or syntactic features, and alterations due to the untranslatability of certain puns, word plays or of cultural references. More significantly, the analysis of this film has highlighted how the transgender condition challenges translation practices and abilities as to what concerns the verbal representation of fluid, intersexual identities and forces us to rediscuss the use of language when talking about gender(s).

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CHAPTER TWELVE

MY PLACE/LA MIA AUSTRALIA: TRANSLATING SALLY MORGAN'S POLYPHONIC AND GENDERED TEXT INTO ITALIAN¹

ELEONORA FEDERICI

Aboriginal literature begins as a cry from the heart directed at the whiteman. It is a cry for justice and for a better deal, a cry for understanding and an asking to be understood.²

A translator of Sally Morgan's *My Place* faces many challenges: the multi-layered structure of the book, the polyphonic nature of the text heard through four different voices, the distinct linguistic registers, the changes occurring to the narrative voices from the beginning to the end of the text, the many intertextual elements about Australian history, culture, society and Aboriginal roots, the linguistic references to Australian English and Aboriginal English are not easy elements to retrace and translate into a target language/culture. While reading it and preparing his own rewriting and adaptation of the text, the translator immediately recognizes he has to cope with a 'textual struggle'. My essay intends to analyse Sally Morgan's text into the Italian context, specifically referring to the Italian translation made by Maurizio Bartocci in 1997.³ My interest lies in the

¹ The financial support of the *Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación* (grant research FEM2009-10976) for this research is gratefully acknowledged.

² Narogin, *Writing from the Fringe. A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature*.

³ Morgan, *La mia Australia*.

importance of Morgan's book in the history of Aboriginal writing and in reproducing/transferring Sally Morgan's *My Place* into Italian for an Italian reader, probably unaware of many aspects about Australian history. Sally Morgan's text is very useful for a discussion on the gaps between theory and practice because it is certainly difficult to translate its many direct (and indirect) references to Aboriginal history and culture in the last century. It is also a good example for a translation focused on gender issues because this novel is about matrilineal heritage; we can say it is a culturally and gendered 'loaded' text. As a matter of fact, three out of the four stories in the book are by women offering a gendered perspective on how Australian society has changed towards Aboriginal people over the years. Aboriginal women like Nan, Sally's grandmother, have fought genocide, dispossession and sexual exploitation; women like Gladys, Sally's mother, have been powerless as children and forcefully detached from their family – the infamous "Stolen Generation". Sally's social improvement and recognition highlights the huge gap between these generations and the new perception about Aboriginal women in Australian society (even if class differences, access to education and social problems among Aboriginals are still poignant factors).

This hybrid autobiographical novel is for the Italian translator an interesting battleground for linguistic and cultural choices. Morgan's text follows an essential grammatical structure, a simple repetitive lexicon which characterizes the four speaking subjects: Sally, Gladys, Arthur and Daisy. Short sentences and lack of subordinates make the novel a 'conversational' text where word usage reclaims a distinctive cultural identity, the Aboriginal one. Even if the author uses a highly literate English language the text is nonetheless intertwined with Australian English words and accurately chosen cultural-bound words in Aboriginal languages that not only add an exotic flavor to the novel but create an empathy between Aboriginal histories and the Italian reader, quite unaware of the history of horror perpetuated in Australia. Historical facts are told from the Aboriginal point of view unveiling a story of loss, trauma and violence. Moreover, orality, so central in Aboriginal culture, is embedded in the narrative structure and strategies granting an important link with the essence of Aboriginal literature and culture.⁴

Sally Morgan's text is a landmark book in Indigenous-Australian literature; it is widely studied in schools around Australia and is on the current senior syllabus in several states. Since its publication in 1987 it has

⁴ An interesting discussion on orality in Aboriginal literature as opposed to Walter Ong's famous study can be found in E. Rask Knudsen, *The Circle and the Spiral. A Study of Australian Aboriginal and New Zealand Maori Literature*.

