Drew University
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Give Me Creative Liberty or Give Me Death:
Translation as Adaptation/Datemi la libertà creativa
o datemi la morte: traduzione come adattamento

A Thesis in English and Italian Studies

By

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Abstract:

This honors thesis explores the translator as an adaptor of the original text by comparing two Italian translations of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*: *Piccole donne* translated in 1915 by Enrico Bemporad and *Piccole donne* translated in 2020 by Beatrice Masini. This honors thesis is framed by a quote from theorist Umberto Eco in which he describes translation as a set of four negotiations between text and the structure of two languages; text and the encyclopedia of two cultures; text and text; and author and readers. Then, the thesis uses the differences between the Italian translations of *Little Women* to argue that translations are adaptations of the original text. The final chapter, written in Italian, discusses the history of translation in Italy, how the feminist movement changed Masini's Italian translation of *Little Women,* and outlines the Italian classification of translation into "bella" (beautiful) or "brutta" (ugly). Finally, the thesis brings translation software into the current conversation surrounding artificial intelligence (AI) translation software, ultimately arguing that the AI translation software will not replace human translators at the literary level. This is because the human translator can pick up on the subtle nuances of the target language that a human translator cannot.

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Introduction: Translation Studies

Translation is the act of converting one language into its equivalent in another in order to create mutual understanding between the two languages. Translation explores the relationship between the original language before translation (called the Source Language (SL)) and the language to which a text or speech is translated into (called the Target Language (TL)). Literary translation is the act of converting a work (such as a novel or a poem) from the SL to the TL, including not only the words of the translation, but also the original author's overall message through plot and artistry.

Though translation is a practice that is as old as language, translation studies is a relatively new discipline that emerged in academia in the late twentieth century. In the 1950s, scholars began to study how translators craft translations of novels into other languages, sparked by the development of translation institutions, or schools where students study how to craft translations. The translation institutions allowed translators to not only translate between different words, but also cultures, as the diverse population of the translation institutions creates intercultural communication and exchange. Currently, the scholarship within the field of translation studies explores questions of authorship. There are two translation theories that attempt to answer the question of how the translator crafts a translation. One is translation purism in which the translator translates as close to word-for-word as possible. The other is skopos theory (or "purpose" in Greek), where translators translate for the purpose of maintaining overall significance, making small creative changes in order to improve the translatability of the text.

Translation Purism:

Some scholars of translation studies argue that a translation should remain true to the original author's text instead of the translator possessing the ability to make creative changes that

change the reading of the original text. This is called translation purism, which I argue is a problematic way to view translation because it reinforces a nationalist viewpoint that gatekeeps language and, therefore, culture. Translation purists derive this practice from linguistic purism, which English linguist George Thomas defines as "the manifestation of a desire… to preserve a language form" (Ayres-Bennett 193). In other words, linguistic purists attempt to keep a language free from the influence of borrow words from other languages in order to salvage national identity. Although purism existed before this point, this school of thought gained popularity amongst translation theorists as part of the nationalist movement in Europe during the fallout of World War I. With the drawing of new borders and the renationalizing of groups of people, government officials attempted to stamp out the languages deemed "unworthy" by keeping a translation free from those borrow words. Translation purism is especially popular amongst the Russian Formalists, a group of intellectuals in the early 1900s that studied the poeticism of language and literature. They claim that in order to maintain linguistic beauty, a translation must be as accurate to the original text as possible. According to French linguist, Anne-Marie Brousseau, linguistic purism "imposes a normative vision on a given language by stipulating which properties are accepted (and therefore acceptable)" and vice versa (Ayres-Bennett 192). The words "accepted" and "acceptable" signify that certain words are more relevant to the language than others, and therefore should be spoken over words which are deemed "not acceptable," such as borrow-words. This viewpoint is problematic because by deeming certain words "acceptable" and "unacceptable" to translate, there is a disconnect between two cultures, which weakens the translation by making it inaccessible to the language into which it is being translated. Now, thankfully, this purist theory is largely recognized as old-fashioned in the context of translation studies, but scholars such as Thomas George and Olivia

Walsh argue that although there is a "xenophobic" origin of purist theory, this connotation is "not intended" to be "negative" regarding the effect on the reader (Ayres-Bennett 192). I argue, however, that any connotation of "xenophobia" is problematic (whether that was the intention or not), as are attempts to deem one culture as "lower" or less valid because of the fear of the linguistic overtake of that culture by another. The modern skopos approach to translation, which I discuss later on in the introduction, attempts to dissuade the nationalist approach to translation, therefore creating a new post-colonial theory that has become standard in the translation studies community in recent years.

Skopos Theory

The skopos theory of translation regards the study of translation as an intercultural and intertextual affair, or an exchange between two languages and cultures from one language to another and promotes greater understanding to international readers. The skopos theory of translation studies emerges from the post-colonial desire to study translation as less of a perfect linguistic match between two works and more of a multicultural exchange, where the original text is not treated with as much authority. Bassnett outlines the emergence of the post-colonial movement claiming that translations are an "intercultural transaction" rather than an effort to homogenize culture or impose the culture of the original text onto the culture in which the translation is designed to circulate (83). The phrase "intercultural transaction" denotes an exchange between two cultures as mapped out by the translator in the mixing of a text from one language to another. In this non-literal view of translation, more commonly called "skopos" theory (from the Greek word meaning purpose), it is more important for the content of the translation as well as the linguistic meaning to translate between cultures, even if the content is unique to the original language/culture of the text (Bassnett 83). This is distinct from the literalist

theory because there is an understanding that there will be elements lost in translation, and therefore we should not make an effort to preserve the lost content. Additionally, skopos theory relies on the translator to "decide what purpose a text should serve" for its audience (Bassnett 84). This means that the translator possesses the agency to "reconfigure a text" to fit the "text type in the target language," (the language into which the original text is being translated) (Basnett 84). This signifies that the organization of the original text can be modified by the translator if it serves a purpose for the reader in the target language. The effect of this is that these changes in organization create a greater scope of relatability between two cultures. This theory became popular in the late 1970s and 1980s, as more colonies won their independence from the colonizing powers. This theory gained the most acclaim in 1984 with the publication of Christiane Nord's book, *Translation as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, in which she explains that another term for skopos is "functionalist," meaning that every choice made in the translation contributes to the overall function of the complete version, which is to convey a story to readers of a translation into the target language in a context which makes sense to them. In the present day, the skopos/functionalist translation theory remains the most popular way of studying translation because the theory allows us to study the intercultural losses and gains that come with a translation, almost as if the translation is a new work altogether.

The Translator and Authorship

Since the skopos theory gives the author creative liberty to make changes to the translation to improve intercultural and intertextual translatability, are they an author of the text? A question heavily debated in translation studies how much change is too much change to the point where the translation becomes a different book altogether, leaving the SL and TL audiences

reading a different version of the same story and, more important, delivering a translation that does not honor the apparent intention of the author? In 2016, this question was brought to light in the public eye when the Korean novel, *The Vegetarian,* won the Man Booker International Prize (now the Booker Prize), awarded to both the original author Han Kang, and the English translator, Deborah Smith. Bilingual readers of Korean and English agree that the English translation by Smith is largely "mistranslated" despite an extensive collaboration between Kang and Smith during the translation process (Armistead). For example, the first line of the original novel states in Korean that the main character's husband "never really thought about his wife as 'anything special'" while Smith translates this line to "'completely remarkable in every way'" (Armistead). The choice by Smith to translate this line in this way completely changes the meaning of the line, and because this line serves as the basis of the entire plot of the novel, the English translation is essentially a different story with a different significance. The problem with this mistranslation—aside from the change in the meaning of the text—is that the novel only gained international attention and consideration for the Man Booker International Prize after the publication of Deborah Smith's translation, which translated the novel with much more colorful and florid language, completely ignoring the original sparseness present in the Korean version and significant features of the characters such as that discussed above. Smith changed the novel so much from its original form that interviewers asked her if "Kang wouldn't have won the Booker prize" if it wasn't for her "improved" English version (Yun). This scandal ultimately brings into question whether or not translators should improve the work of the author when translating it.

Based on my study of both the theories and *The Vegetarian* scandal, I do not believe that the translator should be considered the sole author of a translation because the story is not their

own, even if they make changes which alter the text. Whether the translator translates using translation purism or skopos theory, the role of the translator is to bring the original story into the context of another language, not to create something completely new and different from the original text. Instead, I believe that the translator serves as an adaptor of the text, making creative changes that reflect their reading of the original text based on a specific cultural and linguistic perspective.

Crediting Translators: Byline or Back Flap?

