Translating Buzzati:

Domesticating and Foreignising Strategies

By

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Abstract

Methodologies within Modern Translation Studies are often broadly defined by two seemingly polarised ideologies: foreignisation and domestication. Current theory tends to favour foreignising translations which has led to a marginalisation of domestication as a viable and valid approach.

This thesis is an examination of domestication as a still-legitimate approach in the field of translation. The project consists of original translations of four short stories by noted Italian author Dino Buzzati, which together with commentaries provide a practical platform on which to analyse the characteristics and advantages of the approach.

Additionally, building on these examples is a more general discussion of these two approaches, an examination of their respective strengths and weaknesses and an evaluation of domestication as a methodology that can still offer advantages in effective translation.

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Biographical Note

Life

Dino Buzzati (1906-1974) was an Italian journalist, artist and author.

Dino Buzzati Traverso was born on October 16 1906 in San Pellegrino, in the Dolomite Alps (near Belluno, Veneto) to an upper-middleclass family. His father, Giulio Cesare Buzzati, born in Venice but with a strong Bellunese heritage, was a professor of International Law, teaching at both the Università di Pavia and the Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi in Milan. His mother, Alba Mantovani, was the last descendent of a prominent Venetian ducal family. The second of four children, Buzzati enjoyed a comfortable childhood with the majority of his youth spent in Milan due to his father's employment. However, his adolescence was interspersed with many trips to his family's residence in San Pellegrino where Buzzati was surrounded by his beloved mountains which together with his love of drawing and poetry would remain his greatest passions throughout his life (Buzzati, *60 racconti* introd. v). The family continued to reside in Milan even after his father's premature death in 1920 from a pancreatic tumour; an incident that ignited in the then fourteen year old Buzzati the constant fear of being struck by the same disease (v).

It was in Milan that Buzzati completed all of his formal education, including a degree in law from the Università degli Studi di Milano in 1928. Upon completion of his legal studies, he was hired by the prominent Milanese newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* with which he would remain until his death. Beginning in the corrections department, he went on to a prolific and lauded career in journalism, holding many subsequent positions within the company including art critic, reporter, war correspondent, essayist and eventually editor. His career also gave him frequent opportunities to travel abroad; he served as a correspondent in Africa during World War II and in later years worked as a reporter in Japan, the United States and Israel. His time spent in journalism encompassed some of the most tumultuous times in

modern Italian history, notably World War II and the Fascist Regime (1922-1943) which imposed severe restrictions on the press. However, Buzzati remained distant from the engaged intellectuals of his time with his fiction works contrasting with the prevalent politically charged works typical of some of his contemporaries. He married late in life to Almeria Antoniazzi in 1964. By the 1970s his health was steadily declining. In 1972, aged sixty five, he died of the same cancer that killed his father.

Fiction Works

Buzzati was a rarity in that he excelled at many different mediums of literature. During his literary career he produced novels, short stories, childrens' fiction, comic books, graphic novels, theatre, poetry, radio plays and libretti as well as many formal critical essays and articles.

Buzzati began writing fiction in his youth; his first work, the poem *La canzone delle montagne* (1920) was written when he was only fourteen years old and clearly showed his passion for the mountains of his homeland. This remained an important theme in many of his works including his first novel *Barnabo delle montagne* (1933) which was published after his entry into journalism, and followed two years later by *Il segreto del bosco vecchio* (1935). Buzzati published his best known novel *Il deserto dei Tartari* in 1940 which came to be considered one of the most original twentieth-century Italian novels, winning him critical acclaim and international recognition. His next publication was his first collection of short stories *I sette messaggeri* (1942), a medium he would revisit in several other subsequent collections spanning his literary career. In 1958 he won the *Premio Strega* when he published *Sessanta racconti* which combined a selection of stories from the collections *I sette messaggeri*, *Paura alla Scala* (1949) and *Il crollo di Baliverna* (1954). His critical reputation secure, his later work was characterised by experimentation with new styles and genres; this included his final two novels, the science-fiction *Il grande ritratto* (1960) and *Un amore* (1963) which coincided with his marriage; the graphic novel *Poema a fumetti* (1969); and two more collections of *racconti*: *Il colombre* (1966), and his last work *Le notti difficili* (1972) published a

few months after his death, the title clearly acknowledging his ailing health. Since his death many of his works have been republished or recollected in various editions. Additionally numerous previously unpublished articles, correspondence and drafts have been released posthumously.

Buzzati himself saw the possibility of development of his works, a so-called life after the original. He adapted many of his works into different mediums. For example, short stories often had second lives as theatre plays or libretti; perhaps his most famous play *Un caso clinico* (1953) was an adaptation of his short story *Sette piani* (from *I sette messaggeri* 1942). Furthermore, many of his works were adapted by other artists, notably his novels which were developed into films. Other works also had second lives in other languages. After the domestic critical success of *Il deserto dei Tartari*, the French translation in 1949 created perhaps his greatest readership outside of Italy and this success would see many of his other works released in French translation (Arslan 11). *Il deserto dei Tartari* went on to be translated in some twenty languages as with many of his other novels, short stories and plays. All his novels exist in English translation as do several collections of various selected *racconti*.

Style

“Il massimo, per me, è la letteratura che nobilmente – non con dei trucchetti ridicoli – mi porta alla commozione. Gli scrittori che io massimamente venero sono coloro i quali mi hanno commosso. Lo scopo precipuo della lettura narrativa è quello di dare gioia al lettore...” (Buzzati, *Autoritratto* 204).

Buzzati's style is often described as existentialism or magic realism and certainly elements of both literary schools are present in his writings. Existentialism, an originally philosophical movement which championed human individualism and freedom, first showed its influence in literature through the works of such writers as Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Franz Kafka, an artist to whom Buzzati is frequently compared (Arslan 12). Indeed it is clear that Buzzati himself read and admired literary works from these authors, but he seemed reluctant to acknowledge any great influences. Asked which authors he thought had influenced his works, Buzzati

responded: “Direi Poe. Oscar Wilde...E poi gli altri dicono Kafka... Io non dico niente.” (*Autoritratto* 175).

Nevertheless, aspects akin to the doctrines of existentialism can be discerned in Buzzati’s works. There is often a consciousness of humanity and its consequences, as well as studies of the absurd and the distortion between appearances and reality. Likewise, the ideals behind magical realism accurately describe other elements of Buzzati’s writings. This movement of aestheticism paradoxically yearned to define and study reality by blurring the lines between the real and the surreal. Toscani notes that the transition towards surrealism or the fantastic is undeniably a clear characteristic of Buzzati’s fiction, especially in his *racconti* (157). Buzzati commonly uses symbolism and metaphor, playing with the notions of reality to “...intensificare, di rendere più forte l’espressione di certe idee” (Buzzati, *Autoritratto* 176).

Buzzati frequently said that the effectiveness and credibility of his fantasy relies on it being rendered in the most plausible and evident way: “*Il fantastico che funziona artisticamente è proprio quello che è rappresentato in una forma quanto più possibile reale*” (Buzzati, *Autoritratto* 176).

He believed the idea of the fantastic has to be as stylistically close as possible to that of the *cronaca* (*Autoritratto* 168). Buzzati was working in journalism and writing his fiction simultaneously and naturally one medium influenced the other. Buzzati grounds his fantasy in realism through his use of language and structure. Structurally, he artfully manoeuvres the reader from a beginning firmly grounded in reality, accentuated by his factual, formal, journalistic style, to a climax shrouded in ambiguity and surreality. Speaking on his linguistic style in relation to the fantasy prevalent in his work, Buzzati exclaims: “*Credo che quanto più è fantastico il tema, tanto più preciso deve essere il linguaggio. Questo, anzi, mi pare sia una legge letteraria che non ammette eccezioni*” (169).

Buzzati does this, obeying his *legge* using a standard, somewhat formal language, a style with the highest importance given to the communication of ideas: “*medio-borghese e medio-popolare; lessico evidente, normale, abitudinario, salvo*

sporadicissime citazioni colte; parsimonia di aggettivi, periodi scorrevoli, linearità sintattica da manuale. E il manuale, se c'è, è quello giornalistico. Di un giornalismo 'alto'” (Toscani 148).

Thematically, Buzzati's works, from his fiction to his paintings, reflect a common defining thread: *la montagna* (Buzzati, *60 racconti* introd. viii). Throughout his life he would return to the Dolomites of his homeland and they would play a central part in his creative output, both explicitly, as in novels such as *Barnabo delle montagne*, and implicitly through what they represent: nature, industrialisation and the turn to technology, mystery. His *racconti* are often set in such landscapes, in an ambiguous past, examining and evoking such themes. He also draws additional thematic material from his own life. Some of his literary works are studies of anguish, death, sickness and defeat, which reflect his own anxieties. Others use fantastic situations to examine or critique issues of his contemporary society or institutions such as religion, with metaphysical suggestions of dangerous technologies, and the ideas of fault, sin, expiation and remission (Toscani 65).

Racconti

A master of the genre of the *racconto*, Buzzati produced over two hundred short stories in various collections. Naturally, with such a quantity of works, they represent a myriad of subjects and content, but nevertheless, they share typical characteristics such as his unique take on the fantastic and surreal to portray reality.

In this project I am presenting four of Buzzati's *racconti* which illustrate the diversity of his work in the medium. They all come from different collections and periods from within the author's life:

Original Title	Translation	Original Collection
<i>Il mantello</i>	<i>The Cloak</i>	<i>Sette messaggeri</i> - 1942
<i>Il re a Horm el-Hagar</i>	<i>The King at Horm el-Hagar</i>	<i>Paura alla Scala</i> - 1949
<i>L'uomo che volle guarire</i>	<i>The Man Who Wanted to Heal</i>	<i>Il crollo di Baliverna</i> -1954
<i>Il colombre</i>	<i>The Taniwha</i>	<i>Il colombre</i> – 1966

The selection of these particular stories is related to the methodological process of domestication. The purpose of this study is to examine and discuss the varying degrees of domesticating practices in modern translation studies, and thus I have selected works through which I can effectively scrutinise such practices through the practical application of my own translation. Additionally, as I wanted to examine diverse procedures of domestication, I wished to select works that not only offered themselves willingly to such methodologies, but also others that resisted it. Each of the works presented have been through a process of domestication, but each process has been different in response to the challenges of the individual *racconto*. The specific aspects of their respective domestications are discussed further in the commentaries that accompany each story. However, the general approaches can be basically defined, and appear in this study based on their level of domestication:

<i>The King at Horm el-Hagar</i>	Domestication of context/preconception
<i>The Man Who Wanted to Heal</i>	Domestication of names
<i>The Cloak</i>	Domestication of contextual setting
<i>The Taniwha</i>	Domestication of subject

Audience

When translating it is imperative to know your audience. This is even more important when employing domesticating strategies as you are attempting to cater for their specific needs. Therefore, while translating the following *racconti* I had a hypothetical audience in mind, much like Buzzati would have had during the stories' original composition. I am translating for a contemporary New Zealand reader and have moulded each translation to try to present them in a form that I believe is suitable for this specific audience.

The King at Horm el-Hagar

A Translation of

Il re a Horm el-Hagar

By Dino Buzzati

Il re a Horm el-Hagar

Questi i fatti avvenuti in località Horm el-Hagar, di là della Valle dei Re, al cantiere per gli scavi del palazzo di Meneftah II.

Il direttore degli scavi, Jean Leclerc, uomo attempato e geniale, ebbe una lettera dal segretario del Servizio delle Antichità che gli annunciava una visita di riguardo: un illustre archeologo straniero, il conte Mandranico, verso il quale si raccomandavano i maggiori riguardi.

Leclerc non ricordava nessun archeologo che si chiamasse Mandranico. L'interessamento del S. d. A. – pensò – anziché da reali meriti, era procurato da qualche alta parentela. Ma non ne fu seccato, tutt'altro. Da diei giorni era solo, il suo collaboratore essendo partito per le vacanze. L'idea di vedere in quell'eremo una faccia cristiana che si interessasse un poco delle sue vecchie pietre non gli dispiacque. Da quel signore che era, spedì una camionetta fino ad Akhmim per fare provviste e sotto un padiglione di legno da cui si dominava l'intero complesso degli scavi allestì una mensa perfino elegante.