sold over 500,000 copies in English speaking countries and has been widely translated into different European languages. Moreover, there is still an ongoing critical interest for this novel.⁵ The book has also been published in three parts (*Sally's Story*, *Arthur Corunna's Story* and *Mother and Daughter: the Story of Daisy and Gladys Corunna*) for young readers.⁶ Morgan won numerous literary prizes for this book for example, The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission Award for Literature (1987), the Braille Book of the Year Award (1988) and the Western Australian Citizen of the Year Award for Arts, Literature and Culture (1989). Various polemics have surrounded the text since its publication beginning from the critical response by the Drake Brockman family highly involved in the narrative of exploitation and violence towards Aboriginal people in the book. In order to dismantle Morgan's portrait of the colonizers a different version of the story has been published by Judith Drake Brockman with the title *Wongi Wongi*, a point of view on the same story that aims at deconstructing Morgan's portrayal of incest attached to her great grandfather, colonizer and pastoralist.⁷ Critics to the novel were made also by Aboriginal writers and scholars, the most known of whom was Mudrooroo Narogin who in *Writing from the Fringe* (1990) criticized the editing of 'Aboriginality' of style and discourse in the book.⁸ He declared Morgan's text to be a-political and her use of Standard English a result of the assimilation policy of the colonizer.⁹ This is partly true but Sally Morgan's educational language was English and the book is the result of her own history. The worse critique by Mudrooroo was that Aboriginality was made up for the content of the book: "Sally Morgan's book is a milepost in Aboriginal literature in that it marks a stage when it is considered O.K. to be Aboriginal as long as you are young, gifted and not very black".¹⁰ This is quite a simplifying way of reading the text. Even if the text has been accused of being 'readable' because non-threatening for white Australians,¹¹ Morgan's book

⁵ The book was well received also by white Australian readers/publishers/critics. See A. Shoemaker, *Black Words White Page. Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*.

⁶ All volumes were published in 1990 by Freemantle Press.

⁷ Drake Brockman, *Wongi Wongi: to Speak*. A critique of Morgan's book as an example of fabrication of Aboriginal history can be found in T. Thomas, "My Place: a Betrayal of Trust".

⁸ This critique was quite controversial since Mudrooroo's Aboriginality was questioned sparking a scandal in the media in the mid-90s.

⁹ Narogin, *Writing from the Fringe. A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹¹ Finn, "Postnational Hybridity in Sally Morgan's *My Place*".

should be read at different levels, textual layers that unveil critical representations of Blacks and Whites in Australia and problematic versions of Aboriginal identity and authenticity. Critics have already discussed the 'construction' of Aboriginality by Morgan,¹² her abrupt recovery of the family's Aboriginal past. The Aboriginal scholar, Marcia Langton, reflecting on the debates around the book stated:

"The enormous response by white Australia to *My Place* lies somewhere in the attraction to something forbidden - 'Aboriginality' or incest - and the apparent investigation and revelation of that forbidden thing through style and family history. It recasts Aboriginality, so long suppressed, as acceptable, bringing it out to the open. The book is a catharsis. It gives release and relief, not so much to Aboriginal people oppressed by psychotic racism, as to the whites who wittingly and unwittingly participated in it".¹³

The indigenous writer and activist Jackie Huggins took a different position on Morgan's book and claimed that: "it makes Aboriginality intelligible to non-Aboriginals although there are different forms of Aboriginality which need to be considered also: otherwise these remain exclusionary and the danger is that only one 'world view' is espoused".¹⁴ The strength of the book seems to be Morgan's passion in her search for the past.¹⁵ The issues of "mistranslation, misappropriation and disempowerment"¹⁶ are central in Morgan's story and two keywords permeate the entire reading: a complex of attitudes and beliefs which constitute Aboriginality and the slippery controversial issue of "authenticity"; both are connected to the identity politics which is developed in the text. The text was perceived as "inauthentic" both by Australian Aboriginals and white critics, because embedded in the dominant culture and with a simplified perception of the Aboriginal world.¹⁷ In his analysis of the novel Martin Renes outlines Morgan's ability to put together Western education, the use of Western

¹² Attwood, "Portrait of an Aboriginal as an Artist: Sally Morgan and the Construction of Aboriginality".

¹³ Langton, "Aboriginal Art and Film. The Politics of Representation".

¹⁴ Huggins, "Always Was Always Will Be".

¹⁵ Docker, "Recasting Sally Morgan's *My Place*: the Fictionality of Identity and the Phenomenology of the Converso".

¹⁶ Wisker, *Post-Colonial and African American Women's Writing. A Critical introduction*, 213.