Unfortunately, despite playing a central role in the way that readers experience a text, it is a challenge for translators to receive adequate credit and sometimes even adequate royalties for their translations because they are not often seen as an equivalent of the original author by readers. While poor compensation for the translator is the result of capitalism, failing to credit the translator is the result of ignorance of the translation process. The finished product is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the number of choices made; Bassnett and Bush acknowledge that translators spend "years" researching and studying every word to craft their translation. As part of *The Translator as Writer*, Bush considers the ethical dilemma of crediting a translator as an author when he states that: "most readers of translation prefer not to know" who translated the text, instead preferring to credit the original author (23). Bush's statement reveals that readers position the translator as an editor of the text that has a large role in the creation of the text rather than as a co-author, and their identity is hidden from the reader. This is true in the English literary canon when readers credit works such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* to the original author (in this case Erich Maria Remarque) rather than the translator (such as A.W. Wheen). The words read by English-speakers are not those of Remarque, but the equivalent determined by a translator such as Wheen. The translator is often not credited in the byline for their translation of

a work. Instead, the name of the translator "[adorns] the back flap as a bleak epitaph to the months of labor that…secreted the new spread of words" (Bush 23). I argue instead that the translator deserves a byline credit on the front cover because the translator serves as an adaptor of the original text from the SL to the TL, much like a screenwriter who gets a byline credit for a film adaptation of a work. The creative changes made by the translator are unique to their edition and are not present in the original work, thus they deserve front cover credit. This way, the target audience can put a name to the text of the translation and the original author, displaying how both the author and the translator work in tandem to bring a work to another language and culture.

Looking Forward

In this thesis, I will explore these two theories of translation as they apply to the translation process. In line with theorist Umberto Eco's idea in his book, *Mouse or Rat*, I will argue that the translation process consists of four main negotiations: a negotiation between the structure of two languages, a negotiation between the encyclopedia of cultures, a negotiation between text and text, and a negotiation between author and readers.

In the second chapter, I will compare two Italian translations of Louisa May Alcott's 1868 novel, *Little Women*: *Piccole donne* translated by Enrico Bemporad in 1915 and *Piccole donne* translated by Beatrice Masini in 2020 through the lens of the theoretical framework of translation as an adaptation of the original text. I initially chose to look at translations of *Little Women* because it is a novel of which I am extremely familiar, and I wanted to challenge myself to read a familiar story in a language in which I am gaining fluency but realized that both Italian translations by Bemporad and Masini demonstrate an implementation of creative changes made in order to improve overall translatability. Because *Little Women* is a novel so embedded in its

setting (Civil War-Era Massachusetts), Bemporad and Masini navigate how to implement these cultural references into the text without betraying the integrity of Alcott's original version.

Chapter three will then examine how these Italian translations have been translated and perceived in Italy over time. Since the novel is both rooted in the history of American Civil War politics and is also heavily influenced by references to other contemporary American works at the time of its publication, the novel and its Italian translations serve as an example of how cultural translation from the SL to the TL is just as important as the vocabulary from each language.

Chapter One: The Negotiations and Challenges at the Heart of Translation

In her article, "Translation: walking the tightrope of illusion," Althea Bell summarizes translator and theorist Umberto Eco's book, *Mouse or Rat,* when she states that a translation is a "process of negotiation (between author and text, between author and readers, as well as between the structure of two languages and the encyclopedias of two cultures)" (Bell 60). Based on Bell's summarization of Eco, an effective literary translation is not merely a literal word-for-word rendition of a text in another language, but it is also a series of cultural and linguistic choices made by the translator that create equivalent meaning for readers of that language. Translation is, in fact, a negotiation because individual translators possess the liberty to make creative decisions that add their own authorial voice into their translation while still honoring the essence of original text.

This chapter will explore the role of the translator and how translators negotiate between the source language of the original text and the target language to create their translation. Building off of Bell's summary of Eco, I argue that the following order of negotiations best describes the translation process: translation as a negotiation between the structure of two languages; translation as a negotiation between the encyclopedia of cultures; translation as a negotiation between text and text, and translation as a negotiation between author and text. I argue this because in order to understand literary translation and the role of the translator, the reader first needs to understand how the translator works between the SL and the TL to create a translation; then how the cultures of the SL and TL work together to create maximum translatability; then how the translator interacts with the text; and finally, how the translator keeps the target audience in mind and how readers perceive translators.

Translation as a Negotiation Between the Structure of Two Languages

The translator works with the structures of two languages to maximize the capability of conversion from the SL to the TL, also known as translatability. According to Ahmad Abu-Mahfouz, translation is a "simultaneous process of decoding and encoding," the decoding being the process of interpreting "the meaning embedded in the text of the SL," and the encoding being the choices that the translator makes in order to keep that meaning as they transfer text into the TL (1). The coding and decoding of linguistic structures in order to determine the best equivalent in the TL requires the translator to negotiate with the linguistic structure of the SL. I agree with translation theorist Etienne Dolet when he states that the translator is free to make changes to the original text as long as these changes "clarify obscurities" in the TL, meaning that these changes should ideally improve the overall translatability and the TL reader's understanding. It is important that the translator knows the systems and cultures of both the SL and TL because this knowledge helps inform the translatability of the translation as a whole.

The translator successfully negotiates the translatability between structures of languages by translating on a bigger scale that focuses on sentences and paragraphs rather than individual words, ultimately determining where they need to make creative choices in their translation to improve understanding in the TL. Contemporary translator Nicholas De Lange discusses how he uses this method of translation in an interview, as he says that he "[works] in sentences rather than words" because "a word only has meaning in context" in the larger scheme of the translation (11). By translating this way, De Lange puts the individual words into the context that is necessary for analyzing the translatability of certain linguistic structures, thus allowing him to determine the best equivalents in the TL. This process focusing on the overall meaning of a text and its purpose has been a common practice since the beginning of translation, as Roman scholar Cicero comments that while translating "Latin versions of speeches by the Greek orators" he

"did not translate as an interpreter, but as an orator, keeping the same ideas and the forms, or as one might say, the figures of thought, but in a language which conforms to our usage and in so doing, [he] did not hold it necessary to render word-for-word, but [he] expressed the general style and the force of language" (Ghanooni 77). Cicero's process of translating as the "orator" of the speech places him akin to the original orator. This way, he chooses how to translate based on the delivery of the overall work rather than just the text. By choosing to translate phrases and paragraphs instead of individual words, both De Lange and Cicero demonstrate that the role of the translator is to contextualize the original text in a way that allows for a negotiation of the best equivalent between the two languages.

While aiming for maximized translatability between the two texts, the translator must simultaneously determine the best equivalent for the phrases that are untranslatable in order to avoid too much untranslatability. Every translation contains some form of untranslatability because it is impossible to translate the exact words and systems between two languages. The problem, however, is when the level of untranslatability between texts is too high and there is a disconnect in understanding amongst readers of the TL translation. Untranslatability is especially common when translating metaphors or idioms. The translation of idiomatic language is especially hard to translate because as Bassnett explains, "idioms, like puns, are culture bound," therefore idioms may exist in one language but not another (33). For example, the English saying, "you can't have the cake and eat it, too," does not exist in Italian. Therefore, the translator must pick the closest alternative to the phrase in the TL, which is "avere la botte piena e la moglie ubriaca" (literally: "having the full barrel and the drunk wife"). Though these two idioms are nothing alike when translated literally, they share a relatively similar definition when translated idiomatically (a person "who wants two things that can't happen together"). Notice

how these two phrases are not the same word-for-word but are still accepted as equivalent. This is because equivalence in the SL and TL does not always mean word-for-word. When there is too much commitment to the word-for-word approach, as is favored by early translators and Russian Formalists (who invented linguistic purism theory), the level of untranslatability becomes too much, and the overall understanding of readers in the TL diminishes.

Translation as a Negotiation Between the Encyclopedia of Cultures

Not only is translation a transfer of individual words from the SL to the TL, but it is also a transfer of culture. In other words, in literary translation, language and culture maintain a symbiotic relationship. In "On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture," Juri Lotman and Boris A. Uspensky claim that "no language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language" (211-232). Each translator brings their own cultural perspective to a translation, ultimately creating their own version. This explains why different translations of the same work exist in the same TL even though the plot is the same in every language. The existence of multiple editions is due to the identity of the individual translator, as Marilyn Gaddis-Rose says when she states that "the passage of time and a multitude of readers can bring about changes in how a particular work is perceived and hence interpreted" (6). Because so much of the translator's work depends on their identity within their culture, the translations change based on elements that the translator chooses to emphasize. Bassnett and Bush acknowledge that each translation has a "strong voice" that influences the perception of the translation, just like the original author has a unique voice through their writing (1). One can never read a completely perfect translation of a work because of the translator's influence. There will always be changed words or references.

Translation as a Negotiation Between Text and Text

In the right hands, literary translation is a way of globalizing the literary canon and increasing cultural understanding and understanding between two cultures and languages. As stated earlier, the English literary canon is already full of translated works, such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* or Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. These translations allow speakers of English to read a text originally written in another language, such as Russian or Classical Greek. Translation is a means of accessibility, as stated Gaddis-Rose, who writes that "without translation, obviously, literatures could not be experienced outside their usual areas of language use" (11). The word "experienced" shows that translation gives readers artistic access to texts in other languages, allowing readers to experience not only the literal words of a translation but also the creative importance of a work. In this case, the "experience" that readers share is one text that already exists read in a language that they understand.

In the wrong hands, however, literary translation can push harmful agendas onto readers in the TL or even censor ideas that are not favorable in that society, such as fascist ideas or other racist rhetoric. Or the translator may simply misinterpret the meaning of the SL text because there are different linguistic structures and cultural meanings than in the TL that cannot be replicated. For example, in an article for *The Guardian*, Claire Armistead states that "Korean literature's historic problem, in [her] experience, has been… "professional translators" – nearly always translating into their second language – who have throttled the literary life out of" the original text. By "professional translators," she means those who make a living out of translating and/or have gone to school for translation who may or may not have vast knowledge of the SL or the SL's cultural and linguistic practices. The identity of the translator and the time in which the work is translated are very important as well when studying translation, as each translation by each translator offers a different reading and perspective. A way to remedy this problem is to

translate according to the skopos theory of translation as mentioned in the introduction, translating the text to align with the original author's plot and purpose rather than work in individual words.