Sorse quel mattino d'estate, caldo e greve, con le modiche speranze che accompagnano il nascere del dì sui deserti, e poi si dissolvono nel sole. Proprio il giorno prima, all'estremità del secondo cortile interno, tra le informi cataste delle colonne crollate, era uscita dalla sabbia, dopo molti secoli di buio, una stele con iscrizione di grande interesse per ciò che rifletteva il regno, finora rimasto oscuro, de Meneftah II.

The King at Horm el-Hagar

Here follow the events that took place at Horm el-Hagar, in the Valley of Kings, at the excavation site of the temple of Merneptah II.

The director of excavations, Jean Leclerc, a sharp, elderly man, had received a letter from the secretary of the Antiquities Service announcing an important visitor: a distinguished archaeologist from overseas, one Count Mandranico, who was owed the highest courtesy.

Leclerc couldn't recall any archaeologists with such a name. The intervention of the A. S. – he mused – would have been caused by some high pedigree rather than any real merit. But it didn't bother him, quite the contrary. For ten days he had been alone, his colleague having gone on holiday. The idea of seeing in his little hermitage another Christian face that showed even a little interest in his old stones did not displease him at all. In preparation for his guest he sent a jeep to Akhmim to fetch provisions, and under a wooden pavilion that dominated the entire complex, he prepared a rather elegant table setting.

The summer morning dawned, hot and heavy, bringing with it the modest hopes that accompany the birth of a new day in the desert, hopes destined to melt in the sun. Just the day before, between the shapeless heaps of collapsed columns at the end of the second interior courtyard, a stele had been unearthed from the sand. It bore an inscription of great interest as it reflected the previously obscure reign of Merneptah II:

“I re due volte dai nomi del nord e dalle paludi sono venuti a prosternarsi dinanzi al faraone, sua maestà, vita, salute, forza” diceva l’iscrizione alludendo probabilmente alla sottomissione di vari signorotti del Basso Nilo già ribelli “e sconfitti lo hanno aspettato alla porta del tempio, portavano le parruche nuove profumate d’olio, in mano tenevano corone di fiori ma gli occhi non sono stati pari alla sua luce, le membra ai suoi comandi, le orecchie alla sua voce, le parole allo splendore di Meneftah, figlio di Ammone, vita, salute, forza...” La notte precedente, al lume di un petromax, la decifrazione non era andata oltre.

Ora, benché Leclerc non desse più l’importanza di una volta alle affermazioni accademiche e alla fama, il ritrovamento gli aveva procurato una gioia sincera. Guardando a oriente, verso l’invisibile fiume, là dove la pista automobilistica si perdeva in una prospettiva senza fine di terrazze rocciose polverulente di sabbie, l’archeologo pregustava la soddisfazione di annunciare all’ospite ignoto la scoperta, proprio come si ama trasmettere al prossimo una buona notizia.

Vide in quel mentre – non erano ancora le otto – un lontano esile turbine levarsi dall’orizzonte, cadere, rifarsi più alto e consistente, ondeggiare nell’aria immobile e pura. Poi, con un alito di vento che gli mosse i capelli bianchi da artista, giunse anche un ronzio di motore. La macchina dello straniero stava per arrivare.

Batté le mani Leclerc e a un paio di fellah accorsi fece segno. I due corsero all’ingresso del recinto, aprirono la porta di solide travi. Poco dopo l’automobile entrava. Leclerc notò subito sulla targa, con leggero disappunto, l’insegna del corpo diplomatico.

“Two times the kings of the northern nomes and of the delta came forth to prostrate themselves in front of Pharaoh, his majesty, life, health, strength,” the inscription read, most likely alluding to the submission of various rebellious petty nobles of the Lower Nile, *“...and defeated, they awaited Him at the door of the temple, they bore new wigs perfumed with oil, in their hands they held garlands of flowers. But their eyes could not withstand his His light, their limbs His commands, their ears His voice, the words to the splendour of Merneptah, son of Amon, life, health, strength...”* The night before, by the light of a gas lamp, the deciphering hadn’t gone any further.

Even though Leclerc no longer gave the importance he once had to academic achievements and acclaim, the find had been a sincere joy. Looking east, towards the invisible river where the road disappeared in a never-ending view of rocky terraces dusted with sand, the archaeologist looked forward to the satisfaction of announcing his discovery to his mystery guest, just as one relishes being the bearer of good news.

At that moment he saw in the distance – it wasn’t yet eight – a slender cloud of dust rise from the horizon. He watched it fall, then become higher and denser, wavering in the still, pure air. Then, with a gust of wind that blew the artist’s white hair, came the drone of a motor. The foreigner’s car was about to arrive.

Leclerc clapped his hands; a pair of *fellahin* recognised the signal. The two men ran to the entrance of the enclosure and opened the gate of solid truss-beams. Shortly after, the automobile entered. Leclerc instantly spotted, with slight disappointment, the insignia of the Diplomatic Corps on the licence plate.

Fermatasi la macchina quasi dinanzi a lui, ne scese prima un giovanotto *stilé* che Leclerc doveva aver già visto da qualche parte al Cairo, poi un altro signore bruno and compunto, dall'aria molto seria; infine, con gran fatica – e il Leclerc capì ch'era quello l'ospite – un vecchietto piccolo e segaligno, dalla faccia di tartaruga assolutamente inespressiva.

Sorretto dal signore bruno, il conte Mandranico scese della vettura e appoggiandosi a un bastoncello mosse verso il cantiere. Fino a quel momento nessuno pareva essersi accorto del Leclerc il quale tuttavia con la sua decorativa corpulenza e il largo vestito bianco campeggiava nella scena. Finalmente il giovanotto per primo si avvicinò annunciando in francese che lui, tenente Afghe Christani della Guardia di Palazzo e il barone Fantin (alludeva evidentemente al signore bruno), avevano l'onore (chissà perché tanta solennità) di accompagnare Monsieur Le Comte Mandranico a questa visita che “confidiamo sarà del più alto interesse”.

A questo punto il Leclerc d'un subito riconobbe l'ospite: troppo spesso i giornali egiziani avevano pubblicato la fotografia del re straniero che viveva in esilio a Cairo. Archeologo illustre? Non era una bugia, dopo tutto. Nella sua giovane età – ricordò l'egittologo – il re aveva dimostrato spiccato interesse per la etruscologia e ne aveva appoggiato gli studi anche ufficialmente.

Perciò il Leclerc si fece avanti con un certo impaccio, accennò a un piccolo inchino, la sua simpatica faccia arrossì lievemente. L'ospite, sorriso spento, borbottò qualche parola, dando la mano. Quindi le altre presentazioni.

The car stopped almost in front of him. Out first came a *stilé* young man that Leclerc recalled seeing about Cairo, then another dark-haired, composed gentleman with a very serious air; then finally, with great effort – and Leclerc realised that this was his guest – a wiry, little old man, with an absolutely expressionless face, like that of a tortoise.

Supported by the dark-haired gentleman, Count Mandranico got out of the car and, leaning on a cane, moved towards the worksite. Up until this point no one seemed to have noticed Leclerc who, with his decorative corpulence and his broad, white suit, certainly stood out in the scene. Finally, the young man approached him, announcing in French that he, Lieutenant Afghe Christani of the Palace Guard and Baron Fantin (evidently alluding to the dark-haired gentleman) had the honour (God knows the reason for such ceremony) of accompanying Monsieur le Comte Mandranico on this visit that “we trust will be of the highest interest.”

At this point Leclerc suddenly recognised his guest: all too often had he seen the Egyptian newspapers publish the photograph of the foreign king who was living in exile in Cairo. A renowned archaeologist? It wasn't a lie after all. In his youth – the Egyptologist recalled – the king had shown a keen interest in Etruscology and had even officially supported some such studies.

For this reason Leclerc stepped forward with a certain embarrassment and made a little bow, his kind face lightly reddening. The guest, void of a smile, mumbled a few words, holding out his hand. Then followed the other introductions.

Ben presto il Leclerc ritrovò la disinvoltura abituale. « Di qua, di qua, signor conte » disse indicando la via « è meglio cominciare il giro subito, prima che faccia troppo caldo. » Con la coda dell'occhio si accorse che il compostissimo barone Fantin aveva offerto il braccio al conte; quasi irosamente il vecchio lo aveva però respinto, avviandosi da solo a piccoli stentati passi. Il giovane Christani seguiva da presso con una bianca borsa di pelle sotto il braccio; e sorrideva genericamente.

Giunsero su un ciglione roccioso, donde sprofondava tra due alte ripe tagliate con meravigliosa precisione un lungo piano inclinato. In fondo si apriva come una larghissima e piatta fossa, a metà della quale un rotto colonnato, terribilmente immobile, formava la facciata esterna dell'antica reggia. Spigoli diritti, ombre geometriche, nere occhiaie rettangolari di atrii e portali si accavallavano più in là in apparente disordine, rivelando, in così morto paesaggio, che quello era pure stato il regno dell'uomo.

Spiegava il Leclerc, con signorile distacco, le difficoltà dell'impresa. Prima che si iniziassero gli scavi, tutto era sepolto dalle sabbie e dai detriti fin sopra la cima delle colonne e del maggiore frontone. Una montagna di materiale si era perciò dovuta scavare, sollevare, portar via, per un dislivello in alcuni punti perfino di 20 metri, fino a raggiungere il piano originario del palazzo. E il lavoro non era che a metà.

« *Ta scianti cencio tan ninciatii levoo...?* » domandò con voce chioccia il conte Mandranico, aprendo e chiudendo la bocca in modo curioso.

Leclerc quickly regained his usual confidence. “Over here, this way, sir,” he said, indicating the way, “it’s best if we begin the tour immediately, before it gets too hot.” With the corner of his eye he noticed that the very composed Baron Fantin had offered an arm to the Count; almost irritably the old man rejected it, setting off alone with small, laboured steps. The young Christani followed closely behind with a white leather bag beneath his arm, smiling at nothing in particular.

They reached a rocky cliff where a long sloping plane sank between two high walls cut into the rock with extraordinary precision. Below, it opened up into a wide, flat pit. In the middle a broken colonnade, menacingly still, formed the external façade of the ancient royal palace. Further down one could see the hewn edges, the geometric shadows, the dark rectangular eye-sockets of atriums and portals piled up in apparent disorder, revealing in such a dead scene that this had once indeed been the kingdom of man.

Leclerc explained with gentlemanly detachment the difficulties of the endeavour. Before beginning the excavations, everything was buried under sand and rubble right up to the top of the columns and the main pediment. A mountain of material must have already been dug up, lifted and taken away, as there was a height difference in some places of up to twenty metres until it reached the original level of the palace. And the work was not yet half done.

“Vin bagin da scaviikton...?” asked Count Mandranico in a clucky voice, opening and closing his mouth in a curious fashion.

Leclerc non capí una parola. Fulmineo, guardò il serio barone chiedendo aiuto. E il barone doveva essere allenatissimo a difficoltà del genere perché, impassibile, si affrettò a spiegare: « il conte desidera sapere da quanto tempo si sono iniziati gli scavi ». E c'era nelle parole un vago disdegno, come se fosse logico che il vecchio re parlasse in quel modo, e idiota colui che avesse avuto la tentazione di meravigliarsene.

« Da sette anni, signor contre » rispose Leclerc, suo malgrado un poco intimidito « e ho avuto il privilegio di inaugurarli io stesso... Ecco qui, ora ci conviene scendere di qui, è l'unico punto un po' disagiata » disse, quasi facendo suo l'imbarazzo del decrepito conte dinanzi allo sdrucchiolo del piano inclinato.

Il barone ritentò di offrire il braccio e questa volta non venne respinto; commisurando i suoi passi a quelli del conte si avviò per la discesa. Anche Leclerc rispettosamente avanzò molto adagio. La china era ripida, l'aria sempre più calda, le ombre si accorciavano, l'ospite insigne strascinava un po' la gamba sinistra, impolverandosi la scarpa di pelle bianca, dall'estremità della fossa giungevano ritmici colpi, come di mazzapicchi.