¹⁷ Griffiths, "The Myth of Authenticity: Representation, Discourse and Social Practice".

literary genres and the issue of orality and Aboriginal 'sharing' of secrets.¹⁸

An Aboriginal Woman's Autobiography

Sally Morgan's book is often quoted as a main example for Aboriginal women's autobiography and construction of Aboriginality. Since its publication the Australian publishing market has witnessed a proliferation of this genre as part of a recovery and reconstruction of Aboriginal life and culture in Australia.¹⁹ These narratives were very important in deconstructing 'white cultural amnesia' and, as Brewster affirms, "have demonstrated Benedict Anderson's dictum that a country's biography, "must be narrated".²⁰ Aboriginal women's autobiographies have worked as historical documents able to deconstruct the Great Australian silence, a history based on forgetting the physical and psychic violence and the unbearable racial denigration towards Aboriginal people. Morgan published the book for the Bicentennial reader, occupied in celebrating the birth of a new nation while he was forced to accept that there was another story. Indigenous protest movements brought a different political and social awareness of Australian history heavily marked by colonization and annihilation of native populations. Morgan's character of the hospitalized, alcoholic, violent and racist father and the characters of the colonizers, the Drake Brockman family, clearly represent the 'white sin' of Australia.

At the time of the publication of the book two issues were important: invisibility in the sense of unveiling Aboriginal silence on their own traumatic history, and inaccessibility to Aboriginal history. The narrativization of Aboriginal women's memoirs was aimed at making the invisible history of colonization of Australia visible and renaming Australia's decolonized space. From this perspective, Katherine Trees has considered the novel as a "counter memory of colonialism"²¹ made of personal and political resistance. Similarly, Gina Wisker has considered fictionalized autobiographies such as Morgan's book as texts which "bring forth the issue of who writes, of the politics of co-authorship, of claims of

¹⁸ Renes, "Sally Morgan: Aboriginal Identity Retrieved and Performed within and without *My Place*".

¹⁹ Zierott, *Aboriginal Women's Narratives: Reclaiming Identities*. See also O. Haag, "From the Margins to the Mainstream: towards a History of Published Indigenous Australian Autobiographies and Biographies".

²⁰ Brewster, "An Uneasy Truce? Aboriginal Women's Autobiography in the Arena of Postcolonial Studies", 204.

²¹ Trees, "Counter-Memories: History and Identity in Aboriginal Literature", 3.

identity, and of how we read such works".²² In his study on Australian autobiography, published two years after *My Place*, John Colmer differentiates between European and Australian autobiography outlining some common themes like, for example, the importance of childhood experience, the binomic opposition the rural paradise/problematic urban world and the sense of place.²³ In this analysis he also included a distinctive genre that he defines as "female autobiography" of which Morgan's text is an example. Women's autobiographies reveal "a distinctly feminine mode of perception and writing".²⁴ Morgan's autobiography is more overtly dialogic and less introspective, it is an Aboriginal life story where the author utilizes other literary genres such as, for example, the detective story. Collingwood Whittick goes even further and defines Morgan's text as an "Auto-ethnography" where the authorial I/eye²⁵ frames all the stories of her family. If Hammond, O'Neill and Reid, affirm that "the text becomes a semiotic representation of the writer",²⁶ the author achieves this by splitting the narrative into four parts and presenting different people's experience in various epochs thus envisaging a sociological account of the Aboriginals' history and clash with colonization through three generations. The autobiographical element is fundamental not only in Morgan's text but it has also been central also to Aboriginal lives. In fact, by offering a diachronic perspective on the relation between Aboriginal people and autobiography Penelope von Toorn has outlined how Aboriginal people were encouraged to testify at official inquiries, tell stories to the ethnographer and confess to missionaries. Their words were recorded and this performative aspect of Aboriginal storytelling, is central to their textual contemporary production.²⁷ This function of the author/narrator as an ethnographer recording the family's stories and transcribing them on the page around which Morgan's text is constructed is thus cardinal to the narrative.²⁸

In analyzing Morgan's text and its translation into Italian we should remember that Morgan used oral source material revealing the centrality of oral culture in Aboriginal life and unveiling references to the rich

²² Wisker, *Post-Colonial and African American Women's Writing. A Critical introduction*, 209.

²³ Colmer, *Australian Autobiography: a Personal Quest*.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁵ Collingwood Whittick, "Sally Morgan's *My Place*: Exposing the (Ab)original 'Text' Behind Whitefellas' History", 44.