Translation as a Negotiation Between Author and Readers

The original text is a piece of art that is intentionally crafted to reflect the viewpoints of the original author. The translator's goal is to translate the text keeping the original author's plot, culture, ideology, and artistic value in mind so that these artistic elements come across in the TL. They must also decide what they should transfer, change, or add into the original text so that the translation best fits the way the author wants their audience to interact with their interpretation of the original text.

The translator must negotiate in order to improve the translatability of the translation while also attempting to keep the artistic integrity of the original author. As outlined by New Yorker critic, James Woods, there are two sects of literary translators: "'originalists and activists'" (Armistead). The originalists aim to "'honour the original text's quiddities'" by attempting to translate in equivalents like the linguistic purists (Armistead). On the other hand, activists are "'less concerned with literal accuracy than with the transposed musical appeal of the new work'" (Armistead). He goes on to argue that "'any decent translator must be a bit of both" originalist and activist when crafting their translation (Armistead). By combining the two methods of translation, the translator does not sacrifice the original essence of the author's work during the translation process because there is ideally a balance between the artistic elements of the translation and the translatability in TL. While I agree with the claim that the translator should maintain the artistry of the author to the best of their ability by translating like an originalist and too much focus on the artistry can change the work's overall meaning and cultural

significance, making the translated work unrecognizable, and therefore inauthentic to its original version. By "too much artistry," I mean that the translator may be too focused on the artistic elements of the original text rather than why the author chooses to craft the text in this manner. An example of this is making sure the translation rhymes in the TL like it does in the SL, so much so that the rhyming words change the meaning of the overall poem or literary work to the point where it does not follow the original author's intention. The translation that makes sense to readers in the TL while also keeping the integrity of the author's original story is the translation that employs both of these methods.

The translator negotiates between what the author wants readers to get out of their work and the lens in which the translator wants the audience to focus on as they read the translation. This negotiation results in creative changes that can be motivated by political affiliation, such as the substitution of an American song to an Italian patriotic song (discussed in more detail in chapter three) in order to inspire the reader to view the original story in a more nationalistic lens. These changes can also be motivated by the translator's perspective on the original author's commentary on a particular subject. For example, if the translator believes the author is making a comment about class differences by using a particular written dialect, the translator recreates the dialect as it makes sense in the TL in order to help the reader understand the author's intended commentary. This negotiation between author and readers is why even when the translator balances between maintaining the author's artistic choices from the SL to the TL and honoring their original goal, each translation will be a bit different from one another (even if they are translated into the same language) because of the translator's own personal lens.

Conclusion

The translator negotiates with the original text and their translation by paying attention to the structural, cultural, textual, and authorial elements of the text in order to make an informed decision about changing the text. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter through the comparison of two translations entitled *Piccole donne*, the translator has the authority to make these creative changes through their own interpretation of the text, creating an Italian adaptation of the original novel.

Chapter Two: Translation as an Adaptation of the Original Text

While I do not believe that translators serve the same function as authors because the content of the original text is not their own, I argue instead that translators are adaptors of the original text. According to adaptation studies scholar Linda Hutcheon, in her article "Beginning to Theorize Adaptation," an adaptation is "an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work" (7). Extending Hutcheon's claim to the realm of translation, we might say that much like the adaptor, the translator studies the original work deeply and then adapts the work to fit their reading of the text. In this study of the original work and then its transference into the new text of the translation, the translator also considers their international audience, who may be interpreting this foreign text for the first time. Hutcheon also categorizes an adaptation as "an act of appropriation or salvaging and… a double process of interpreting then creating something new" (20). I argue that translation, much like an adaptation, is an act of salvaging as well as appropriation because the translation maintains the original plot and essence of the text while also tinkering with the text to find the best words or cultural references for the reader to understand. One could also categorize a translation—much like adaptation-- as the translator's "interpreting" of the original text, then taking that reading and "creating something new" through their own stylistic choices (Hutcheon 20). It is important to note that each translator possesses a distinct authorial voice, which comes through in moments of creative liberty that ultimately shape the translation and interpretation of the original text, thus allowing for the adaptation of the original text to take form.

Each translator takes their own creative liberty within the word choice of their translation which changes the overall significance of the original text. In "A dialogue: on a translator's interventions," Ros Schwartz states that in his translation process, he starts by "finding a voice'"

separate from the voice of the original author (Schwartz and De Lange 10). Schwartz, as the translator, separates himself from the author in order to establish his own interpretation of a work, which is a common practice in the field of translation studies, as discussed in chapter one. The translator must decide which word will best fit the overall sentiment of the original sentence, which differs between translators, creating a new reading each time the work is translated. This new reading is achieved through the translator's negotiations with the original text outlined by Bell's summary of Eco.

One way to explore these differences is to focus on translations of one book, and two of its translations. Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women,* published in the US in 1868, and its first and most recent translations into Italian provide a good example for this exploration of translation. The translations by Bemporad (1915) and Masini (2020), both entitled *Piccole donne,* represent the first Italian reader's interaction with the text and the most recent. Because of the identical titles, I will denote which translation is which by stating the translator's last name or the year in which it was published.

Between the two different versions of *Piccole donne,* for instance, the first sentence of each utilizes different expressions in order to translate the same sentence. Alcott's original first sentence reads: "'Christmas won't be Christmas without any presents,'" (Alcott 1). In the 1915 translation of *Piccole Donne,* Bemporad writes, "'Natale non sembrerà più Natale senza regali;'" meanwhile, in the 2020 version*,* Masini translates the same sentence into, "Natale non sarà Natale senza regali" (Masini 6). In English, the literal translation of "non sembrerà più" is "it will not *seem* like anymore," whereas Masini's translation of "sarà" literally translates to "it will not be" (Masini 6). In the 1915 edition, the word "sembrerà" implies that Jo is uncertain in her statement. In Masini's 2020 translation, however, "sarà," meaning "will be" is closer to Alcott's

original sentence, where Jo is definite in her statement that without presents, “Christmas will not be Christmas” (Masini 6). This difference may seem minute; however, this difference in context demonstrates the translator’s calculated choice to translate the sentence in that particular way in order to convey the particular meaning. In Bemporad’s translation, the ambiguous tense changes the way the Italian reader interprets the text because it shows that Jo’s uncertain of her words, shaping the reader’s introduction to Jo as the central character who is not as secure as she is depicted in the original text. The use of the word “sembrerà” also suggests that without presents, it will still be Christmas in the sense of religious significance, but it will not *seem* like a traditional Christmas celebration because the holiday loses the consumerist traditions like gift-giving. In Masini’s translation, the word “sarà” invokes a sense of certainty that cements Jo as the voice of certainty amongst her sisters. In this translation, the word “sarà” shows that in the sisters’ minds, without gifts, it will not be Christmas at all because they only care about the consumerist traditions associated with Christmas This difference in word choice shows that the translators interpret Jo in different ways, thereby also slightly altering the reader’s relationship with Jo as the central character in the novel.

Because Masini is most famous for her Italian translations of the *Harry Potter* series, she possibly knows her reader demographic well, and uses this to her advantage in her translation through the adolescent characters in *Little Women*. For example, in the scene after Jo sells her hair, she begins to cry and Masini chooses the word “sbottò” meaning “burst out” in tears to describe this action (245). This is consistent with Alcott’s original text, as Alcott also uses “burst out;” but in Bemporad’s translation, he uses the word “singhiozzò,” meaning “hiccupped” (Bemporad 162). Masini’s version of the text captures the overall energy of Jo’s emotions in a way that seems more realistic to Jo’s overall behavior (164). “Burst out” evokes more of a strong

emergence of tears than a “hiccup” does, showing that Masini depicts Jo as a stronger character than Bemporad. Bemporad’s use of “singhiozzò” makes Jo seem less dramatic and demurer, aligning closer with the expected behavior of a woman in Italian society in 1915 than Alcott’s original text. The significance of this difference in word choice between the two translations is that Masini’s characterization of Jo is more consistent with Alcott’s original text, keeping Masini closer to a reading of Jo that relies on the original intended audience, while Bemporad translates Jo to better fit the societal ideals of the target audience. The overall effect of this difference is that the Italian reader has less distance from Jo as a character, creating a greater capacity for the reader’s identification with this character in Masini’s translation.

Not only do the Italian editions of *Little Women* contain different interpretations of the characters between versions, but they also only include the first part of the novel. The current American editions have an additional volume of text (comprising Alcott's *Good Wives*, a follow up to the first volume published a year later) published into one novel changes the original volume’s ending and sees Jo fall in love with and marry someone other than Laurie Laurence. This missing content also shapes the Italian reading of the text because Italians can only read half of the story that contemporary Americans read, and so the reading of the text leaves a lot for the reader to surmise as to what happens to the characters. The translations of the first volume are the only versions available in Italy.