Come furono in fondo, non si videro più le baracche del cantiere, nascoste dal ciglione; ma soltanto gli antichi pietroni, e intorno le alte ripe precipitose, calcinate e cadenti. Verso occidente esse si innalzavano a gradoni formando una vera montagna, anch'essa più che mai nuda, ormai soggiogata dal sole.

Leclerc hadn't understood a word. He swiftly looked at the stern Baron, asking for help. The Baron must have been well trained to deal with such difficulties as, emotionless, he rushed to explain: "Monsieur le Comte wishes to know how long it has been since the excavations began." There was a vague contempt in his words, as if it were logical that the old man spoke in such a manner, and only a fool would be tempted to be surprised by it.

"Seven years ago, sir," Leclerc answered, despite feeling a little intimidated, "and I had the privilege of inaugurating it myself... Ah, here, it's best for us to go down here, it's the only part that is a little difficult," he said, almost taking upon himself the embarrassment of the decrepit Count, judging the degree of the inclining plane.

The Baron once again tried offering his arm, this time he wasn't refused; matching his steps to the Count's, they started the descent. Leclerc too advanced very slowly. The slope was steep, the air became hotter and hotter, the shadows smaller. The distinguished guest dragged his left leg a little, getting dust all over his white leather shoe. From the bottom of the pit came rhythmic blows, like those from a pickaxe.

As they went further down, the sheds of the worksite disappeared from view, hidden by the cliff, leaving only the ancient stones and all around the high, precipitous, crumbling walls which rose sharply to the west, forming a true mountain, barer than ever, exposed to the sun.

Leclerc, cortese, spiegava e il conte Mandranico alzava ogni volta la faccia meccanicamente senza partecipazione, approvando con piccoli cenni; ma si sarebbe detto non ascoltasse. Ecco il colonnato d'ingresso, il troncone di una sfinge androcefala, i minuziosi bassorilievi semicancellati dal tempo, dove si indovinavano figure di deità e di monarchi. Ermetici come montagne gli appiombi delle antiche muraglie non rispondevano agli sguardi umani.

Lo straniero avvistò allora nel cielo delle nuvole strane che salivano lentamente dal cuore dell'Africa. Erano tronche di sopra e di sotto, come se un coltello le avesse tagliate, e solo ai fianchi ridondavano di molli gorghi spumosi. Con infantile curiosità il conte le additò col bastoncino.

« Le nuvole del deserto » spiegò Leclerc « senza testa né gambe... come se fossero schiacciate tra due coperchi, vero?... »

Il conte stette a fissarle alcuni istanti, dimentico dei faraoni, poi vivamente si volse al barone domandando qualcosa. Il barone dimostrò confusione e si scusava ampiamente senza perdere la sua compunzione. Si poté capire che il Fantin aveva dimenticato di portare la macchina fotografica. Il vecchio non dissimulò la stizza e gli voltò le spalle.

Entrarono nella prima corte, in totale rovina. Solo la simmetrica disposizione delle pietre e degli sfasciumi indicava approssimativamente dove un tempo innalzavano i colonnati e le mura. Ma in fondo due massicci piatti torrioni dagli spigoli sbiechi, resistevano ancora, collegati da un muro più basso e rientrante, dove si apriva un portale.

Leclerc courteously explained to his guests what they were looking at. Count Mandranico raised his head every now and then mechanically, but never spoke, just approving with little nods; it was unclear if he was even listening. They passed through the colonnade of the entrance, they saw the stump of a man-headed sphinx and all around detailed bas-reliefs partially worn away by time, though the figures of deities and monarchs could still be discerned. Hermetic like the mountains, the faces of the ancient walls didn't respond to the glances of the living.

The foreigner caught sight of some strange clouds in the sky coming up from the heart of Africa. They were truncated on the top and bottom; as if cut by a knife, only on the sides did they blossom into soft, foamy whirlpools. With childish curiosity, the Count pointed at them with his little cane.

"The clouds of the desert," explained Leclerc, "without head nor tail... As if they were crushed in a vice, don't you agree?"

The Count stayed and stared at them for a moment, oblivious to the pharaohs. Then he turned lively to the Baron, asking him something. The Baron looked confused and apologised at length, still managing to maintain his composure. It was clear that Fantin had forgotten to bring the camera. The old man made no effort to conceal his anger, turning his back to him.

They entered into the first courtyard which was in complete ruin. Only the symmetrical placement of the stones and debris indicated more or less where the columns once rose up. But at the end, two massive, squat towers with rough, slanting edges still remained, connected by a shorter receding wall which opened in a wide doorway.

Era il frontone interno del palazzo e Leclerc fece notare due smisurate figure umane che in bassorilievo occupavano ciascuna delle due pareti: il faraone Meneftah II rappresentato nel magnanimo furore della battaglia.

Un uomo anziano col *tarbusc* e una lunga tunica bianca avanzò dall'interno del tempio, avvicinandosi a Leclerc e gli parlò in lingua araba, concitato. Leclerc gli rispondeva scuotendo il capo con un sorriso.

« Scusi, che cosa dice? » chiese il tenente Christani incuriosito.

« È uno degli assistenti » rispose Leclerc « un greco, che ne sa ormai più di me, si occupa di scavi da almeno trent'anni. »

« Ma è successo qualcosa? » insistette Christani che aveva afferrato qualche frammento della conversazione.

« Le loro solite storie » fece Leclerc « dice che oggi gli dèi sono inquieti... dice sempre così quando le cose non vanno per il loro verso... c'è un masso che non riescono a spostare, è slittato fuori dalle guide, adesso dovranno rifare l'argano. »

« Sono inquieti... eh... eh... » esclamò, non si capiva in che senso, il conte Mandranico, rianimatosi all'improvviso.

Passarono nel secondo cortile, anch'esso tutto desolazione e rovina. Solo a destra ciclopici piloni stavano ancora ritti, da cui sporgevano, smozzicate, le sagome di formidabili atlanti.

It was the internal pediment of the palace. Leclerc pointed out the two immense human figures which, in bas-relief, occupied each of the two walls: the pharaoh Merneptah II represented in the magnanimous furore of battle.

An elderly man wearing a tarbush and a long white tunic came out from inside the temple. He approached Leclerc, speaking to him in Arabic, clearly agitated. Leclerc replied, shaking his head in a smile.

“Excuse me, but what did he say?” asked Lieutenant Christani, curiously.

“He’s one of the assistants,” replied Leclerc, “a Greek, he knows more about it than me, he has been involved in excavations for almost thirty years.”

“But has something happened?” insisted Christani, who had caught a fragment of the conversation.

“Just the usual stories,” said Leclerc, “he said that today the gods are restless... It’s what he always says when things aren’t going their way... There’s a rock they can’t move, it skidded off its guides, and now they have to repair the winch.”

“Restless... Eh... Eh...” exclaimed Count Mandranico, reviving all of a sudden; what he actually meant was unclear.

They passed into the second courtyard, also in total ruin, desolation. Only towards the right were shafts like Cyclopes still standing from which jutted out smashed outlines of formidable Atlas-like figures.

In fondo, una ventina di fellah stavano lavorando e all'apparire dei signori, come presi di frenesia, cominciarono ad agitarsi, vociando, in una simulazione di intenso zelo.

Il re straniero guardò ancora le singolari nubi del deserto. Navigando esse tendevano a raggrupparsi in un nuvolone solo, statico e pesante, che invece non si muoveva. Sulla biancastra cornice della montagna a ovest passò l'ombra.

Leclerc, ora seguito anche dall'assistente, guidò gli ospiti a destra, in un'ala laterale, l'unico punto dove le strutture fossero in buone condizioni. Era una cappella funeraria, ancora riparata dal tetto, solo qua e là sbrecciato. Entrarono nell'ombra. Il conte si tolse lo spesso casco coloniale e il barone fu lesto ad offrirgli un fazzoletto affinché si tergesse il sudore. Il sole penetrava dagli interstizi con lamine ardente luce che battevano qua e là sui bassorilievi, rianimandoli. Intorno c'era penombra, silenzio e mistero. Nella semioscurità, ai lati, si intravedevano alte statue, irrigidite sui troni, alcune decapitate, dalla cintura in giù, esprimevano volontà cupa e solenne di imperio.

Leclerc ne indicò una, priva di braccia ma dalla testa pressoché intatta. Aveva un muso grifagno e malvagio. Avvicinatosi, il conte si accorse ch'era il volto di un uccello, solo che il becco si era spezzato.

« Interessantissima questa statua » disse Leclerc. « È il dio Thot. Risale almeno alla dodicesima dinastia e doveva essere considerata preziosa se venne trasportata fin qui.

Further down a group of twenty or so *fellahin* were working, and as the gentlemen appeared, they got all worked up, as if in a frenzy, shouting in a display of intense fervour.

The foreign king was still looking at the peculiar desert clouds. They were now soaring, appearing to regroup into one great mass, static and heavy, motionless. Its shadow passed over the off-white ridge of the mountain to the west.

Leclerc, now also followed by his assistant, guided the guests towards the left to a side-wing, the only place where the structure was still in good condition. It was a funerary chapel, still sheltered by a roof that was only breached here and there. They entered into the darkness. The Count took off his thick pith helmet and the Baron was quick to offer him a handkerchief to wipe the sweat from his brow. The sun crept in through the cracks with sheets of burning light that bounced here and there off the bas-reliefs, bringing them back to life. All around it was dark, silent and mysterious. In the half-light tall statues could be made out on the sides, petrified on their thrones, some decapitated. From the waist down they expressed the gloomy and solemn will of an empire.

Leclerc pointed out one that was missing its arms but still had its head intact. It had a wicked, avian face. Getting closer, the Count realised that it did indeed have the face of a bird, only the beak had been broken off.

“Most interesting, this statue,” said Leclerc. “It’s the god Thoth. It dates back to the twelfth dynasty at least, and must have been considered very precious to be transported here.

I faraoni venivano a chiedergli... » si interruppe, restò immobile come tendendo le orecchie. Si udiva infatti, non si capiva bene da quale parte, una specie di sordo fruscio.

« Niente, è la sabbia, la maledetta sabbia, la nostra nemica » riprese Leclerc tornando a rasserenarsi. « Ma scusatemi... dicevano che i re, prima di partire per le guerre, chiedevano consigli a questa statua, una specie di oracolo... se la statua restava immobile la risposta era no... se muoveva la testa era approvazione... Alle volte queste statue parlavano... chissà che voce... i re soltanto riuscivano a resistere... i re perché anche loro erano dei... » Così dicendo si voltò, nel vago dubbio di aver commesso una *gaffe*. Ma il conte Mandranico fissava con inaspettato interesse il simulacro, toccò con la punta del bastone il basamento di porfido quasi a saggiarne la consistenza.

« *Dun ciarè genigiano anteno galli?* » chiese finalmente con intonazione incredula.

« Monsieur le comte chiede se i re venivano di persona a interrogarli » tradusse il barone, indovinando che il Leclerc non aveva afferrato una parola.

« Precisamente » confermò soddisfatto l'archeologo, « e dicono, dicono almeno, che Thot rispondesse... Ed ecco, ecco qui in fondo la stele di cui vi avevo parlato... voi siete i primi a vederla... » Aprì le braccia in un largo gesto, un poco teatrale, restò così immobile, di nuovo ascoltando.

The pharaohs would come and ask him..." he broke off and stood still as if straining his ears. There was a noise, it wasn't clear exactly where from, but there was a sort of muted rustling.

"It's nothing, just the sand, the cursed sand! Our old foe," Leclerc resumed, cheering up. "Do excuse me, they said that the kings, before heading out to battle, would ask advice of the statues, like a type of oracle... If the statue stayed still, the answer was no... If it moved its head it was showing its assent... At times they spoke; God knows how they must have sounded... Only the kings could withstand their voices... Because the kings themselves were gods..." Saying this he turned away with the faint impression he had made a *gaffe*. But Count Mandranico was just staring with unexpected interest at the simulacrum. He touched the porphyry base with the tip of his cane as if to test its solidity.

"*Vir da kans kimmask dim*," he finally asked in a disbelieving tone.

"Monsieur le Comte wishes to know if the kings came in person to question them," translated the Baron, assuming Leclerc hadn't caught a word.