²⁶ Hammond M. O'Neill and J. Reid, *Autobiography. The Writer's Story*, 8.

²⁷ Von Toorn, *Writing Never Arrives Naked*.

²⁸ Gelder, "Aboriginal Narrative and Property".

linguistic and cultural archive of Aboriginal people choosing to disseminate them in a written form. Various meanings were given to this transcription of oral sources into the written form. Story telling has a memory form, it is not a linear narrative and as such it should be re-ordered. In Stephen Muecke's opinion, "the translation from speech to writing [...] involves editing which is massive in its proportions and implications"²⁹ whereas Colmer believes that Morgan's recording of oral histories in cassettes is a sign of authenticity for the novel, because it gives verisimilitude to the narrative. Due to this recording act Morgan was compared to an ethnographer, or using Clifford's term, we could say a "para-ethnographer".³⁰ The debate was centred around Morgan's articulation of Aboriginality due to the fact that she discovered it when she was an adult as she plainly asserts in her book: "Had I been dishonest with myself? What did it really mean to be Aboriginal? [...] I'd never participated in corroborees or heard stories of the Dreamtime. I'd lived all my life in suburbia and told everyone I was Indian. I hardly knew any Aboriginal people. What did it mean to someone like me?"³¹

At the centre of the book is the discovery of her ethnical background and her unveiling silences and secrets. Many critics have dealt with this issue outlining how her search for Aboriginality can be perceived as "Morgan's heart of darkness",³² or the importance of her pilgrimage to the places and extended family,³³ or her will "to reclaim a place for her Aboriginality".³⁴ Morgan craftily weaves the narrators' stories thus allowing the readers to become part of her discoveries sharing with them her quest for roots and inner struggles. Morgan's text is a declaration of ethnic and cultural belonging along with a way of rethinking about Australian identity in general. The importance of women story-telling in this text is adamant and reiterates the centrality of oral culture from one generation to the other carried out by the family's women.

²⁹ Muecke, "Introduction" to Paddy Roe's *Gularabulu*, 5.

³⁰ Eric Michaels utilized this term criticizing Morgan's 'fake' Aboriginality: Michaels, "Para-Ethnography".

³¹ Morgan, *My Place*, 141.

³² Bliss, "The Mythology of Family: Three Texts of Popular Australian Culture", 65.

³³ Downing, "Scrivendo il silenzio: le life-stories al femminile di Sally Morgan e Ruby Langford Ginibi".

³⁴ Brewster, *Aboriginal Women's Autobiography*, 21.

What Did it Really Meant to be Aboriginal?

The success of the book changed Morgan's life, she became more and more engaged in Aboriginal issues. She got involved in school workshops with Aboriginal children, she set up the Centre for Indigenous History and the Arts at the University of Western Australia that has been instrumental in breaking down the barriers between Aboriginal people and white culture, helping Stolen Generation victims to find their family and protecting intellectual property rights in the fields of Arts. In 2007 she co-edited an anthology of indigenous-Australian entitled *Speaking from the Heart: Stories of Life, Family and Country*. Her second book, *namurraganya: the Story of Jack McPhee* (1989) was her grandfather's biography.

The answer to her own question "What did it really meant to be Aboriginal?" was for Morgan the use of polyphony, in fact, in this text authorship is inscribed in a shared communal experience rather than on an individual effort. The insertion of various voices demonstrates Morgan's growing process in her acquisition of knowledge of Aboriginality. *My Place* is polyphonic because: 1) it includes more voices heard in parallel with the narrator, whose voice gradually fades away from the narration; 2) it moves from autobiography to Aboriginal textual conventions.³⁵ Referring to Bakhtin's idea of the novel as "an artistically organized social heteroglossia", Subhash Jaireth underlines how the incorporation of three testimonies makes Morgan's text an example of heteroglossia.³⁶ The author/narrator's speech is presented in parallel with the speeches of three other narrators/members of the family. As Muecke affirms, Morgan "has resisted the impulse to enclose the others".³⁷ The narrators' stories enable the reader to recover a diachronical history of Aboriginal family's life thus understanding the struggle and violence perpetuated against Aboriginals in different epochs. The four stories, though each different and independent from the others, give a final frame to the whole story, linking the principal issues to the main narrative. It is the story of a silenced, fragmentary past that slowly comes to the surface revealed by reluctant narrators who, step by step, become more and assertive and forceful. In Joan Newman's words "the four authorial voices [...] do not challenge one another, they have the same cohesive function of oral narrative in terms of their relation to each other. Rather, they challenge the discourses in which they are framed.