Furthermore, it is impossible for a translation to successfully reach its target audience without the translator’s pre-consideration of the audience. Audience is an important aspect of translation because it is the desire of the audience for a translation of a text that creates a translation in the first place. Therefore, the choices made by the translator are influenced by the intended audience for the translation. In the United States, *Little Women* is read primarily by

females (it was originally written and published as a "women's book" for young girls) of a younger demographic. Just as Alcott did when writing the novel, Masini and Bemporad keep the audience in mind when translating the book. Noted literary and cultural theorist, Walter Benjamin, disagrees with this effort when he states in his article, "The Translator's Task," that "it never proves useful to take the receiver into account" when crafting a translation because the translator will never find "the ideal reader" for the translation (151). This means that the translator should not burden himself with the reception of the translation because the person that the translator has in mind as the "ideal reader" does not exist (Benjamin 151). Therefore, it is not the job of the translator to consider the audience. Instead, he argues that "translation is mode," meaning that translation itself is the method in which the text is experienced for foreign readers. I argue, however, that this absence of consideration is not possible for a successful translation. Instead, considering the audience in a translation is inevitable, and it allows the translator to obtain the creative liberty needed to make a translation understandable and compelling. Especially when translating literature for a specific age group, such as adolescents, it is important to acknowledge the variables associated with that style of literature rather than not considering the translation's reception. In considering her audience of young Italian readers (many of whom are experiencing this story for the first time), Masini keeps her translation as close to Alcott's message as possible to give her audience an authentic reading of the story, as she prefaces her translation with an excerpt from *Pilgrim's Progress* like Alcott does, a novel by John Bunyan (translated in this version from its original English into Italian) that reads:

Leave, little book, go and show everyone what is dear to you in your paper heart: blessed if they choose, guided by affection, to become courageous Pilgrims, better than you and me in their ends. Tell them of the Grace and the company that will make them by going on the way to listen to her

every child will learn the wise joys of the world that will come along roads traced by holy footsteps. She will go in small steps towards a great joy (Masini 5).

This excerpt that she translates from John Bunyan serves as a dedication selected to precede her translated text. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a novel written in 1678, cited by literary editor Robert McRum as having an "influence on writers as diverse as… Louisa May Alcott" (McRum 1). *The Pilgrim's Progress* influences so much of *Little Women* that the first chapter is entitled "Playing Pilgrims," a chapter in which the sisters attempt to follow the Christian model outlined in Bunyan's novel, resisting the urge to complain about their misfortunes when their neighbors have less than them (Alcott 1). The overall purpose of Bunyan's novel is to outline how one should be a good person in their "pilgrimage through life," and by including this excerpt, Masini suggests to her readers that this is the key message that she wants them to take away from her translation just as it was for Alcott. Another significant aspect of starting Masini's translation with this excerpt is that the reader can see the origin of Alcott's characters, and then track this idea through the reading of the translation. By including this excerpt, Masini invites the reader to consider Bunyan's influence in the pursuit of reading this text, just as the March sisters do in the examination of their lifestyle. Because Masini wants to remain close to Alcott's original text, she includes the poem that appears in the original edition of *Little Women* as a way of maintaining this closeness, something that Bemporad's translation does not include.

In addition to word choice and audience influencing the choices made by translators, there is also an inevitable untranslatability between two cultures that shapes the way in which translators translate the text. In her book *Translation Studies,* Bassnett cites translation studies scholar Catford, who states that there are two types of untranslatability: "'linguistic and cultural,'" meaning that untranslatability can exist either in the pure definitions of words or in

larger concepts specific to a particular culture (Bassnett 40). It is therefore essential for the translator to consider the differences in cultural context between the original text and their translation, and the effect this translation has on international readers' interpretation of the work. As I discussed in chapter one, the translator negotiates between the cultural context of the source text and the cultural context of the TL. To American readers, for example, a major theme of the novel is Jo's assumption of the patriarchal role in her family because her father is absent from the home fighting in the Civil War. In a pivotal scene, it is revealed that Jo cuts her hair into a "short" "boyish" haircut in order to sell it for money to provide for her family (Alcott 162). By selling her hair, Jo is seen as more masculine in appearance and in the role of her family, as earning money is typically associated with the masculine familial role at the time of Alcott's writing. In Japan, however, Jo's act of sacrifice for her family reads as more maternal. In her article "Reading 'Little Women,' Reading Motherhood in Japan," Japanese teacher Kazuko Watanabe claims that due to the "[acknowledgement]" of Japan "as a traditional maternal country" present in the language of the first Japanese translation by Kitada Shuho, Japanese readers interpret the characters and overall narrative differently than American readers (698). The Japanese word "bosei" meaning "nature of motherliness" is a common word in the Japanese translation of *Little Women,* especially the language surrounding Jo's character (698). In fact, Watanabe claims that it is Jo's "ability to assume motherly sensitivity" despite her "boyish…nature" that resonates with Japanese readers (702). Therefore, the translator of the Japanese edition, by using language that portrays Jo as fitting the "bosei" ideal throughout the entire translation, the readers are able to understand Jo in a way that Americans do not. Because the story is slightly changed from the original version (along with the title, which translates to "'A Story of Young Grass'"), the Japanese translator, Kitada Shuho, creates a new version of

Alcott's original text which loses the original essence of Jo, but also paints a version of Jo's character that is understandable to Japanese readers (700). Thus, her translation becomes more of an adaptation to best fit the context and cultural concepts familiar to Japanese readers. According to Umberto Eco, "equivalence of meaning" is not the same as "synonymy" between languages (9). "Equivalence of meaning" refers to a translation in which two words have the same overall meaning in the context of the language while "synonymy" refers to two words with the exact same definition (9). This signifies that there will never be an "exact" translation because a word with an equivalent meaning between two languages is not always precisely the same due to different structures and cultural concepts. Therefore, it is up to the translator to decide which meaning is the most practical to convey, as the Japanese translator did in this case.

In Italian, however, the implicit sense of untranslatability between Alcott's version and the translated versions by Bemporad and Masini derives more from the structure of the Italian language, which differs greatly from English. For example, when addressing different people in the second person, there are three different possible words (and therefore, verb tenses) to use depending on who one addresses. An example of this difference occurs in Masini's translation, when Jo yells up to her new neighbor, Laurie, before they are acquainted with one another, she asks "come state? Siete malato?" ("how are you (formal)? Are you (formal) sick?") (Bemporad 55). "State" and "siete" are consistent with the "voi" form of address, which was used in the time period that Alcott wrote *Little Women* (and is still a popular form of address in Southern Italy). This signifies to the Italian reader that Jo and Laurie are unfamiliar with each other and are formal in their address throughout their first meeting. However, later, when Meg sees Laurie at a party, they address each other with the informal "tu" form, like when Meg asks Laurie "che cosa le dirai?" ("what would [Jo] tell you? (informal)") about Meg's dress and Laurie answers that Jo

would not recognize him “perché sembri così grande e diversa che io quasi paura di te” (“because you seem so big and different that I am almost scared of you (informal)”) (138). By this point in the novel, because the March sisters have befriended Laurie, the two speak to each other using the informal “tu,” which is the form of “you” used only amongst friends and family. In an American reading, because there is no distinction between a “formal” and “informal” you, this small detail does not exist, and therefore does not clue the reader into the developing friendship between the March sisters and Laurie. It is up to Masini to decide when to drop the Italian formal “you” among characters who begin a more intimate relationship in order to convey a sense of growing comfort and familiarity between the characters, lessening the tension implicitly present in the text. This gives new significance to the dance scene that is not present in the original version, displaying that this moment is the turning point in the evolving relationship between Laurie and the March sisters. This is also present in Bemporad’s translation, but in the standard Italian “Lei” form of address, which is the modern formal version of the English “you.” When Jo asks Laurie how he is, she asks “Come sta? è malato?” aligning with the use of formal language during their first encounter and changing to the informal language in the dance scene. All of these forms of “you” implicitly provide Italian readers with linguistic and cultural context, which does not exist in English due to the difference in structure between the two languages. This differentiation in subject is a regional choice made by the individual translator, and the difference between Masini’s use of “voi” and Bemporad’s use of “Lei” could be because Masini is from Milan and Bemporad was from Florence (two cities with different subsects of Italian culture). However, because “voi” was a prominent form at the time when *Little Women* takes place, Masini attempts to match the language to the time period to make her translation more historically accurate. According to Masini, “voi” is how the characters would speak if they were

living in Italy, and therefore she translated this encounter with "voi" rather than the modern "Lei," which remains standard today. Whether this is because of the time period or the geographic region in which they write, both translators demonstrate their ability to choose subjects and tenses which best reflect the audience of their translation. Even though implicit, these choices made by the translators change the reading of the text from its original English meaning, therefore classifying the two translations as adaptations.