"Precisely," the archaeologist confirmed, satisfied, "and they say, just *say* mind you, that Thoth would answer... And here, here at the back, is the stele I was telling you about... You are the first to see it..." He unfurled his arms in a large gesture, a little theatrical. He froze, holding the pose, listening again

Tutti istintivamente tacquero. Il fruscio di prima rodeva intorno, misterioso, come se i secoli assediassero lentamente il santuario cercando di risepellirlo.

Le lame del sole si erano fatte sempre meno oblique, ora scendevano quasi a picco, parallele agli spigoli dei piloni, ma alquanto fioche, quasi il cielo si fosse appannato.

Il Leclerc aveva appena cominciato la spiegazione che il barone gettò uno sguardo all'orologio da polso. Le dieci e mezzo. Faceva un caldo d'inferno.

« Vi ho fatto fare un poco tardi, signori, forse? » domandò amabilmente Leclerc. « Avrei disposto la colazione per le undici e mezzo... »

« La colazione? » esclamò il conte, in tono secco e finalmente comprensibile, rivolto al Fantin. « Ma non dobbiamo partire... alle 11 al più *taddi*, al più *taddi*... »

« Non avrò dunque l'onore?... » fece Leclerc desolato.

Il barone volse la cosa in termini più diplomatici: « Siamo davvero estremamente grati... davvero commossi... ma impegni... »

A malincuore l'egittologo abbreviò i commenti, rinunciando a molte importantissime cose che gli erano care. Il gruppetto ritornò quindi sui suoi passi. Il sole si era spento, una coltre rossiccia si era stesa nel cielo, atmosfera da pestilenze. A un certo punto il conte bisbigliò qualche parola al Fantin, che lo lasciò, precedendolo. Leclerc, pensando che il vecchio avesse voglia di urinare, si avviò all'uscita con gli altri due. Il conte rimase solo, tra le antiche statue.

Everyone instinctively went quiet. The rustling from before rolled around them mysteriously, as if the centuries were slowly besieging the sanctuary, trying to rebury it.

The rays of light had become less and less slanting, almost coming down to a point, parallel to the rough edges of the pylons. They were rather dim, almost as if the sky had clouded over.

Leclerc had just begun another explanation when the Baron glanced at his wristwatch. Half ten. It was as hot as hell.

“I’ve made you a little late perhaps, gentlemen?” Leclerc asked amiably. “I have arranged luncheon for half eleven...”

“Luncheon?” exclaimed the Count in a dry tone, though finally comprehensible. He turned to Fantin: “But we must leave... At eleven at the *lattist*, the *lattist*...”

“I won’t have the honour then of...” said Leclerc, dejected.

The Baron put it into more diplomatic terms: “We are extremely grateful... Touched even... But commitments...”

So the Egyptologist reluctantly abbreviated his explanations, leaving out many an interesting point that he held dear. The little group then went back, retracing their steps. The sun had dimmed; a blanket of reddish-brown spread out over the sky, a pestilent atmosphere. At a certain point the Count whispered a few words to Fantin, who then left and walked away. Leclerc, believing the old man wished to relieve himself, also headed towards the exit with the other two men. The Count stayed there alone, amongst the ancient statues.

Uscito intanto dal chiuso, Leclerc esaminò la volta celeste: aveva un colore strano. In quel mentre una goccia gli batté su una mano. Pioveva.

« Piove » esclamò « da tre anni non si era vista una goccia!... Era un brutto segno a quei tempi... se pioveva i faraoni rinviavano qualsiasi impresa... »

Si volse per comunicare al conte, rimasto indietro nel tempio, l'eccezionale notizia; e lo vide. Stava in piedi dinanzi alla statua di Thot e parlava. La voce non giungeva fino a lui ma l'archeologo scorgeva distintamente la bocca che si apriva e chiudeva in quel curioso modo da tartaruga.

Monologava il signor conte? o veramente interpellava il dio come i remoti faraoni? Ma che cosa poteva domandargli? Non guerre da poter combattere c'erano più per lui, non leggi da promulgare, né progetti, né sogni. Il suo regno era rimasto di là dei mari, per sempre perduto. Buono e cattivo della vita era stato speso fino in fondo. Non gli restavano che dei poveri giorni superflui, proprio l'ultimo pezzettino di strada. Quale ostinazione lo teneva dunque perché osasse tentare gli dei? Oppure, svanito, non ricordava più che cosa era successo e si immaginava di vivere i bei tempi lontani? O intendeva fare uno scherzo? Ma non era il tipo.

« Signor conte! » gridò Leclerc con improvvisa inquietudine.
« Signor conte, siamo qui... ha cominciato a piovere... »

Troppo tardi. Dall'interno del tempio uscì un suono orribile. Leclerc si sbiancò in volto, il barone Fantin arretrò istintivamente di un passo, la borsa bianca scivolò di sotto al braccio del giovane. E le gocce di pioggia cessarono.

Outside Leclerc examined the sky: it was an odd colour. At that very moment a drop of water landed on his hand. It was raining.

“It’s raining!” he exclaimed, “there hasn’t been a drop here for three years! It was a bad omen back in those days... If it rained the pharaohs would postpone every endeavour...”

He turned to the Count who had remained inside the temple to inform him of the exceptional news; then he saw him. He was standing in front of the statue of Thoth, talking. The words didn’t reach him, but the archaeologist could clearly make out his mouth opening and closing in that curious, tortoise-like fashion.

Was he talking to himself? Or was he truly consulting the god like the pharaohs of old? But what could he possibly be asking him? He had no wars left to fight, nor laws to proclaim, nor plans, nor dreams. His kingdom remained out there in the ocean, lost to him forever. The good and the evil of life had been utterly spent. Nothing awaited him except for a few meagre superfluous days, the end of the road. What obstinacy then, held him there to dare tempt the gods? Or, light-headed, did he not know what had happened, and believed to be living in the good days of old. Or did he mean to play a joke? No, he wasn’t the type.

“Sir!” cried Leclerc with a sudden uneasiness. “Sir, we’re over here... It’s started to rain...”

Too late. A horrible sound came out from inside the temple. Leclerc’s face went white, Baron Fantin instinctively took a step backwards, the white bag slipped off the arm of the young man. The rain ceased.

Un suono di legni cavi rotolanti, o di lugubri tamburi, così pressappoco dalla cappella di Thot. E poi si ampliò in un mugolo cavernoso, confusamente articolato, simile, ma ancora peggio, al lamento delle cammelle nel parto. C'era dentro una specie di inferno.

Il conte Mandranico, fermo, guardava. Non fu visto retrocedere né accennare la fuga. Il becco mozzo di Thoth si era dischiuso formando alla base un ghigno, i due morcherini si aprivano e chiudevano bestialmente; tanto più spaventosi perché il resto della statua giaceva immobile, del tutto privo di vita. E dal becco usciva la voce.

Il dio parlava. Nella quiete, le sue roche maledizioni – perché così parvero – avevano tetre risonanze.

Leclerc non era più capace di muoversi. Un orrore mai conosciuto lo teneva, facendogli saltare il cuore. E il conte? come il conte poteva resistere? Forse perché anche lui era re, invulnerabile dal Verbo come i sepolti faraoni?

Ma la voce adesso ondeggiava in borbottii, cedeva, si spense, lasciando un terribile silenzio. Solo allora il vecchio conte si mosse, coi suoi fragili passettini si avviò all'uscita, non vacillava, non era spaventato. Avvicinatosi a Leclerc che lo fissava inorridito, disse, approvando con cenni del capo:

« Ingegnoso: proprio ingegnoso... peccato che forse la molla si è rotta... biciognava ciassi tabli cicata... »

Stavolta però il barone non era pronto a tradurre gli ultimi suoi balbettii. Perfino il barone tacque, sopraffatto da quell'arido vecchio, sordo ai misteri della vita, così misero da non capire neanche che gli aveva parlato un dio.

There was a sound like rolling hollowed logs or drums all about the chapel of Thoth. And then it grew into a cavernous moan, confusingly articulate, similar to, but even worse than the cries of camels giving birth. There was hell inside.

Count Mandranico, immobile, watched. He made no sign of retreat or escape. The severed beak of Thoth parted, forming a sneer at the base, the two stumps opened and closed bestially, made so much more frightening because the rest of the statue lay there still, completely void of life. And from the beak came the voice.

The god spoke. In the stillness came his throaty curses – or so they seemed from their bleak echoes.

Leclerc was no longer able to move. A horror like no other gripped him, making his heart jump. And the Count? How could he possibly withstand it? Perhaps because he too was a king, invulnerable to the Word like the buried pharaohs?

Now the voice wavered in rumblings, subsided, then died out, leaving behind a terrible silence. Only then did the old Count move, with fragile little steps he headed towards the exit. He wasn't wobbling, he wasn't frightened. Approaching Leclerc who was staring at him, horrified, he said, approving with nods of his head:

“Ingenious, simply ingenious... It's a shame *perhabs* a spring is broken or something... *niids tabi ripaard*.”

This time however the Baron wasn't ready to translate his latest babble. He was overwhelmed by the arid old man, deaf to the mysteries of life, too wretched to realise that a god had spoken to him.

« Ma in nome del cielo » supplicò finalmente Leclerc, col vago presentimento di cose ostili. « Ma non ha sentito? »

Alzò il capo il grinzoso sovrano con atto autoritario:

« *Cioccheccia! Na ciocchezza!* » (voleva dire sciochezza?). Poi ancora con improvviso cipiglio: « *È ponta la macchina? È taddi: taddi... Fantin, cagaia fa?* ». Sembrava impermalito.

Leclerc, dominandosi, lo fissava con un sentimento strano, tra la costernazione e l'odio. Ma un coro di imprecazioni esplose all'estremità degli scavi. I fellah urlavano, impazziti e dal fondo del tempio accorreva a precipizio l'assistente, vociando.

« Che dice? che è successo? » chiese allarmato il Fantin.

« Una frana » tradusse il giovane Christani « uno dei fellah è rimasto sepolto. »

Leclerc strinse i pugni. Perché non se ne andava lo straniero? Non ne aveva avuto abbastanza? perché aveva voluto risvegliare gli incantesimi rimasti per millenni addormentati?

In realtà se n'andava il conte Mandranico, strasciando la sua gambetta su per il piano inclinato. Nello stesso tempo Leclerc si accorse che tutt'attorno, dalle bruciate ripe, il deserto si muoveva. Piccole frane smottavano qua e là, silenziosamente, simile a bestie guardinghe. In moto concentrico colavano giù per i valloncelli, canali, fessure, di terrazzo in terrazzo, ora fermandosi, poi riprendendo, strisciavano verso il monumento dissepolto. E non c'era un filo di vento. Il rumore dell'auto che si metteva in moto parve per qualche attimo un realtà rassicurante. Commiati e ringraziamenti furono formali. L'imperterrito conte aveva fretta.

“In God’s name!” Leclerc finally begged, with the vague foreboding of hostility. “Didn’t you hear?”

The wrinkled sovereign rose his head with an autocratic air: *nunsiins, va nonsiins!* (did he mean nonsense?). Then again with a sudden frown: “*Is the car rady? It’s latt: latt... Fantin, vatyuuudu?*” He seemed offended.

Leclerc, controlling himself, stared at him with a strange feeling, somewhere between dismay and hatred. Suddenly, a chorus of curses exploded at the edge of the excavations. The *fellahin* were shouting, crazed, and from the end of the temple, the assistant rushed to the precipice, shouting.

“What did he say? What’s happened?” asked Fantin, alarmed.

“A slip,” translated young Christani, “one of the *fellahin* has been buried.”

Leclerc clenched his fists. Why didn’t the foreigner just leave? Hadn’t he done enough already? Why had he wanted to reawaken spells that had laid dormant for millennia?

Count Mandranico was in fact leaving, shuffling his legs up the sloping plane. At the same time Leclerc noticed that all around, from the burnt banks, the desert was moving. Little slips slid down here and there silently, like cautious beasts. In a concentric movement they dripped down towards the little vales, channels, cracks from terrace to terrace, stopping, starting again, creeping towards the unearthed monument. There wasn’t a breath of wind. The noise of the car starting seemed for a moment a reassuring reality. The farewells and thank yous were formal. The undeterred Count was in a hurry.