³⁵ Muecke, "Aboriginal Literature and the Repressive Hypothesis" and "Body, Inscription, Epistemology: Knowing Aboriginal Texts".

³⁶ Jaireth, "The 'I' in Sally Morgan's *My Place*: Writing of a Monologised Self".

³⁷ Muecke, *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*, 134.

Orthodox European discourses of nationalism, and the generic form of autobiography".³⁸ The novel is also polyphonic because one voice does not silence the other, they all form the final narrative: "Polyphony requires the decentering of authorial consciousness so that a dialogue between equally independent voices of the author and protagonists can take place".³⁹ Morgan does not talk for others but let them speak. It is the story of a silenced, fragmentary past revealed by reluctant narrators whose voices become more and more positive. As Finn underlines, Morgan's well-thought structure is "a recuperative act of piecing together a collective memory across generations".⁴⁰

The text presents different linguistic registers, dialects and Aboriginal cultural-bound terms. The characters' social and gender variations become markers of identity and, at the same time, discursive signs and social-cultural traces of specific periods of Australian history. Morgan's text is grammatically essential, with a simple lexicon and repetitions. The reader understands the layering of meanings that are revealed as the narrative goes on and is enriched by new elements. Dialogues are characterized by everyday language conversations. Morgan has been criticized also for her use of language by Mudrooroo who asserted that the other lives in *My Place* are imprisoned between "slabs of Standard English subordinate to the framing self of Sally Morgan and her totalizing narrative",⁴¹ nevertheless I believe, borrowing the idea from Audre Lorde, that 'using the master's tools can dismantle the master's house'. Morgan's Australian English phrases do not domesticate the language of the 'other' that, on the contrary, marks its presence through speech mixture. Language use reflects social class, racial/ethnic background, gender and professional life. From this perspective the heteroglossic discourse also comes out from the characters' speeches marked by all these categories and geographical belonging. The importance of Aboriginal languages through Nan's shifts in language and Arthur's recovery of Balgoo and other hints provided by the author in the text reveal the central role of language for Morgan.⁴² Certainly Morgan chose to make the text more readable to the non-

³⁸ Newman, "Reader-Response to Transcribed Oral Narrative: *A Fortunate Life* and *My Place*", 387.

³⁹ Muecke, *Textual Spaces Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*, 71.

⁴⁰ Finn, "Postnational Hybridity in Sally Morgan's *My Place*", 20.

⁴¹ Mudrooroo in Muecke, 362.

⁴² For a study on Aboriginal languages see: Amery and Bourke "Australian Languages: our Heritage" and Blake, *Australian Aboriginal Languages: a General Introduction*.

Aboriginal reader and uses pervasively standard English but her choice is also the result of forced linguistic assimilation and biographical erasure.

The Italian Translation: *La mia Australia*

The Italian translation, published by Theoria ten years later was translated by Maurizio Bartocci who included a two-pages translator's note at the end of the book; a second edition came out in 2007 by Bompiani with a Preface by Nadia Fusini where the scholar emphasizes a central issue of the novel, the sense of place, the sense of belonging to the nation Australia but also the psychological, interior landscape of each character. Before tackling this translation it is important to underline, that in Italy few Aboriginal texts are known because they are neither translated nor disseminated by publishers. Mudrooroo's *Wild Cat Falling/ Gatto selvaggio cade* was translated in 2003 as part of the emerging Indigenous canon along with Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* in 2004.⁴³ Marlo Morgan's *Mutant message down under/ e venne chiamata due cuori* is still presented as an indigenous author while she is a highly controversial US author highly critics for her representations of Aboriginals.⁴⁴

The title of the book, *My Place* is a key feature to read the text because it implies a rethinking of Australian nationalism through the Aboriginal concept of belonging to the land which is not connected to possession but rather to spirituality. The "Place" is not only a geographical entity but a mythical space connected to the time of memory. The title recalls the "reclaiming of place" carried out by Aboriginal people for land rights.⁴⁵ The title of the book – part of what has been defined as the "Aboriginal Renaissance – highlights an important issue which will come to an end few years later with the historic High Court Mabo decision of 1992: the dismantling of the legal fiction of Australia as a *terra nullius*. The title reveals the climax of the book, the protagonists' journey to the Aboriginal North, the trip to the land of the ancestors; "place is the dominant metaphor of the book".⁴⁶ Quite surprisingly according to these reason but quite common as part of editorial choices, in the Italian version the title has been changed into "La mia Australia" and the direct reference to the

⁴³ Mudrooroo, *Gatto selvaggio cade*; Pilkington, *Barriera per conigli*.