Because of the unique authorial voice and cultural biases that the translator adds to their translation, we should examine a translation as an adaptation of the original work rather than as a literal reproduction. Based upon Hutcheon's definition, I have argued that a translation is another reading of the text entirely that includes the particular cultural biases of the translator. In Masini's translation, for example, when Beth falls ill for the first time, Masini omits the specific type of medication ("Camphor") that Beth takes because the medication does not exist in Italy (Alcott 175). Instead, she simply uses the word "medicine" in Italian to describe the drug (Masini 261). Though a small change, it shows that Masini keeps the Italian reader in mind, therefore altering the text to fit her culture rather than staying true to the original word, even though keeping Camphor in the text is more accurate to the American reading of the novel. It is clear that Masini studies Alcott's life and the text of *Little Women* extensively, as she published an Italian language biography entitled *Louisa May Alcott*, yet she is still able to take Alcott's original text and "transpose" the story to fit the expectations of her Italian language readers. Additionally, according to Hutcheon, an adaptation also "commits the heresy of showing that form (expression) can be separated from content (ideas)" in its relationship to the original text (Hutcheon 7). The word "heresy" signifies that Hutcheon's point of view on adaptation differs from translation and adaptation theorists who rely on the argument that "form" and "content"

cannot be separated from original to adaptation (Hutcheon 7). This applies to Bemporad's translation as well as Masini's because Bemporad changes character names in his translation in order to fit a more "Italian" style. For example, when Meg visits the Moffatt family, the names of her friends change from Alcott's original version. Nan becomes "Nannina," Belle becomes "Bella," and Annie becomes "Anna." Bemporad even drops the nickname "Daisy" given to Meg when in the company of the Moffatts. Since all of these names are hard for Italians to pronounce and read (names ending in "a" and other vocalized vowels are easier for Italians to understand and pronounce), and the fact that the character names he changes are minor characters, Bemporad makes the decision to translate them into Italian, but still keeps the main characters the same. The Italian language relies on its musical sound more than written text, so the ability to read and subsequently pronounce the names enhances the Italian reading of the novel, even in the subtlety of these minor details. The effect of this is that Bemporad keeps the original sentiment of the characters the same but adapts the minor character names in order to make these characters seemingly familiar to his audience. Now, the Italian audience will know Meg's friends by their Italian names instead of their English names, which permanently alters the way in which Italians discuss *Piccole Donne.* Each translator creates a unique reading of the text because of these subtle (or drastic) changes.

Ultimately, the classification of adaptation in translation matters because it highlights the importance of the effect language has on a larger culture. These choices made by the translator to fit the translation to reflect the readability of the target audience enhance the perception of the work in both the target language and culture and the language of the original text. In re-examining the Japanese reading of *Little Women*, the perception of the characters through this concept of "bosei" shape Japanese culture. In Watanabe's study of the effect of the translation of

Little Women, she mentions that in Japan, the novel is the "second most popular children's book for young female readers" (700). Obviously, the popularity of Kitada Shuho's adaptation including reference to the concept of "bosei" displays the impact on the larger audience. She also points to this translation being an intergenerational point of discussion and reading, as she mentions that the novel "has remained perennially popular with Japanese women of all ages and social backgrounds since it first appeared in Japanese translation in 1891" (700). This Japanese translation was available to readers much earlier than the first Italian translation, perhaps due to the end of Japan's Meiji period, after which women were given the power to contribute to Japanese society in artistic ways rather than solely domestic, while Italy maintained a rigid patriarchal society that did not allow women's education or literacy (Dollase 1). Today In Italy, the novel is received similarly to its Japanese counterpart. By making a translation more relatable for its audience through adaptative choices, the target language audience uses the novel "as a bridge between the discourse" in their culture (700). This way, the Japanese translation serves as a guide for upkeeping the cultural norms, but also presents the way in which Western culture views the "cult of domesticity," creating an intercultural discourse surrounding the themes of the novel.

A translation as an adaptation also provides a teaching tool for readers in the target culture. In Japan, for example, the reading of Jo as a motherly character in the Japanese translation models the sacrifice that motherhood requires, influencing young girls to keep a traditional concept of motherhood as they grow up and become mothers themselves. This is also true in the Italian translations of the novel. According to Italian student and publisher of variations of classic literature, Daniela Mastropasqua, *Piccole Donne* is considered a piece of "classic" literature for "adolescents" (Mastropasqua 1). Alcott herself comments on class

differences, womanhood, and Masini's efforts to spread awareness of Alcott's life and message by adding timelines and a biography to the back of her translation create a new feminist message for young Italian girls entering into the world of classic literature for possibly the first time. Perhaps their mothers read Bemporad's translation growing up (this is the only other edition available to Italian readers) and can now compare the choices made by Bemporad to the choices made by Masini with the influence of different generational periods. These adaptations of foreign literature reflect the larger cultural biases of both the original audience and the target audience, crossing generations, time, and language to create a universally beloved story read and enjoyed by all.

Capitolo Tre: Confronti e osservazioni su cosa costituisce una "bella" e una "brutta" traduzione

La traduzione è una forma d'arte secondo gli italiani e in Italia è una disciplina importante da studiare con una lunga tradizione critica e numerosi studi delle diverse metodologie. La radice della parola "traduzione" proviene dal latino e le parole latine "traductio" e "traslatio" significano trasferire qualcosa (Polezzi 306) e la radice di questa parola è importante ai fini di questa tesi perché l'obiettivo di una traduzione (secondo gli italiani) è il trasferimento sia della cultura che della lingua. Gli italiani sono anche interessati alla bellezza della lingua; quindi, ha senso che i traduttori italiani studino la qualità delle traduzioni con attenzione alla lingua e alla storia. Secondo i traduttori ed i linguisti come Benedetto Croce ci sono due categorie: una "bella traduzione" e una "brutta traduzione" (Salerno). La traduttrice Sherry Simon dice che "like a woman, a translation can be beautiful and faithful or ugly and unfaithful," (Simon 10). Questo è importante perché la metafora rappresenta la maniera in cui gli italiani, prima del movimento femminista, riconoscono non solo la traduzione, ma anche il ruolo della donna nella cultura italiana. Quindi, il ruolo della donna e la traduzione vanno di pari passo, specialmente nel caso di *Piccole donne*. La traduzione in Italia è collegata agli studi di genere perché l'italiano è una lingua in cui tutte le parole hanno un genere. In questo capitolo discuterò le mie idee in tre parti: prima, discuterò le teorie della traduzione in Italia secondo gli studi di Paolo Fabbri, Umberto Eco e altri traduttori. Poi discuterò in che modo queste teorie siano presenti nelle due edizioni di *Piccole donne*. Nella seconda parte discuterò come il movimento femminista degli anni Settanta in Italia influenzi le ultime traduzioni di *Piccole donne* come quella di Beatrice Masini e, come queste, influenzino anche i lettori italiani di oggi. Infine,

confronterò due traduzioni: quella di Enrico Bemporad, pubblicata nel 1915, e quella di Beatrice Masini, pubblicata nel 2020, secondo la classificazione di bella o brutta traduzione.

La storia della traduzione in Italia inizia con gli studi di estetica o di filosofia d'arte e con le traduzioni delle poesie classiche greco-latine. Nel 1902 lo scrittore Benedetto Croce pubblica il libro *Teoria e storia,* in cui spiega che l'estetica è la "scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale" (Salerno). Croce ha trasformato lo studio della linguistica in studio della traduzione dopo che Giovanni Gentile aveva pubblicato un articolo ne *La critica* delineando "il torto e il diritto delle traduzioni" (Gentile). Secondo Gentile l'efficacia di una traduzione è determinata dalla bellezza stilistica. In questo caso, "l'efficacia" di una traduzione significa che la traduzione è vicina al testo originale. Dopo la Prima guerra mondiale, con i testi di Karl Marx, la classificazione di una traduzione efficace o di qualità diventa più necessaria perché secondo Antonio Gramsci "un traduttore qualificato dovrebbe essere in grado non solo di tradurre letteralmente, ma di tradurre i termini anche concettuali di una determinata cultura nazionale nei termini di un'altra cultura nazionale" per dare informazioni a tutte le classi sociali in maniera globale (Gramsci). Dopo l'unificazione d'Italia le traduzioni di autori stranieri furono accessibili a un pubblico più vasto. Sfortunatamente, durante il fascismo, i traduttori devono censurare le loro traduzioni con i riferimenti culturali stranieri per dimostrare il potere della letteratura italiana. Ma dopo il fascismo in Italia i traduttori ritornano alla traduzione di poesie classiche dell'India e di altri Paesi. Durante la seconda parte del XX secolo assistiamo a un cambiamento negli studi della traduzione dalle poesie alle opere in prosa che hanno portato a "una maggiore visibilità" della materia (Salerno). In aggiunta alla discussione della qualità e fedeltà di una traduzione, ci si chiede se un traduttore sia un autore indipendente dall'autore originale (Salerno). Negli anni Cinquanta, apre a Milano una scuola di traduzione e gli studenti studiano la

traduzione come “imitazione” del testo originale invece che di un testo nuovo (Salerno). Poi negli anni Settanta abbiamo un “nuovo paradigma per lo studio della traduzione letteraria basato su una teoria globale e una continua ricerca pratica,” trasformando completamente gli studi (Hermans). Con una prospettiva più globale le idee di traduttori come Antoine Berman hanno molta influenza; infatti, affermano che “la traduzione è un’esperienza” molto personale (Berman). L’idea di una traduzione fedele contrapposta a una traduzione infedele riemerge nei testi di Umberto Eco, che crede nella “semiotica della fedeltà,” o la fedeltà della lingua e il significato del testo (Eco 3). Oggi la discussione su cosa costituisca una buona traduzione, in Italia e in altri Paesi europei, è ancora una discussione tra una traduzione bella e infedele e una traduzione brutta e fedele.