Non chiese perché i fellah urlassero, non guardò le sabbie, non si interessò del Leclerc che era molto pallido. La vettura uscì dal recinto, scivolò via per la pista tra mulinelli di polvere, scomparve.

Rimasto solo sul ciglione, Leclerc ora fissava il suo regno. Le sabbie continuavano a franare, tratte giù da forza misteriosa. Egli vide anche i fellah lasciare in corsa disordinata il palazzo, fuggire spaventati, sparire quasi inesplicabilmente. L'assistente in gabbana bianca correva di qua e di là, con irosi richiami, cercando invano di trattenerli. Poi anche lui tacque.

Si poté quindi udire la voce del deserto che avanzava: coro sommesso di mille fruscii formicolanti. Già una piccola colata di sabbia, scivolando giù per una scarpata, toccò il piedistallo della prima colonna, un secondo rigurgito eseguì poco dopo il seppellimento dell'intero zoccolo.

« Dio mio » mormorò Leclerc. « Dio mio. »

He didn't ask why the *fellahin* were shouting, he didn't look at the sands, he wasn't interested in the very pale Leclerc. The car left the enclosure; it skidded away towards the road between whirlwinds of dust, then disappeared.

Left alone on the ridge, Leclerc stared at his realm. The sands continued to slide down, drawn in by a mysterious force. He watched the *fellahin* evacuating the palace in a jumbled scurry, fleeing terrified, disappearing almost inexplicably. The assistant in the white tunic was running here and there with terse calls, trying in vain to hold them back. Then he too fell silent.

The voice of the desert could be heard advancing: a soft chorus of a thousand swarming murmurs. Already a small flow of sand, drifting down from an escarpment, touched the pedestal of the first column, shortly after a second regurgitation buried its entire base.

"My God," murmured Leclerc. "My God."

Il re a Horm el-Hagar – The King at Horm el-Hagar

Commentary

Il re a Horm el-Hagar comes from Buzzati's second collection of short stories *Paura alla Scala* (1949). However, as with the majority of his stories, it was previously published in a periodical, in this instance the *Corriere Lombardo* on July 7 1946 under the slightly different name *Un re a Horm el-Hagar* (Giannetto 250).

The story is exemplary of how Buzzati employs fantasy in his writing, in particular the transition from the real to the surreal. It recounts the supposed events that took place at an excavation site of a funerary complex in the necropolis of the Valley of Kings, Egypt. The director of excavations has news of the imminent arrival of an important guest who will end up destructively exposing secrets lost for millennia.

In this story, Buzzati's journalism background is clear from the very first sentence. It begins formally, relaying only the barest, most necessary information. However, with the arrival of the count, the appearances of banality and formality are warped with his bizarre actions, building up to a climax surrounded in chaos. It was Buzzati's belief that for fantasy to be effective in fiction, it must be grounded in reality (Buzzati, *Autoritratto* 176). In my translation I have endeavoured to maintain the formal, journalistic style that he employs to achieve a sense of authenticity. This is particularly evident in the beginning of the story, as in the example of the first sentence:

Questi i fatti avvenuti in località Horm el-Hagar, di là della Valle dei Re, al cantiere per gli scavi del palazzo di Meneftah II.

Here follow the events that took place at Horm el-Hagar, in the Valley of Kings, at the excavation site of the temple of Merneptah II.

Despite the brevity of this opening sentence, it explicitly states the setting much as one would expect from formal report which I have reflected stylistically in the translation. Additionally, the story is necessarily full of specific technical terms, such as those related to architecture, archaeology and Egyptology, a field which Buzzati

himself found fascinating (Buzzati, *60 racconti* introd. v). The language is presented in an orderly, concise fashion, using short sentences, terse dialogue and descriptive passages, all of which I have retained in the translation to reflect the author's style.

In this story, unlike many of his others, Buzzati describes a clear setting. We are given concrete place names from the real world (Egypt, Akhmim, the Valley of Kings) and although the time period is not explicitly mentioned, the reader can easily estimate this from references to clothing and other objects. The content certainly fits with the heyday of excavations of Ancient Egyptian tombs during the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, there are temporal limits, which ground the setting in an approximate time; there is mention of motor vehicles which limits how early the setting could possibly be, and similarly there are references to clothing and other objects which determine the setting as more or less contemporary with the time of its initial publication in the 1940s.

This physical setting, however, is not Buzzati's own. In this story the foreignness of the characters and cultures is clearly defined and celebrated, even to the point of influencing the language. Applying a full-domestication to a text that is already essentially an explicit representation of the foreign can be an awkward transition. Firstly, as the source culture is not directly referenced, equivalents do not need to be found from the source culture, but instead from the foreign cultures depicted. This simple alteration changes the entire context of the story; in the original the cultures are foreign, in a domestication the cultures would be familiar, thus the representations do not correspond as they would in a story where one domestic culture is being substituted by another. Additionally, it was no mistake that Buzzati chose to depict a foreign culture; it was his intention to transport the reader to these places, and thus I have decided to retain this feature in my translation.

Even if attempting to find equivalents for the foreign terms in the original in a New Zealand domestic setting, significant difficulties arise. While there certainly are archaeological sites and excavations in New Zealand, the scale of the activities is much smaller, the history of the cultures concerned is much more recent and the presumed temporal setting does not match seamlessly. Despite the fact that in some cases approximate equivalents can be found, while considering the process it became

increasingly difficult and required extensive reworking of the source material. Ultimately I arrived at the decision that the story was moving too far away from plot and theme, to the extent of possibly sacrificing it, simply to merge with the process of heavy domestication. Thus, I found the approach unsuitable for the story, and present it here as perhaps the most ‘foreignising’ of the four stories that appear in this collection. However, as with all translation there are still elements of domestication throughout the text. A translation constantly, and necessarily, dictates that the translator must interpret the source text and below are a number of my personal interpretations.

An example of specific rendering of language is the ‘translated’ inscription of the stele. Here I have intentionally changed the register of the language, to a more formal, precise, if not slightly awkward English to reflect both that the original text would have been in Ancient Egyptian, and then most likely translated into French by Leclerc before arriving at the English of the translation (substituting the Italian of the original):

“I re due volte dai nomi del nord e dalle paludi sono venuti a prosternarsi dinanzi al faraone, sua maestà, vita, salute, forza” diceva l’iscrizione alludendo probabilmente alla sottomissione di vari signorotti del Basso Nilo già ribelli “e sconfitti lo hanno aspettato alla porta del tempio, portavano le parruche nuove profumate d’olio, in mano tenevano corone di fiori ma gli occhi non sono stati pari alla sua luce, le membra ai suoi comandi, le orecchie alla sua voce, le parole allo splendore di Meneftah, figlio di Ammone, vita, salute, forza...”

“Two times the kings of the northern nomes and of the delta came forth to prostrate themselves in front of Pharaoh, his majesty, life, health, strength,” the inscription read, most likely alluding to the submission of various rebellious petty nobles of the Lower Nile, “...and defeated, they awaited Him at the door of the temple, they bore new wigs perfumed with oil, in their hands they held garlands of flowers. But their eyes could not withstand His light, their limbs His commands, their ears His voice, the words of the splendour or Merneptah, son of Amon, life, health, strength...”

In this excerpt I have intentionally used a more formal, academic vocabulary (*prostrate, withstand, bore*), accompanied with extended sentence structure (*two times* instead of *twice*, *of the northern nomes and of the delta* instead of *of the northern nomes and the delta*) to allude to the perceived pompousness of the

‘original’ text, as well as trying to mimic the formal, academic style of the translation of ancient texts.

Another linguistic feature of the text (both the original and the translation) is the repeated use of foreign words and phrases. The original itself could be seen as a foreignising text as it deliberately includes such features to add authenticity and foreign colourings to the story. Even though the original readership of the text was Italian, we know that in the context of the events portrayed, the characters would have been communicating in French and Arabic. Buzzati makes this clear:

Finalmente il giovanotto per primo si avvicinò annunciando in francese che lui, tenente Afghe Christani della Guardia di Palazzo e il barone Fantin (alludeva evidentemente al signore bruno), avevano l'onore (chissà perché tanta solennità) di accompagnare Monsieur Le Comte Mandranico a questa visita che “confidiamo sarà del più alto interesse”

Un uomo anziano col tarbusc e una lunga tunica bianca avanzò dall'interno del tempio, avvicinandosi a Leclerc e gli parlò in lingua araba, concitato.

Even in the original we are dealing with a ‘translation’. An Italian audience understands that the characters are not speaking Italian, and the inclusion of foreign words simply reminds them of this fact. Examples of this can be seen in the two excerpts above; firstly we have the French address *Monsieur Le Comte* which forms part of the dialogue, cementing the fact that they are speaking in French. In the second excerpt we have a borrowing of the Egyptian Arabic *tarbusc*, a style of hat. Since I have chosen to retain the foreignness of the original setting, all these foreignisms have been preserved. But even these can be domesticated. For example, the word Buzzati uses, *tarbusc* is rendered in English as *tarboosh*, despite both being foreignisms of the original Egyptian Arabic word (“Tarboosh”). A further example of my new interpretation of the foreign is the Arabic word *fellah* which Buzzati uses to express both a singular and plural form. However, I discovered that the plural form is in fact the quite different *fellahin* (“Fellah”), and thus it appears in this form in appropriate places in the translation.

Perhaps the greatest domestic change to the story is the interpretation of the character of the count. From the story we know he is a king in exile, but it is never explicitly

stated from where. Ultimately he personifies the mechanism of the surreal and his language and manner are the first manoeuvres towards the chaotic climax. But who is he? Giannetto draws similarities between the count and the historical figure King Vittorio Emanuele III which cannot be ignored (251-252). Mere months before the story's initial publication the Italian King had abdicated to his son, then taking up exile in Egypt, adopting the name *conte di Pollenzo*. The count of the story even corresponds in physical description of the king who was at the time in the final years of his life, and was noted for his short stature (Giannetto 251). However, it is important to note that even though it would seem Buzzati certainly arrived at the idea of the story through this historical figure, his representation in the story is entirely fictitious. All the events and additional characters in the story were fabricated by Buzzati himself.

Ultimately this type of character proves problematic for a translator removed from the original setting. Would even a modern Italian audience readily grasp the reference, let alone a foreign audience? Almost certainly not; for a target audience to appreciate the reference they would need to understand that the story is Italian in origin, who Vittorio Emanuele III was and that he abdicated and lived in exile in Egypt (even though he appears in the story under the guise *Mandranico*). Thus, the only way to establish all of this information for a domestic audience is to include extensive footnotes or an introduction. However, I would argue that even this would not fulfil the purpose of providing the reader sufficient background knowledge to grasp the concepts of the reference. For the original intended audience the story was effectively dealing with current events, the references would be novel and understood as they would certainly have been aware of the king's abdication, exile and the circumstances surrounding these events.

In the end I considered the question: is the reference integral to the story? While this may seem harsh, I felt that even with an extensive footnote, there is no way of recreating the context of the original audience for it to have significant bearing. Certainly when I first read the story and selected it for this project I was unaware of the allusions to Vittorio Emanuele III. Ultimately the *conte Mandranico* of the original and the Count Mandranico of the translation are different characters, though little has been changed. *Conte Mandranico* extends beyond the story in the

preconceptions of the original audience, whereas Count Mandranico is contained by it. This in itself is a form of domestication, which in this case I believe obligatory. There was also the option of using an equivalent domestic personality to achieve an effect similar to that experienced by the target audience, but to do this effectively would have required contemporising the entire setting, which was a process that I felt the story resisted.

The changes between the two characters textually are minor; I have retained the pseudonym and description from the original, so the reference still exists (albeit in a much less overt way). However, slight changes were necessary. A particularly challenging linguistic feature of the text that required domestication was the Count's bizarre language. This presented numerous challenges. Firstly in the original, while the language is somewhat removed from standard Italian, a native speaker can look at it and, with the aid of contextual clues, at least partially understand it. The use of this language is interesting but certainly due to its inclusion in the story, Buzzati had a particular reason for using it. Giannetto offers a possible motive:

"...le oscurità di linguaggio del protagonista hanno prima di tutto la funzione di stabilire distanza e connotare superiorità, ma anche quella di simboleggiare, materializzandole, le difficoltà di comunicazione e la mancanza di sintonia che dividono fra loro i personaggi e in particolare contrappongono la sensibilità dell'archeologo all'aridità del re"(254).