⁴⁴ Di Blasio "A Path of Words: the Reception of Autobiographical Australian Aboriginal Writing in Italy".

⁴⁵ Cfr. Baraldi, *L'ultima terra: la cultura australiana contemporanea*; O. Palusci and S. Bertacco, *Postcolonial to Multicultural. An Anthology of Texts from the English-Speaking World*.

⁴⁶ Jaireth, 71.

main discourse - that is to say the Aboriginal subject towards the kinship network - has been completely lost. Nevertheless *La mia Australia*, was chosen for the the Italian version in order to allow Italian readers to make a connection with the country while emphasising at the same time, a personal history through the possessive 'mia'. The second visible change in the Italian version is the cover. While the original text presents a painting by Morgan, who is a well-known urban artist, which functions as a 'meta-reading' of the text to allow readers to visualize the richness and depth of Aboriginal culture,⁴⁷ in the Italian edition we find the photograph of a young Aborigine getting ready for a corroboree (and in the second edition a similar image of an Aboriginal dancing). Although this is undoubtedly an appreciable image from an aesthetical point of view, it also reassures the target reader thanks to its romantic representation of the noble savage. The representation of Aboriginality – the essence of the book – is given through its objectification in the depicted subject rather than through an image emphasizing Aboriginal creativity like in the source text (ST).

When we open the book and begin to read the Italian version the first question that comes to mind is whether the polyphony of voices and oral discourses of the ST are preserved in the target text TT. The answer unfortunately is not a positive one. Notwithstanding the premises on cultural awareness in the translator's note, serious changes were made to the original structure of the source text. The main reason was probably to translate the ST into readable and fluent Italian. If it is true that Italian is less direct than English, with longer sentences and passive constructions it is also true that the ST has been widely simplified. The TT has lost the oral flavor of the ST. Nan's voice fiercely bursting out after decades of silence in the ST is tamed and domesticated in the target text losing one of the main structural devices of the novel. Moreover, the Italian version presents clear uniformity in the speeches of all the four characters, assimilated and rendered as a 'group' and not in their individuality clearly 'audible' in the ST. Step by step the four voices in the ST change and develop becoming more and more assertive. These variations in speech are totally absent in the TT; polyphony is reduced to one voice. Another important feature that is completely lost in the TT is broken grammar and slang which are present in the ST and not retraceable in the Italian translation where the

⁴⁷ Aboriginal Visual Art is an important element for the understanding of Aboriginal culture. Many are the publications, among which: Amadio and Kimber, *Wildbird Dreaming: Aboriginal Art of the Central Deserts of Australia*; Morphy, *Aboriginal Art and Caruana, Aboriginal Art*.

language seems to be standardized. As a consequence, also the rhythms and sounds of polyphony have disappeared. Moreover, the colloquial modes of expression that make the text visibly 'oral' in the ST cannot be 'heard' in the TT. The reader thus loses one of the main characteristics of Aboriginal narratives and the core elements of the text. Another aspect which is not always conveyed in the TT is the connotative meaning of words. Many are the terms referring to the Australian landscape, which not only possess a specific meaning in this context but are extremely important when connected to Aboriginal culture; for example, a term like 'bush' that not only identifies the Australian outback but acquires a different meaning that goes beyond the spatial/geographical connotation for Aboriginal people, was translated as 'boscaglia' a term that immediately recalls a very different image from the Australian outback domesticating the visual image of the Australian bush. To be fair, we must say that some words in Aboriginal English were kept in order to invite a perception of cultural difference but generally speaking the translation does not transpose many concepts which are central to Aboriginal culture. Since language embodies our conceptualization of experiences and cultural key-concepts, here Aboriginal beliefs like kinship or spirituality should be clearly conveyed (with the use of footnotes, a preface or even a glossary). In the Italian translation the translator maintains: 1) the use of orthography and capitalized letters through which the author emphasized some 'places' and issues; 2) the repetition of some keywords that reiterate a certain message; 3) some untranslated terms such as "blackfella" repeatedly used in the text with a derogatory connotation; 4) some footnotes explaining mainly Australian flora and fauna. However, the references in the footnotes are mainly informative and they neither unveil the complexity of correlated issues, nor clarify some aspects of Aboriginal culture. Even if acquainted with the specific socio-historical situation of Australia (and its history of race relations) the translator mainly opted for a more conventional rendering of the text carrying out a cross-linguistic/cultural editing for the target reader. May be as G. C. Spivak suggests, he should have called for an interpreter figure to help him to gather all the implications of Aboriginal culture and women's role in it.⁴⁸ Or should he have consulted the author, a communication that can have a special value in transposing a text into another culture?⁴⁹ Certainly when dealing with a Postcolonial text documentary competence is fundamental in order to better understand the many intertextual references to the ST