Una “bella traduzione” o “bella infedele” è una traduzione che rappresenta la bellezza della lingua italiana e include anche i temi del testo originale, e siccome la teoria della traduzione ha origine dalla traduzione della poesia è importante per i traduttori italiani che la traduzione abbia parole poetiche. Ma quando io dico qualità alta significa che non si usano solo parole belle, ma anche una bella traduzione che dà al traduttore il potere di fare scelte che migliorano la conoscenza tra le lingue. Secondo Renate Siebert “cercare di tradurre i ‘nostri’ parametri culturali, morali ed etici per farci comprendere da ‘loro’ non può essere disgiunto dallo sforzo di ascoltare le «loro» voci e di farci tradurre culture e valori altrui” (Siebert 115-116). In questo caso, “i nostri” si riferisce alla lingua italiana mentre “i loro” si riferisce al testo originale americano. Una traduzione non è solamente una traduzione di parole, ma anche una traduzione della trama in maniera efficace per capire la lingua di destinazione. In una bella traduzione esiste uno scambio culturale tra le due lingue e le due culture. A detta dei teorici della traduzione, una bella traduzione segue la tradizione greco-latina. Una bella traduzione non deve essere una copia

esatta del testo originale, ma il traduttore ha il potere di fare scelte creative per scegliere parole che migliorano la qualità della lingua. Secondo Giovanni Pascoli “ogni buona traduzione è mutamento di veste” (Pascoli). Questo significa che una buona traduzione mantiene l’essenza del testo originale, come una persona mantiene sempre lo stesso corpo, ma con alcune variazioni delle parole o altre scelte creative, nello stesso modo in cui una persona sceglie un abbigliamento diverso. Questa metafora è importante perché le scelte creative di una bella traduzione integrano un’estetica di bellezza della lingua alla traduzione che può essere o no di qualità alta come accade nella moda.

Secondo molti traduttori una “brutta traduzione” è una traduzione che segue il testo originale alla lettera. Si usa anche la frase “brutte fedeli” per descrivere le traduzioni che sono fedeli al testo originale, ma che compromettono l’intenzione originale dell’autore (Simon 10). Come negli studi di traduzione inglese, gli italiani riconoscono che ci sarà sempre intraducibilità tra la lingua originale e la lingua di destinazione perché “ogni testo trasposto crea diversi effetti” per il lettore (Silvano). La traduttrice Angela Ricci dice che “è uno dei paradossi della traduzione: per restituire qualcosa devi togliere qualcos’altro” (Ricci). In altre parole, è necessario togliere un elemento grammaticale o culturale quando si traduce. In realtà, è quasi impossibile tradurre un testo parola per parola (specialmente nel caso dell’italiano e dell’inglese perché sono lingue con origini diverse). Comunque, si può avere una brutta traduzione quando ci sono troppe intraducibilità tra le due lingue, specialmente con le frasi idiomatiche. Per esempio, la traduzione letterale in inglese di “Giovanni sta menando il can per l’aia” è “John is leading his dog around the threshing floor” (Bassnett 34). Questo, però, è un esempio di una brutta traduzione (fedele al testo italiano) perché in inglese non ha senso e non è traducibile in senso letterale. In questo caso la traduzione più appropriata è “John is beating around the bush,” perché

restituisce lo stesso significato della frase idiomatica italiana usando una frase idiomatica inglese comprensibile dai lettori anglofoni (Bassnet 34). Un'altra caratteristica di una brutta traduzione è quando il traduttore censura le idee dell'autore originale attraverso troppe omissioni. Per esempio, durante il fascismo in Italia, i traduttori italiani censurano le traduzioni, cancellando i riferimenti al sesso, alla religione e ad altre cose che il governo o i traduttori ritengono inopportune (De Grand). Avere troppe intraducibilità e censura in un testo è un problema perché questo indebolisce l'intenzione dell'autore e diminuisce la qualità, causando troppa inautenticità. Un aspetto importante degli studi di traduzione è che la traduzione sia vicina al testo originale, ma non troppo vicina, e che abbia parole belle; quindi, è importante che non si produca un testo con una brutta traduzione.

Inoltre, i traduttori italiani hanno creato la frase "traduttore traditore" per descrivere un traduttore che non segue esattamente il messaggio dell'autore quando traduce. Questa idea proviene dai formalisti russi che credono che una traduzione debba essere perfetta (parola per parola senza cambiamenti) per essere una traduzione "fedele" (Eco 30). Come ho detto precedentemente, una traduzione perfetta tra due lingue non può esistere perché ci sono parole e idee diverse in ogni lingua e cultura. Comunque, gli italiani usano la metafora del traditore perché i lettori si fidano del traduttore quando rende nell'altra lingua il tema principale del libro originale. Secondo Lorena Polezzi, i traduttori si chiamano "traditori" perché i traduttori stanno "consciously or unconsciously distorting the original and only providing the recipients with an inferior copy" (Polezzi 306). Indipendentemente dai cambiamenti fatti con buone intenzioni, alcuni traduttori credono che qualunque cambiamento sia un tradimento del testo originale. Questa idea è una domanda sulla paternità di una traduzione invece che sulla fedeltà. Ci si deve chiedere se il traduttore sia un autore o no. Secondo me, il traduttore è quasi un autore perché

ogni traduttore mette un po' della sua identità nella sua traduzione. Per esempio, se si legge *Little Women* in inglese, ci si accorge che l'autrice ha un punto di vista unico perché è americana. Quando un traduttore italiano traduce *Piccole donne* inserisce inevitabilmente elementi italiani nella sua traduzione. Ma si può eliminare l'identità di un traduttore in una traduzione? Giulio Silvano si chiede: "è davvero possibile non mettere qualcosa di noi, della nostra storia, lavorando su un'opera di un'altra nazione, di un altro tempo, per renderla leggibile a chi condivide la nostra lingua?" (Silvano). Rispondo a questa domanda dicendo che non è possibile per un traduttore tradurre un testo senza un inserimento della sua identità, ma il problema è quando un traduttore sceglie di mettere troppo della sua identità nel testo originale. Si corregge questo fenomeno se si intende la traduzione come uno scambio non solo di lingue, ma anche di culture. Umberto Eco scrive che i formalisti russi fanno una distinzione tra "*fabula* (o storia) e *sjuzet* (o trama)," che "neither of which are a question of language" (Eco 30). Secondo Eco, è più importante che un traduttore rispetti il testo originale piuttosto che provare a fare una traduzione libera. Sono d'accordo con Eco e quindi la trama originale deve essere rispettata. Perciò, quando un traduttore cambia la trama e il nuovo testo non ha senso, secondo me, lui è un traduttore traditore.

La dicotomia di bella e brutta traduzione è molto sessista perché l'origine di questa teoria di traduzione è che le donne sono inferiori agli uomini, Tutti gli studi della traduzione ruotano intorno ai seguenti concetti: "originale/copia, autore/traduttore, e per analogia, uomo/donna" (Simon 12). Questa analogia uomo/donna proviene dal Diciassettesimo secolo, infatti nel 1603, Giovanni Florio, un linguista e traduttore italiano, scrive che le traduzioni sono "donne stimate" perché "sono difettose," (Simon 1). In questo caso, "difettose" significa che le traduzioni non sono il testo originale e quindi non esiste una traduzione completamente perfetta. Al tempo di questa asserzione, le donne non potevano essere traduttrici, ma "the language of translation

theory has indeed been profoundly marked by gender" (Simon 10). Il problema è che questo era un settore principalmente maschile e quindi gli uomini dettavano le regole e gli sviluppi del settore ne sono stati condizionati. Gli studi della traduzione sono associati agli studi della bellezza. La qualità e l'integrità di una traduzione sottolineano la soggettività della bellezza dettata dagli uomini europei. Il giornalista Giulio Silvano dice che la traduzione è "una forma di imperialismo, che punta principalmente alla comprensione di un testo – 'ogni traduzione è in sé stessa un'interpretazione'" (Silvano). Questo significa che la traduzione europea segue l'interpretazione basata sugli standard di bellezza e di scelte stilistiche europee; quindi, si perdono le idee dei Paesi stranieri o dei gruppi che non siano uomini europei. Invece queste traduzioni dovrebbero essere un'arte in cui i traduttori sono donne e uomini.

Prima di classificare le traduzioni di *Piccole donne* secondo i canoni di bella o brutta traduzione, sono importanti alcuni cenni storici della fortuna editoriale del romanzo in Italia. Anche se il libro originale di Louisa May Alcott viene pubblicato nel 1869, la prima traduzione a cura di Enrico Bemporad è pubblicata solo nel 1915. Bemporad, il figlio dell'editore della prima edizione italiana, ha tradotto questa edizione seguendo lo stile europeo. Il libro originale, *Little Women*, è pubblicato in due volumi, "il primo nel 1868 e il secondo nel 1869" ("Piccole donne"), ma la casa editrice negli Stati Uniti riunisce i due volumi in uno solo ("Piccole donne"). In Italia il libro rimane in due volumi come nelle altre traduzioni europee di Paesi come Francia ed Inghilterra. La prima edizione italiana ha solo il primo volume, quindi i lettori italiani possono leggere solamente la prima metà del libro. Nonostante questo, la prima edizione italiana "ebbe un successo immediato quando uscì" e il libro fu "consigliato dagli insegnanti" ("Piccole donne"). E anche se il libro originale è americano, è evidente che le traduzioni italiane sono importanti nella cultura italiana. Oggi ci sono molte edizioni italiane che sottolineano elementi diversi del testo

originale. Per esempio, oltre a tradurre il testo originale, la traduttrice Beatrice Masini ha scritto molte traduzioni e adattamenti di *Piccole donne* e ha pubblicato molti libri per bambini come *La storia di May piccola donna* (un adattamento della biografia della sorella di Louisa Alcott e ispirazione del personaggio di Amy March) e *Piccole donne* con illustrazioni e testo semplificato.