I wanted to retain these features of the language, but using the language as it appears in the original would not provide the target audience with the intelligibility experienced by the original audience. Thus, I needed to alter the language into some form of English, removed enough from the standard but still vaguely comprehensible. This could have been resolved by using a dialectal form of English, however, I would argue that the use of a dialect would seem too definitive, possibly with the result of giving the count a specific nationality. Ultimately, I chose to create a fictitious language, which basically is a mutated form of English. I have given this 'language' a foreign feel by using uncommon consonants, changing the word order, and other features removed from English such as double vowels. However, I tried to retain an element of the way the original words sounded in English, so that the

meaning could still be deduced, especially in the instances when the count's babble is not translated by the baron:

« *Ta scianti cencio tan ninciati levoo...?* »

Which corresponds to: *Da quanto tempo sono iniziati i lavori* (Giannetto 260)

“*Vin bagin da scaviikton...?*”

Which corresponds to: *When did the excavations begin?*

In addition to these specific changes, all the remaining language featured in the translation has also been subject to interpretation. Further than the transposition from Italian to English, I have presented the language in registers that I found appropriate for the characters or the perceived time period. This is particularly reflected in the dialogues. Even though it is made clear that they are for the most part conversing in French, I have used equivalents in English to try and reflect their characteristics and circumstances. We know that these men are educated, some are nobility and for the most part they are older gentlemen, but we also know that they are strangers. Thus, for the dialogues I have used a slightly pompous and formal, yet slightly antiquated English to reflect both the personalities and the era of these characters:

“*I’ve made you a little late perhaps, gentlemen?*” *Leclerc asked amiably. “I have arranged luncheon for half eleven.”*

This translation is undoubtedly the most foreignised of the four I present here. Nevertheless, while the *racconto* did not lend itself to a full domestication, through the unavoidable interpretation of the source text, some elements have still gone through manoeuvres typical of domesticating methodologies. In this example, domestication can mostly be seen through the renderings of specific features of the language and through the necessary shift of the contextual preconception of the character of the count. However, by retaining the original foreign setting the translation has also been subject to obligatory foreignising strategies such as the retention of names and foreignisms within the text. Thus, this translation illustrates that elements of these two polarised approaches can and often do appear within the same work while still producing a reliable result.

The Man Who Wanted to Heal

A Translation of

L'uomo che volle guarire

By Dino Buzzati

L'uomo che volle guarire

Intorno al grande lebbrosario sulla collina, a un paio di chilometri dalla città, correva un alto muraglione e in cima al muraglione le sentinelle camminavano su e giù. Tra queste guardie ce n'erano di altezzose e intrattabili, altre invece avevano pietà. Perciò al crepuscolo i lebbrosi si raccoglievano ai piedi del bastione e interrogavano i soldati più alla mano.

« Gaspare » per esempio dicevano « che cosa vedi questa sera? C'è qualcuno sulla strada? Una carrozza, dici? E com'è questa carrozza? E la reggia è illuminata? Hanno acceso le torce sulla torre? Che sia tornato il principe? » Continuavano per ore, non erano mai stanchi e, benché il regolamento lo vietasse, le sentinelle di buon cuore rispondevano, spesso inventando cose che non c'erano, passaggio di viandanti, luminarie, incendi, eruzioni perfino del vulcano Ermac, poiché sapevano che qualsiasi novità era una deliziosa distrazione per quegli uomini condannati a non uscire mai di là. Anche i malati gravi, i moribondi partecipavano al convegno portati in barella dai lebbrosi ancora validi.

Soltanto uno non veniva, un giovane entrato nel lazzaretto da due mesi. Era un nobile, un cavaliere, uomo già stato bellissimo, a quanto si poteva indovinare perché la lebbra lo aveva attaccato con una violenza rara, in poco tempo deturpandogli la faccia. Si chiamava Mseridon.

« Perché non vieni? » gli chiedavano passando dinanzi alla sua capanna « perché non vieni anche tu a sentire le notizie? Ci devono essere questa sera i fuochi artificiali e Gaspare ha promesso che ce li descriverà. Sarà bellissimo, vedrai. »

The Man Who Wanted to Heal

Around the great leper colony on the hill, a couple of miles from the city, there ran a high wall on which sentries walked up and down. Of these men, some were haughty and cold, while others were more compassionate. Therefore at nightfall, the lepers would gather at the foot of the bastion and question the more willing soldiers. "Caspar," they would say, "what can you see this evening? A carriage, you say? And what is it like? Is the Royal Palace lit up? Have they lit the torches on the tower? Perhaps the prince has returned!" They would carry on for hours, never tiring; and even though the rules prohibited it, the kind-hearted sentries would answer them, often inventing things that were not there: passers-by, illuminations, fires, even eruptions of the volcano Ermac, as they knew that any news was a delicious distraction for those men, condemned to never leave that place. Even the gravely ill, the dying, participated in the vigil, carried in stretchers by the still able lepers.

Only one would not come, a young man who had entered the compound two months earlier. He was a nobleman, a knight, once handsome, as much as one could guess as the leprosy had attacked him with a rare violence, in a short time disfiguring his face. His name was Mseridon.

"Why do you not come?" they would ask him, passing in front of his hut. "Why do you not come with us and hear the news? Tonight there should be fireworks, and Caspar has promised to describe them to us. It will be beautiful, you will see."

« Amici » lui rispondeva dolcemente, affacciandosi alla soglia e si copriva la faccia leonina con un pannolino bianco « capisco che per voi le notizie che vi dà la sentinella siano una consolazione. Questo è l'unico legame che vi resta col mondo esterno, con la città dei vivi. È vero o no? »

« Sì certo, è vero. »

« Questo vuol dire che vi siete già rassegnati a non uscire mai di qui. Mentre io... »

« Tu che cosa? »

« Mentre io invece guarirò, io non mai sono rassegnato, io voglio, capite, voglio tornare come prima. »

Tra gli altri, dinanzi alla capanna di Mseridon, passava il saggio e vecchio Giacomo, patriarca della comunità. Aveva almeno centodieci anni ed era quasi un secolo che la lebbra lo smangiava. Non aveva più membra di sorta, non si distinguevano più la testa né le braccia né le gambe, il corpo si era trasformato in una specie di asta del diametro di tre quattro centimetri che si teneva chissà come in equilibrio, con in cima un ciuffo di capelli bianchi e assomigliava, in grande, a quegli scaccimosche che adoperano i nobili abissini. Come ci vedesse, parlasse, si nutrisse era un enigma perché la faccia era distrutta né si vedevano aperture nella crosta bianca che lo rivestiva, simile alla corteccia di betulla. Ma questi sono i misteri dei lebbrosi. In quanto al camminare, scomparse tutte le articolazioni, se la cavava saltellando sull'unico piede, tondo anch'esso come il puntale di un bastone. Anziché macabro, l'aspetto complessivo era grazioso. Praticamente, un uomo trasformato in vegetale. E siccome era molto buono e intelligente, tutti gli usavano riguardo.

“My friends,” he would gently reply, appearing at his doorstep, his leonine face covered with a white rag, “I understand that for you the news that you hear from the sentry offers you some consolation. It is the only link that is left between you and the outside world, with the city of the living. Am I right?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“That means that you have already resigned yourselves to never leave this place. Whereas I...”

“You what?”

“Whereas I instead will heal, I have never given up hope. Understand, I want to return to how I was.”

Amongst the others, in front of Mseridon’s hut, passed the old and wise Jacob; the patriarch of the community. He was at least a hundred and ten: it had been almost a century since the leprosy had consumed him. He didn’t really have limbs anymore at all; it was difficult to distinguish between his head, his arms and his legs. His body had become like a sort of pole with a diameter of only three or four inches that somehow he managed to keep balanced. With a tuft of white hair on the top, he resembled one of those flyswats that the Abyssinian nobles use, only larger. How he could see, talk or eat was a mystery as his face had been ravaged, nor could any orifices be seen in the white crust covering him, similar to the bark of a birch tree. But these are the mysteries of the lepers. As for walking, his joints having long since disappeared, he got by hopping on his only foot which was also round like the tip of a walking stick. However, rather than macabre, his overall appearance was charming. He was practically a man turned vegetable. And due to his kindness and intelligence, everyone respected him.

All'udire le parole di Mseridon, il vecchio Giacomo si fermò e gli disse: « Mseridon, povero ragazzo, io sono qui da quasi cento anni e di quanti io trovai o entrarono dipoi nessuno è mai uscito. Tale è la nostra malattia. Ma anche qui, vedrai, possiamo vivere. C'è chi lavora, c'è chi ama, c'è chi scrive poesie, c'è il sarto, c'è il barbiere. Si può anche essere felici, per lo meno non si è molto più infelici degli uomini di fuori. Tutto sta nel rassegnarci. Ma guai, Mseridon, se l'animo si ribella e non si adatta e pretende una guarigione assurda, allora ci si riempie il cuore de veleno ». E così dicendo il vecchio scuoteva il suo bei pennacchio bianco.

« Ma io » ribatté Mseridon « io ho bisogno di guarire, io sono ricco, se tu salissi sulle mura potresti vedere il mio palazzo, ha due cupole d'argento che scintillano. Laggiù ci sono i miei cavalli che mi aspettano, e i miei cani, e i miei cacciatori, e anche le tenere schiave adolescenti mi aspettano che torni. Capisci, saggio bastoncello, io ho bisogno di guarire. »

« Se per guarire bastasse averne bisogno, la cosa riuscirebbe molto semplice » fece Giacomo con una bonaria risatina. « Chi più chi meno, tutto sarebbero guariti. »

« Ma io » si ostinò il giovane « io per guarire ho il mezzo, che gli altri non conoscono. »

« Oh lo immagino » fece Giacomo « ci sono sempre dei bricconi che ai nuovi venuti offrono a caro prezzo unguenti segreti e prodigiosi per guarire. Anch'io ci cascai quando ero piccolo. »

« No, non uso unguenti io, io adopero semplicemente la preghiera. »

Hearing Mseridon's words, old Jacob stopped and said:
"Mseridon, my poor boy, I have been here for almost a hundred years, and out of all the souls that I found here, or that have entered since, not one has ever left. Such is our disease. But even here one can live, you will see. There are those who work, who love, who write poetry. There is a tailor, a barber. One can even be happy, at least not a lot unhappier than the men outside. But it all relies on acceptance. Be careful, Mseridon; if your soul rebels and does not adapt, instead expecting some sort of absurd recovery, you will fill your heart with poison." And saying this, the old man shook his fine white plumage.

"But I," retorted Mseridon, "I need to heal. I am rich; if you were to climb the wall, you would be able to see my palace with its two silver domes sparkling. Down there, my horses await me, my dogs, my hunters. Even my tender young slave girls await my return. Understand, you wise little stick, I need to heal."

"If healing only required you to need it, it would all be simple," Jacob said with a good-natured chuckle. "Some more, some less, but everyone would heal."

"But I," Mseridon persisted, "I have the means to heal that the others do not know."

"Oh I can imagine," said Jacob, "there are always some scoundrels that offer newcomers secret and prodigious unguents at a high price. Even I fell for it when I was younger."

"No, I don't use any unguents. I simply pray."

« Tu preghi Dio che ti guarisca? E sei perciò convinto di guarire? Ma tutti non preghiamo, cosa credi? Non passa sera che non si rivolga il pensiero a Dio. Eppure chi... »

« Tutti pregate, è vero, ma non come me. Voi alla sera andate ad ascoltare il notiziario della sentinella, io invece prego. Voi lavorate, studiate, giocate a carte, voi vivete come vivono pressapoco gli altri uomini, io invece prego, tranne il tempo strettamente indispensabile per mangiare, bere e dormire, io prego senza soluzione di continuità e del resto anche mentre mangio io prego e perfino mentre dormo; tanta è infatti la mia volontà che da qualche tempo sogno di essere inginocchiato e di pregare. La preghiera che fate voi è uno scherzo. L'autentica preghiera è una fatica immensa, io alla sera arrivo estenuato dallo sforzo. E come è duro all'alba, appena sveglio, riprendere subito a pregare, la morte talora mi sembra preferibile. Ma poi mi faccio forza e mi inginocchio. Tu, Giacomo, che sei vecchio e saggio, dovresti saporle queste cose. »

A questo punto Giacomo cominciò a dondolare come se stentasse a mantenere l'equilibrio e calde lacrime rigarono la sua scorza cinerina.