⁴⁸ G.C. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*.

⁴⁹ See Spivak's "Introduction" in Devi, *Imaginary Maps*.

culture and context. Furthermore, the use of a critical apparatus where the translator can insert many explanations and information for the target reader is very important. Translation should deconstruct the target reader's cultural categories and familiarize him/her with a different culture.

A translator is responsible for the final work and its reception. This means, as G. C. Spivak has outlined in reflecting on Comparative Literature, that the translator should be, first of all, an interpreter between two socio-political and cultural worlds. In order to dismantle the dichotomy between the West(ern world) and 'the rest', the need of interpreting figures able to speak and translate minority languages becomes essential to reveal the other's point of view and avoid misinterpreting their stratified and multi-layered languages.⁵⁰ Today, the ethics of the translation involves being aware of the risks deriving from speaking for others, erasing a Euro-centric notion of translation and above all, understanding the geo-socio-political context in which the original texts are produced (ethics of location). We should therefore take into consideration that the location of translators is connected to social practices and how translation is mainly an intercultural exchange which necessitates a profound awareness of linguistic and cultural boundaries.

In the Italian translation of Morgan's text women's voices are domesticated and rendered 'other' from what they are, symbols of a traumatic history, embodiments of a matriarchal society and expressions of an imposed linguistic assimilation which nonetheless has some gaps. The Aboriginal woman's voice in Italian does not sound Aboriginal:

ST: "Well I'm hoping things will change one day. At least we not owned anymore. I Know it's hard for You Sal hard to understand. *You different to me. I been scared all my life [...]*. Do you think we'll get some respect? I like to think the black man will get treated same as the white man one day. Be good, wouldn't it? *By gee it'd be good*"

TT: "Insomma spero che un giorno le cose cambieranno. Se non altro non siamo più proprietà di nessuno. So che per te è difficile Sal, difficile da capire. *Tu sei diversa da me. Io ho avuto paura di parlare [...]* credi che avremo un po' di rispetto? Mi piace pensare che un giorno l'uomo nero sarà trattato allo stesso modo che quello bianco. Sarebbe bello vero? *Perdinci, sarebbe bello*"

Nan's Aboriginal language with its syntactical simplification and colloquial and immediate tone is rendered in a more formal Italian and, as shown in the example above, in a quite funny anachronistic lexical choice.

⁵⁰ G.C. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*.

Erasure of difference and uniformisation to the target language and culture do not permit the understanding of cultural differences. In Morgan's case the problem is even deeper because the structure of the text itself, the language used and the polyphony of voices should be kept in order to hear the author's voice. In the Italian version the division of chapters was not kept so that the reader ends up having a different perception of the four narrators' voices. In particular the colloquial register used in both Arthur Corunna's story and Daisy's Corunna story is lost in the Italian version. Morgan adopts a simple strategy to render Arthur and Daisy's voices, she writes their words as if they are speaking, with an orthography that presents final ellipsis and syntactical elements of Aboriginal English. The translator on the contrary, opts for a standard Italian both in the grammatical and orthographical form. The Italian translation of the four characters' voices diminishes the exchange of different speech patterns, erases the oral background of story-telling and the specificity of Aboriginal English. This is why the cultural factors beyond the linguistic choices remain unexplained. A gender and intercultural awareness is fundamental for a translation of Morgan's novel which requires a deep understanding of Aboriginal difference, a willingness to relate Aboriginal values and an attentive reflection of possible linguistic choices.

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