Inoltre, *Piccole donne* oggi è un classico in Italia con la presenza di molti personaggi femminili, ma nel 1915 il ruolo della donna in Italia era molto diverso rispetto agli Stati Uniti. Nel 1915 l'idea di patriottismo era molto forte perché l'Italia entra nella Prima guerra mondiale contro l'Austria e l'Ungheria e c'erano più donne attive degli uomini perché gli uomini erano soldati nella guerra. Per eliminare questo problema, il governo provava a eliminare le donne dalla forza lavoro (De Grand 36). Di conseguenza, c'era una grande "infusione di propaganda nazionalista" per le donne che venivano incoraggiate a rimanere a casa e ad avere figli (De Grand 38). La chiesa cattolica amplifica questa propaganda perché voleva che nascessero più bambini cattolici. Ma il problema più grande riguardo al ruolo della donna subito dopo il Risorgimento era che le donne e gli uomini non erano considerati uguali per legge. Le donne non avevano il diritto al voto o il diritto al divorzio, quindi, per legge, erano inferiori agli uomini. Siccome *Piccole donne* è un libro sull'esperienza femminile ci sono elementi che non sono presenti durante questi anni. Elio Vittorini fa notare che prima del fascismo le traduzioni erano "censurabili" per soddisfare le idee di nazionalismo (Filanti 38), e questo insieme al basso tasso di alfabetizzazione impedisce alle donne di leggere questa edizione anche se, paradossalmente, erano il pubblico di riferimento del romanzo.

Fortunatamente negli anni Settanta in Italia il ruolo della donna nella società inizia a cambiare in maniera positiva e assistiamo a un cambiamento negli studi teorici sulla traduzione e

di conseguenza nelle traduzioni di *Piccole donne*. Questo cambiamento è iniziato dopo la fine della Seconda guerra mondiale, ma era più popolare negli anni Settanta con il movimento del femminismo di seconda generazione negli Stati uniti e in Europa. Le proteste in Europa e negli Stati Uniti incoraggiano le donne italiane a prendere parte alla Rivolta femminile a Milano e Roma (Ginsborg) e finalmente nel 1975 secondo una nuova legge, moglie e marito sono considerati uguali nel matrimonio. Dopo l'approvazione di questa legge e durante le proteste del femminismo, le donne iniziano a esplorare la loro sessualità per la prima volta senza paura. Questa esplorazione è importante per le traduzioni di *Piccole donne* perché il libro affronta il tema di come diventare donna.

Il movimento femminista influenza anche le traduzioni e gli adattamenti cinematografici di oggi. Durante gli anni recenti le traduzioni di *Piccole donne* cominciano a cambiare un po' perché oggi la cultura della donna è diversa grazie al movimento femminista globale che porta a una reinvenzione del personaggio di Amy March (la sorella più giovane). In particolare, l'adattamento più recente (2019) della regista americana, Greta Gerwig, si incentra sul ruolo di Amy, un personaggio molto controverso. Alcott ha basato il personaggio sulla sua sorella più giovane, May Alcott. Nel testo originale, Amy è la sorella che si lamenta molto perché lei è una bambina. La traduttrice Stella Sacchini dice che la sua traduzione "**è la rivincita di Amy, la capricciosa, la sbruffoncella, l'ambiziosa, la sfacciata**, con il suo diritto a riempirsi la bocca di parole difficili, ricercate, desuete e di sbagliare, di inanellare un errore dopo l'altro senza il minimo imbarazzo" (Sacchini). Secondo me, questa scelta creativa di Sacchini significa che le donne possono rappresentare tutte queste caratteristiche, non devono essere solamente belle e contegnose. Ma la rivoluzione di Amy non è solo una scelta creativa delle traduzioni di *Piccole donne* di oggi; Sacchini, dice anche che "i traduttori di oggi cambiano anche il dialogo un po' per

il gradimento presso il pubblico" per essere vicini al testo originale per il pubblico di riferimento di oggi (Sacchini). La traduttrice Angela Ricci aggiunge che i traduttori cercano "di avvicinare la lingua al modo in cui ragazze di quell'età parlano adesso" (Ricci). Secondo me, queste traduzioni moderne e l'abilità di fare cambiamenti creativi sono possibili perché il modo in cui si parla delle donne in Italia è cambiato e si insegna alle ragazze preadolescenti di oggi come una donna possa esplorare la propria personalità.

Oggi in Italia il pubblico di riferimento di questo romanzo sono le ragazze preadolescenti. La traduttrice di *Piccole Donne* Stella Sacchini dice che il libro "mi è stato regalato quando avevo più o meno otto anni" ("Piccole donne"). e che il libro è "un classico amatissimo" ("Piccole donne"). In "Piccole donne," l'autrice scrive che il libro è molto popolare tra le ragazze adolescenti perché "il tema principale del romanzo non è solo la famiglia e come gli insegnamenti dei genitori si riflettano sui figli, bensì la crescita e la trasformazione interiore da adolescenti ad adulti" (Sacchini). In altre parole, questo significa che i personaggi preadolescenti, come le sorelle March e Laurie Laurence, rispecchiano le vite del pubblico di riferimento perché sono diventate adulte; quindi, loro sono il pubblico di riferimento di *Piccole donne*.

Tenendo presente tutto ciò, secondo me, la traduzione di *Piccole donne* di Enrico Bemporad è una brutta traduzione, perché lui scrive con l'idea del patriottismo italiano in mente e, pertanto, ci sono elementi nella sua traduzione che sono andati perduti perché cambia completamente gli elementi culturali americani del testo originale per promuovere il nazionalismo in Italia. Una cosa importante da ricordare è che Bemporad ha tradotto la prima edizione di *Piccole donne* per i lettori italiani nel 1915 e questo significa che la sua traduzione è la prima traduzione disponibile per i lettori italiani durante un'epoca di nazionalismo subito

prima del fascismo. Bemporad era una fascista di Firenze e le sue idee fasciste sono presenti nella sua traduzione (tre anni prima dello sviluppo del fascismo in Italia). Per esempio, invece di tradurre la canzone americana, "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," nel primo capitolo del testo originale, Bemporad la sostituisce con la filastrocca europea/americana "Addio mia bella addio," una canzone patriottica italiana (Bemporad 14). Chiaramente, Bemporad non traduce con l'idea di autenticità in mente perché lui cancella i riferimenti culturali americani dalla sua traduzione e trasforma il testo per riflettere le idee del patriottismo italiano. Con l'eliminazione dei riferimenti culturali originali del 1868, Bemporad offre ai lettori un testo con riferimenti propri del 1915 a scapito della traduzione che è piuttosto brutta a mio parere. Un altro esempio di questi cambiamenti drastici è nel capitolo undicesimo intitolato "Il campo Laurence." In questo capitolo le sorelle March passano un giorno con amici inglesi del loro amico Laurie Laurence. Alla fine di questo capitolo, nel testo originale, c'è una conversazione tra Meg (la sorella maggiore) e Ned, un giovane inglese che flirta con Meg dopo aver cantato una canzone americana. Questa canzone e la conversazione che segue sono molto importanti per la trama del libro perché durante la conversazione tra Ned e Meg è la prima volta che i lettori vedono che Meg è interessata a John Brooke, il suo futuro marito. Nella sua traduzione Bemporad omette sia la canzone che la conversazione e la narrazione ricomincia dalla mattina dopo. Il riferimento alla canzone è solo la frase: "tutta la compagnia cantava a squarciagola" (Bemporad 142) invece di "a pensive refrain" (Alcott 139) del testo originale. Questo è un esempio di una brutta traduzione perché, omettendo questa scena, non solo si perde il tono originale, ma si perde anche il contesto di tutta la trama. Quindi, l'anticipazione della relazione tra Meg e John Brook si perde senza questa scena. Riconosco che la canzone di Lowell è molto "americana," quindi è possibile che Bemporad non abbia voluto tradurre la scena perché sarebbe stata difficile da capire dai lettori

italiani. Invece di usare le lettere di Meg per dimostrare la storia sentimentale come nel testo originale, i lettori devono porsi domande sulla relazione romantica tra Meg e John Brooke. Tutti questi cambiamenti dimostrano troppe libere interpretazioni del testo originale e, secondo me, Bemporad è un traduttore traditore. La traduzione non ha la stessa struttura del testo originale e quindi, in generale, è una brutta traduzione, o una traduzione troppo libera.