« È vero, è vero » singhiozzava il vecchio « anch'io quando avevo la tua età... anch'io mi gettai nella preghiera e tenni duro sette mesi e già le piaghe si chiudevano e la pelle tornava bella liscia... stavo guarendo... Ma a un tratto non ce la feci più e tutta la fatica andò perduta... lo vedi in che stato son ridotto... »

« E allora » disse Mseridon « tu non credi che io... »

« Dio ti assista, non posso dirti altro, che l'Onnipotente ti dia forza » mormorò il vecchio, e a piccoli saltelli si avviò alle mura, dove la folla era riunita.

“You pray to God to heal you? And are therefore convinced you will? But what did you think? We all pray! A night does not pass without one turning his thoughts towards God. Yet, whoever...”

“Yes, you all pray, it is true. But not as I do. In the evenings you all go and listen to the sentry, whereas I pray. You work, you study, you play cards, you live more or less like the other men, whereas I pray. Except for the essential time required for eating, drinking and sleeping, I pray without any interruption; and even then, I pray while I eat and sleep. In fact, so strong is my will that for some time I have been dreaming of kneeling and praying. Your prayers are a farce. True prayer is an immense labour. Come evening, I am exhausted from the effort. And then, how I suffer at dawn; as soon as I wake, I immediately resume my prayer. At times death seems preferable. But then I bear up and get on my knees. You should know such things, Jacob, old and wise as you are.”

At this point Jacob began to sway as if he found it hard to keep his balance and warm tears ran down his ashen crust.

“It is true, it is true,” sobbed the old man, “I too, when I was your age... I too threw myself into prayer. I persevered for six months and already my sores were closing up and my skin was once again becoming clean and smooth... I was healing... but all of a sudden, I could not do it any more and my effort was wasted... you can see the state that I have been reduced to...”

“And so,” said Mseridon, “you do not believe that I can...”

“May God help you, that is all I can say. May the All-knowing give you strength,” muttered the old man, and with small hops, he set off for the wall where the crowd had gathered.

Chiuso nella sua capanna, Mseridon continuò a pregare, insensibile ai richiami dei lebbrosi. A denti stretti, col pensiero fisso a Dio, tutto in sudore per lo sforzo, lottava contro il male e a poco a poco le immonde croste si accartocciavano al bordo e poi cadevano, lasciando che la carne sana rinascesse. Intanto la voce si era sparsa e attorno alla capanna stazionavano sempre gruppi di curiosi. Mseridon aveva ormai fama di santo.

Avrebbe vinto o tanto impegno non sarebbe servito a niente? Si erano formati due partiti, pro e contro e il giovane ostinato. Finché, dopo quasi due anni di clausura, Mseridon un giorno uscì dalla capanna. Il sole finalmente gli illuminò la faccia, la quale non aveva più segni di lebbra, non assomigliava al muso di un leone, bensì risplendeva di bellezza.

« È guarito, è guarito! » gridò la gente incerta se mettersi a piangere di gioia o lasciarsi divorare dall'invidia. Era guarito infatti Mseridon ma per poter lasciare il lebbrosario doveva avere un documento.

Andò dal medico fiscale che faceva ogni settimana l'ispezione, si spogliò e si fece visitare.

« Giovanotto, puoi dirti fortunato » fu il responso « devo ammettere che sei quasi guarito. »

« Quasi? Perché » chiese il giovane con amara delusione.

« Guarda, guarda qui la brutta crosticina » fece il medico additando con una bacchetta, per non toccarlo, un puntino colore della cenere non più grande di un pidocchio, sul mignolo di un piede « bisogna che tu elimini anche questa se vuoi che io ti lasci libero. »

Shut up in his hut, Mseridon continued to pray, the cries of the lepers falling on deaf ears. Teeth clenched, his mind fixed on God and saturated in sweat from the exertion, he battled against evil and little by little the filthy scabs shrivelled to the edges and fell, allowing his pure flesh to be reborn. Meanwhile, the news had spread, and all around the hut lingered groups of curious men. Mseridon, by now, had gained the stature of a saint.

Would he prevail? Or would so much effort be wasted? Two parties had formed, one for and one against the obstinate youth. Then one day, after almost two years of a cloistered life, Mseridon came out of his hut. At last the sun shone on his face which no longer showed a trace of leprosy; it no longer resembled that of a lion, but rather shone with beauty.

“He’s healed! He’s healed!” the people shouted, unsure whether to cry for joy, or to be devoured by envy. Mseridon had indeed healed, but in order to leave the colony, he needed a document.

He went to the fiscal doctor who held weekly inspections, undressed, and let the doctor examine him.

“You may count yourself lucky” was the response, “I must admit, you are almost healed.”

“Almost? What do you mean?” asked the young man with bitter disappointment.

“Look, look here at this ugly little sore” said the doctor, pointing with a rod to avoid touching the tiny ash coloured mark on his little toe, no bigger than a louse. “You must get rid of this too if you want me to let you go.”

Mseridon tornò alla sua capanna e mai seppe neppur lui come fece a superare lo sconforto. Credeva di essere ormai salvo, aveva allentato tutte le energie, già si apprestava al premio: e doveva invece riprendere il calvario.

« Coraggio » lo incitava il vecchio Giacomo « ancora un piccolo sforzo, il più l'hai fatto, sarebbe pazzesco rinunciare proprio adesso. »

Era una rugosità microscopica sul mignolo ma sembrava che non volesse arrendersi. Un mese e poi due mesi di ininterrotta potentissima preghiera. Niente. Un terzo, un quarto, un quinto mese.

Niente. Mseridon stava per mollare quando una notte, passandosi, come faceva ormai meccanicamente, una mano sul piede malato, non incontrò più la crosticina.

I lebbrosi lo portarono in trionfo. Era ormai libero. Dinanzi al corpo di guardia ci furono i commiati. Poi soltanto il vecchio Giacomo, saltellando, lo accompagnò alla porta esterna. Furono controllati i documenti, la chiave cigolò girando nella serratura, la sentinella spalancò la porta.

Apparve il mondo nel sole del primo mattino, così fresco e pieno di speranze. I boschi, le praterie verdi, gli uccellini che cantavano, e in fondo biancheggiava la città con le sue torri candide, le terrazze orlate di giardini, gli stendardi fluttuanti, gli altissimi aquiloni a forma di draghi e di serpenti; e sotto, che non si vedevano, miriadi di vite e di occasioni, le donne, le voluttà, i lussi, le avventure, la corte, gli intrighi, la potenza, le armi, il regno dell'uomo!

Mseridon returned to his hut. Not even he knew how to overcome such discouragement. He had thought himself already healed, he had eased off his efforts, he had already prepared for his reward: but instead he had to resume his trial.

“Courage,” old Jacob incited him, “just a little more effort, the worst is over, it would be madness to give up now.”

It was a minuscule mark on his little toe, but it seemed to not want to surrender. A month, then another of uninterrupted prayer. Nothing. A third, a fourth, a fifth.

Nothing. Mseridon was on the brink of giving up when one night, mechanically passing his hand over his infected foot, as he often did, he didn't encounter the scab.

The lepers carried him in triumph. He was free. The farewells took place in front of the guards. Then, only old Jacob, hopping, accompanied Mseridon to the outer door. The documents were checked, the key squeaked turning the lock, and the sentry swung the door open.

The world appeared in the early morning light, so fresh and full of hope. The woods, the green grasslands, the little birds singing; and further away the city shone with its white towers, the terraces hemmed with gardens, the standards fluttering, the kites up high in the shape of dragons and serpents; and below, out of view, myriads of lives and opportunities, women, voluptuousness, opulence, the court, the intrigues, the power, the weapons, the reign of men!

Il vecchio Giacomo osservava la faccia del giovane, curioso vederla illuminata dalla gioia. Sorrise infatti Mseridon al panorama della libertà. Ma fu un istante. Subito il giovane cavaliere impallidì.

« Che hai? » gli chiese il vecchio supponendo che l'emozione gli avesse tolto il fiato. E la sentinella:

« Su, su svelto, giovanotto, passo fuori che io devo subito richiudere, non ti farai pregare, spero! »

Invece Mseridon fece un passo indietro e si coprì gli occhi con le mani: « Oh è terribile! ».

« Che hai? » ripeté Giacomo. « Stai male? »

« Non posso! » disse Mseridon. Dinanzi a lui, di colpo, la visione era cambiata. E al posto delle torri e delle cupole, giaceva adesso un sordido groviglio di catapecchie polverose, grondanti di sterco e di miseria, e invece degli stendardi, sopra i tetti, nugoli caliginosi di tafani come un infetto polverone.

Il vecchio domandò: « Che cosa vedi, Mseridon? Dimmi: vedi marcio e luridume dove prima tutto era glorioso? Al posto dei palazzi vedi ignobile capanne? È così, Mseridon?»

« Sí, sí, tutto è diventato orribile. Perché? Cosa è successo? »

« Io lo sapevo » fece il patriarca « lo sapevo ma non osavo dirtelo. Questo è il destino di noi uomini, tutto si paga a caro prezzo. Non ti sei mai chiesto chi ti dava la forza di pregare? »

Old Jacob observed the face of the young man, curious to see it brighten with joy. Mseridon did indeed smile at the vista of freedom. But only for an instant. Immediately the young knight turned white.

“What’s wrong?” asked the old man, imagining that the emotion had left him breathless. Then the sentry cried:

“Come on, quickly now, young man. Go out, I have to close the door straight away. You’re not going to start praying again, I hope!”

But instead Mseridon took a step backwards and covered his eyes with his hands: “Oh it’s terrible!”

“What’s wrong?” repeated Jacob. “Are you alright?”

“I cannot!” cried Mseridon. In front of him the vision had suddenly changed. In the place of the towers and domes now lay a sordid tangle of dusty hovels, dripping with dung and poverty, and instead of standards above the roofs swarmed a smog of horseflies like an infectious cloud of dust.

The old man asked: “What do you see, Mseridon? Tell me: do you see corruption and filth where there once was glory? In the place of palaces do you see vile huts? Is it so, Mseridon?”

“Yes, yes, it has turned awful! Why? What has happened?”

“I knew,” said the patriarch. “I knew, but I didn’t dare tell you. This is the fate of us men, one must pay for everything at a high price. Did you never ask yourself who gave you the power to pray?”

Le tue preghiere erano di quelle a cui non resiste neanche la collera del cielo. Tu hai vinto, sei guarito. E adesso paghi. »

« Pago? E perché? »

« Perché era la grazia che ti sosteneva. E la grazia dell'Onnipotente non risparmia. Sei guarito ma non sei più lo stesso di una volta. Di giorno in giorno, mentre la grazia lavorava in te, senza saperlo tu perdevi il gusto della vita. Tu guarivi, ma le cose per cui smaniavi di guarire a poco a poco si staccavano, diventavano fantasmi, cimbe natanti sopra il mar degli anni! Io lo sapevo. Credevi di essere tu a vincere, e invece era Dio che ti vinceva. Così hai perso per sempre i desideri. Sei ricco ma adesso i soldi non ti importano, sei giovane ma non ti importano le donne. La città ti sembra un letamaio. Eri un gentiluomo, sei un santo, capisci come il conto torno? Sei nostro, finalmente, Mseridon! L'unica felicità, che ti rimane è qui tra noi, lebbrosi, a consolarci... Su, sentinella, chiudi pure la porta, noi rientriamo. »

La sentinella tirò a sé il battente.

Not even the wrath of heaven could withstand your prayers. You have won, you have healed. And now you must pay the price.”

“Pay? What do you mean?”