La traduzione di *Piccole donne* di Beatrice Masini (pubblicata nel 2020), invece, è un esempio di una bella traduzione perché sebbene rimanga vicina al testo originale, contiene scelte stilistiche di qualità. Complessivamente, la sua traduzione riporta fedelmente il testo di Alcott. Per esempio, Masini mantiene gli elementi culturali unici del libro originale usando la grammatica e le parole giuste per i lettori italiani. Nel testo originale, Alcott cita libri e opere americane che erano popolari al suo tempo. Nella sua traduzione Masini mantiene questi titoli popolari (*Zio Tom, L'erede di Redclyffe* e *Ivanhoe*) mentre Bemporad li omette completamente. Grazie a questi dettagli Masini fa rivivere ai lettori l'ambientazione e il periodo di tempo originali attraverso i riferimenti culturali americani, ed è come se loro fossero negli Stati Uniti della Guerra civile. L'inclusione di questi dettagli dà alla sua traduzione un senso di autenticità perché questi sono i libri americani che leggono i personaggi. e un aspetto importante è proprio l'ambientazione durante la Guerra civile americana. Masini, traducendo i titoli delle opere americane in italiano, aiuta i lettori a capire meglio la storia americana in quel periodo e fa conoscere loro l'importanza della cultura. Masini fotografa perfettamente anche la maniera unica in cui parlano i personaggi. Nel libro di Alcott, per esempio, Amy è una bambina e solitamente fa errori quando parla. Masini traduce questi malapropismi mantenendo la caratterizzazione originale dei personaggi. Per esempio, nel capitolo undicesimo Amy dice che "Beth is a very fastidious girl," ma lei intende dire "fascinating" (Alcott 138-139). Masini traduce la parola

"fastidious" con "pungigliosa" e "fascinating" con "fascinosa" (Masini 204). Normalmente, in inglese questo errore ha senso perché le parole sono più simili, ma in italiano è un errore un po' strano, ma va bene. È possibile che Amy possa confondere le parole che terminano in "osa." Ciò nonostante, Masini traduce ancora l'errore per preservare il suo significato originale del testo originale. Secondo me, questa è una bella traduzione perché Masini sceglie queste parole per preservare il significato del personaggio di Amy. Inoltre, nonostante Masini traduca abbastanza fedelmente modifica un po' il testo originale in modo da migliorare tutti i riferimenti culturali usando, allo stesso tempo, parole belle. Per esempio, nel primo capitolo Alcott scrive: "they had always done this from the time they could lisp: Crinkle, crinkle, little star" (una parodia della canzone "Brilla brilla mia stellina") (Alcott 20). Questa frase ci fa conoscere meglio le sorelle March durante la loro infanzia mentre fanno errori come Amy quando parlano. Però la frase di Masini dice: "l'avevano sempre fatto da quando avevano iniziato a balbettare: billa billa, mia 'tellina" (Masini 21). Oltre a cambiare la parola "brilla" (della canzone originale) in "billa" (linguaggio infantile incomprensibile), Masini aggiunge un apostrofo per imitare una blesità con la parola da "stellina" a "'tellina." Questa frase è un esempio di una bella traduzione perché Masini segue l'esempio di Alcott quando usa la stessa canzone, ma fa una modifica diversa per preservare la lingua e i riferimenti culturali. La canzone è una filastrocca popolare in Italia e negli Stati Uniti. Questi esempi dimostrano che Masini riesce a mantenere il senso originale del testo di Alcott senza cambiamenti radicali e senza alterare la trama e allo stesso tempo fa in modo che la traduzione sia capita dai lettori italiani a differenza di quello che fa Bemporad.

In conclusione, le traduzioni di *Piccole donne* continuano a coinvolgere i lettori in Italia e nel mondo perché raccontano una storia universale. Non importa l'essere donna oggi o nel 1915 perché la storia ha temi comuni come l'amicizia, l'amore e il diventare maggiorenni. Molte

persone si identificano con le sorelle March, come per esempio Sacchini, che dice che quando era piccola, “ero Jo e non lo sapevo. Sono stata Beth e anche Meg, in altre fasi della mia vita” (Sacchini). Questo significa che ci possiamo identificare con i personaggi grazie a delle buone traduzioni. Il libro continua a influenzare le ragazze adolescenti di oggi, infatti, quando parla del libro nel mondo di oggi, Sacchini dice: “penso che sia questo il motivo del fascino imperituro di questa storia che continua a essere letta e tradotta e ha conosciuto così tante versioni filmiche” (Sacchini). Questo significa che ogni traduzione o adattamento di *Piccole donne* crea un nuovo pubblico nel corso di una nuova generazione e, a ragione, la storia di *Piccole donne* è diventata un vero e proprio classico per le ragazze preadolescenti in Italia e anche nel resto del mondo.

Conclusion: Translation as a Human Experience v. AI Translation Software

It goes without saying that the kinds of translations that are produced by artificial intelligence programs are not the equivalent to human translators because literary translation requires contextual knowledge that AI does not possess. Scholars of literary translation studies refer to this technology as "computer-assisted literary translation (CLAT)" (Youdale 221). While translation software may be useful for everyday translation, the difference between a human translator and a translation software, first and foremost, is that software does not have real-world human experience with language. Translation software "doesn't pick up on subtle nuances in languages. It can't carry out language expansion and struggles to grasp the broader context in which words exist" like a human can (DTS Language Services). Literary translation requires a nuanced conception of grammar in the context of the story that translation software does not have because it does not know the relationships between the characters. For example, the discussion of the multiple ways to say "you" in Italian in chapter two would not be something that translation software could pick up on because it does not know when the March sisters become comfortable enough with Laurie to switch their address of him from "Lei" or "voi" to "tu." Even if AI is programmed to know the grammatical rules, it does not have the capacity to put the grammar rules in context. So, while AI is learning and improving its ability to mimic human interaction, it is unlikely to ever be able to work like a human who can speak two languages. Ratherm translation software like Google Translate is "better suited for everyday and informal use" than important documents, or literature (DTS Language Services).

Though translation software is not usable for literary translation due to its inability to translate the artistry from one language to another, translation software can be a helpful tool for non-literary translation, such as international students taking courses in a language other than

their own, where they are expected to keep up with lectures and readings alongside native speakers. When I served as an embedded learning fellow for Writing 101 at Drew University, a course designed to teach college-level writing in accordance with the American style, some students in the class used Google Translate or DeepL to better understand the assigned readings. Some of them even used this software when working with me face-to-face in order to get the correct point across in a language that is not natively spoken. Since the software helped them better understand the reading, the students were able to produce meaningful written responses to the readings in English. Therefore, translation software can be a helpful tool in the classroom.

However, using translation software can also be viewed as a violation of academic integrity, especially in foreign language classes, where the goal is to learn the basic grammar and structure of a language. Because artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) translation software are computer-based programs that provide an instant translation of a text, students have taken advantage of these programs for enhanced performance in foreign language classes. In language courses at my university, we have a strict policy prohibiting the use of Google Translate because not only is it a violation of our honor code, but also our professors claim that “they can tell " if we use translation software. The official policy of the Italian Department of Drew University, located on course syllabi reads: “IMPORTANT: Students are not allowed to use online translators for their homework,” followed by a university-wide statement that reads:

> You may use Artificial Intelligence (AI) resources only if an assignment clearly states that is an option or if your instructor explicitly permits it in the syllabus. In such cases, you may only use the specific tools identified as acceptable and you must adhere to our standards for attribution, validation, and transparency. This means that you must (1) fully

> document all material that was not generated by you, (2) check information generated by AI and take full responsibility for its accuracy, and (3) identify where and how you used any AI tools and how they contributed to your work. Assessment may focus on how you improve on and surpass the initial contributions of the AI. Use of any AI tools without permission is unacceptable and will be reported as an academic integrity violation. If you have any doubts about what is acceptable, please discuss them with the professor of the class. (Drew University).

Because the professor is presumably a native or fluent speaker of the language of the course, I believe that the improper use of translation software is detectable by a professor. Not only do they know the language, but they also know the context of their assignment (the skill level of the student, what they have taught up to that point, etc.), whereas translation software will not. For a foreign language course, I believe that the policy against using translation software should be enforced. By relying on their own ability instead of using AI, the student will actually gain more fluency in the language because they have to put the language in context in order to choose the correct words and follow the grammatical rules specific to that language.

Though AI and other translation software are useful tools, they will not erase the need for human translators altogether. In 2017, South Korean researchers from the International Interpretation Translation Association held a competition between humans and translation software to see if translation software could beat a human translator. Basically, the object of this competition was to see if translation software had the capability of creating a faster, more accurate translation than a human translator. The competition consisted of four humans against three different types of AI translation software. The human translators “scored an average of 25 out of 30 in translating Korean to English, while the AI translators scored between 10 and 15”

(Kim Han-joo). This competition demonstrates that AI translation software is not as accurate as a human translator at this point in time and does not eliminate the need for human translators in the near future, especially for longer and artistic works, such as literature. Ultimately, human translators are necessary for the process of literary translation.

Using the example of *Little Women* and Bemporad and Masini's editions of *Piccole donne*, we see that translation is a human experience that requires negotiations between text, language, culture, authors, translators, and audiences. We also see how translations can shape cultural attitudes toward both the original text and TL text, as demonstrated in Italian and Japanese society's perception of *Little Women,* a text so embedded in American culture. Translation is an ever-present and ever-expanding artform that offers to provide an international understanding, bringing humans closer together.

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