“It was God’s grace that sustained you. And the Almighty’s grace does not spare anyone. You are healed, but you are not the same as you once were. Day by day, while His grace was working inside you, without knowing it, you were losing your zest for life. You were healing, but your reasons for wanting to heal were fading with time, becoming ghosts, driftwood upon the tide of years! I knew it. You believed you would win, but instead God won you. And thus you have forever lost your aspirations. You are rich, but money does not matter to you. You are young, but no longer interested in women. To you the city seems a filthy mess. You were a gentleman, but now you are a saint. Can you see how the tables have turned? You are ours, at last, Mseridon! The only happiness you have left is among us lepers, to comfort us... Come now, sentry, close the door. We’re going back inside.”

The sentry pulled the door closed.

L'uomo che volle guarire – The Man Who Wanted to Heal

Commentary

L'uomo che volle guarire comes from Buzzati's third collection of short stories: *Il crollo di Baliverna* (1954). The *racconto* tells the story of a young nobleman who finds himself removed from the luxuries of his once-blessed life as he enters into a leper colony. Around him he finds resignation, but he is different. Yearning to revert to his former beauty and power, he throws himself zealously into an act of intense prayer, to the scorn of his fellow lepers. Ultimately God answers, but unbeknownst to the young man he must also pay the price.

The notion of God and religion plays an important role in many of Buzzati's works (Toscani 132). In his youth he received a traditional religious education, which in his maturity he renounced. However, his beliefs still remained apparently conflicted, it was clear that he wanted to believe in God, but he could not bring himself to do so:

"...rimpiango di non aver la fede... Vorrei credere in Dio... Perché la fede in Dio (non dico nel Dio cattolico, ma in qualsiasi Dio) è una tale forza che ti cambia la vita!...Però io non credo più nel Dio che mi hanno insegnato, perché è una cosa assurda, crudele, ingiusta..." (Buzzati, *Autoritratto* 88).

The God presented in this story seems to play on the traits which Buzzati has described; *assurda, crudele, ingiusta*. We are not shown a benevolent, charitable figure; instead He is depicted as petty and destructive. He may listen to and grant prayers, but He expects something in return.

Other thematic ideas that frequently appear in his work are also present in the story, perhaps most notably the consequences of illness. Buzzati had been very candid about his fear of illness and death, noting that the reason behind this was that according to him: *"la malattia è umiliazione"* (*Autoritratto* 82). His father's premature death to cancer gave birth to an anxiety that would continue with him for his entire life and the themes of sickness and death frequently appeared in many of his works (Toscani 65). The idea of *umiliazione* being descriptive of sickness seems particularly poignant when discussing the leprosy illustrated in the story. In the

narrative we see humiliation, we see Mseridon's pride and obstinancy, we see the lepers confined to a colony, rejected from society; certainly Buzzati's preoccupation with sickness influenced the themes of this story.

Unlike in *Il re a Horm el-Hagar* the reader is not given an explicit physical setting in this story, and the temporal setting is even more ambiguous. However, through the subject matter and vocabulary a rough time period is implied. The idea of leper colonies is closely associated with the middle ages, a setting that is also alluded to with other references, such as vocabulary items like *cavaliere*, *principe*, *reggia*. Additionally, there are a few fleeting phrases that describe the environment in which the characters live, an example being:

...la città con le sue torri candide, le terrazze orlate di giardini, gli stendardi fluttuanti, gli altissimi aquiloni a forma di draghi e serpenti..

The image we are given is by no means definite. But there is an element of exoticism, perhaps alluding to an eastern or Asian culture. With such ambiguities in the setting, the story lends itself towards a possible adaptation into another culture. However, the process of domestication is only possible if the references can be plausibly and logically transferred for equivalents in the target culture. As the target culture I am concerned with is that of New Zealand, the presence of large leper colonies (or an equivalent) seems awkward, affecting the essence of reality that Buzzati himself strived for in his writings. Also the story's temporal setting does not merge with New Zealand history; it is clearly set in a distant historical past which gives the *racconto* fable-like attributions, a past for which there is no logical equivalent in the target culture. Thus, I believe the nature of the story does not lend itself to a full-domestication into my culture. It is ambiguous enough to be adapted into other cultures (European, Asian, Middle Eastern) but considering that successful and faithful domestication should be undertaken by an agent of the culture in which the story is being adapted to, I have decided to leave its setting open to the reader's interpretation.

However, once again there are elements of domestication in the English translation I present here. Perhaps the most obvious example is the characters' names. In the

original there are two Italianate names: *Giacomo* and *Gaspare*, while other proper nouns seem to be inventions of the author. These names I have domesticated, and being biblical in origin, appear in their anglicised equivalents in my translation: *Jacob* and *Caspar*. I believe that presenting them in their English equivalents instead of the Italian, removes the story from a potentially perceivable Italian setting, which was not the intention of the author given the exoticism of the other proper nouns and descriptions of the environment. And while the anglicised equivalents might suggest a perceived English speaking setting, I judged the names to retain a suitable foreign feeling thereby avoiding a setting in any particular culture. Additionally, I wished to retain the biblical nature of the names, given the religious motifs present in the story. I did, however, preserve the original name of the main protagonist: *Mseridon*. This decision was two-fold; firstly, it again alludes to a foreign setting, and secondly the word appears to incite the Italian word *miseria*, a fitting choice for the tragic character; *miseria* also corresponds with the English equivalent *misery* and so the reference remains. I also retained the proper noun of the volcano *Ermac*, even though it is only mentioned in passing; the very fact the volcano was named with such a strange word, signifies Buzzati's deliberate attempt to give the setting an exotic feel.

The remaining language has been translated into a non-specific, standard English with a few unusual sentence constructions to add to the antiquated feel of the source text and to correspond with the setting. Thus, in the translation we find syntax such as:

"Of these men, some were haughty and cold, while others were more compassionate."

Instead of the more expected and natural equivalent:

"Some of the men were haughty and cold, while others were more compassionate."

Often, as is indeed the case with this example, the English I have used is adapted from the original sentence structure and therefore is more closely aligned with the syntax of the original Italian:

"Tra queste guardie ce n'erano di altezzose e intrattabili, altre invece avevano pietà."

This use of more unusual linguistic features also extends into the selection of some vocabulary items. In some cases I have intentionally selected words that, while they share a common meaning, are more obscure, again to create a sense of age. Once again, these often tend to match the Italian equivalents:

<i>ostinato</i>	<i>obstinate</i>	(<i>stubborn</i>)
<i>unguente</i>	<i>unguent</i>	(<i>ointment</i>)

This practice can be seen as a form of foreignisation, as it deliberately chooses to retain words from the original (or in this case adapted from the original) for stylistic effect. However, the words I have used correspond to actual English equivalents unlike some more extreme practices which borrow directly from the source text.

I have also deliberately avoided using too many contractions, again to make the language seem more antiquated, particularly in the dialogues of the characters, as seen in the following example:

“Why do you not come?” Instead of: *“Why don’t you come?”*

Translators must choose among particular words in their translations, in many cases one word in the source text can be translated with several in the target language. In translating this work, I made a conscious decision to utilise, if possible, words that evoked the religious themes of the story. This is a delicate process as if taken too far it can misalign with the author’s intentions. Thus, I only used words that could logically be translated from the words in the source text, and could be merged seamlessly with surrounding vocabulary items. Examples include:

<i>convegno</i>	<i>vigil</i>
<i>..e di quanti io trovai...</i>	<i>... and out of all the <u>souls</u> that I found here...</i>
<i>clausura</i>	<i>cloistered life</i>

Finally, another important linguistic feature is the title of the work: *L'uomo che volle guarire*. In Italian this can have a dual meaning, as the verb *guarire* can be used both with or without an object (“Guarire”). Thus, in direct translation into English, there are two possibilities:

The man who wanted to heal (himself)

and

The man who wanted to heal (something, someone, others).

Both of these forms seem to fit the context of the plot. The story is focused on how Mseridon wants to heal *himself*, clearly. However, by the end of the narrative we discover that it his destiny to heal *others* and perhaps the title is referring to his retrospective journey about how he ultimately became a saint, a healer within the compound. Other international versions seem to have considered this issue.

Breitman’s French translation simply corresponds with the Italian:

L’homme qui voulut guérir (L’écroulement de la Baliverna).

While in Spanish translation, Corral uses a reflexive verb, therefore, removing any ambiguity:

El hombre que quiso curarse (Sesanta relatos).

I have chosen to present my translation as *The Man Who Wanted to Heal*, mirroring the Italian version. There were various reasons behind this decision. Firstly, much like the Italian version, it is ambiguous, and can have the previously discussed double meaning. Additionally, I wanted to translate the word *guarire* as *heal*, again to underpin the religious motifs in the story, and because other equivalents such as *get better* or *recover* seemed either too colloquial or clunky. Finally, I like how the title seems almost incomplete. It invites the reader to find out: what does he want to heal? Consequently, readers can themselves discover the double implications of the title.

The Man Who Wanted to Heal is a further example of how even a story that appears to be foreignised can still contain significant elements of domestication. The domestication goes further than that seen in *The King at Horm el-Hagar*, there have been concrete changes to source culture references to better present the story to the new intended audience, as seen in the domestication of some proper nouns. Additionally, whilst I have retained the setting's sense of ambiguity and exoticism, the context for the audience has shifted and consequently some of the changes described above were intended to aid their conception, while others serve to demonstrate the retained setting and to reflect Buzzati's style in the original.

The Cloak

A Translation of

Il mantello

By Dino Buzzati

Il mantello

Dopo interminabile attesa quando la speranza già cominciava a morire, Giovanni ritornò alla sua casa. Non erano ancora suonate le due, sua mamma stava sparecchiando, era una giornata grigia di marzo e volavano cornacchie.

Egli comparve improvvisamente sulla soglia e la mamma gridò: « Oh benedetto! » correndo ad abbracciarlo. Anche Anna e Pietro, i due fratellini molto più giovani, si misero a gridare di gioia. Ecco il momento aspettato per mesi e mesi, così spesso balenato nei dolci sogni dell'alba, che doveva riportare la felicità.

Egli non disse quasi parola, troppa fatica costandogli trattenere il pianto. Aveva subito desposto la pesante sciabola su una sedia, in testa portava ancora il berretto di pelo. « Lasciati vedere » diceva tra le lacrime la madre, tirandosi un po' indietro « lascia vedere quanto sei bello. Però sei pallido, sei. »

Era alquanto pallido infatti e come sfinito. Si tolse il berretto, avanzò in mezzo alla stanza, si sedette. Che stanco, che stanco, perfino a sorridere sembrava facesse fatica.

« Ma togliti il mantello, creatura » disse la mamma, e lo guardava come un prodigio, sul punto d'esserne intimidita; com'era diventato alto, bello, fiero (anche se un po' troppo pallido). « Togliti il mantello, dammelo qui, non senti che caldo? »

Lui ebbe un brusco movimento di difesa, istintivo, serrandosi addosso il mantello, per timore forse che glielo strappassero via.

The Cloak

After an endless wait, when hope had already started to fade, John returned home. The clock had not yet struck two; his mother was clearing the table. It was grey March day, the crows were flying.

Suddenly he appeared on the doorstep and his mother cried: “Oh, my Lord!” running to embrace him. Even Anna and Peter, his much younger siblings, began shouting with joy. It was that moment, awaited for months on end, often flashing into their dreams at dawn, which was to restore their happiness.

He barely said a word; he was using all his energy to hold back the tears. He swiftly laid his heavy weapon on a chair, he was still wearing his hat on his head. “Let me see you” his mother said between the tears, drawing back a little, “let us see how handsome you are. But you’re so pale, John!”

He was, in fact, quite pale, and somewhat worn out. He took off his hat, went into the middle of the room and sat down, so exhausted that even to smile seemed a chore.

“Come on, take off that cloak, darling,” said his mother. She looked at him like a prodigy, almost intimidated; how tall he had become, how handsome and proud (even if he was a little too pale). “Take of that cloak, give it here, can’t you feel how warm it is?”

He instinctively made a sharp defensive movement clenching the cloak around himself out of fear they might take it from him.

« No, no lasciarmi » rispose evasivo « preferisco di no, tanto, tra poco devo uscire... »

« Devi uscire? Torni dopo due anni e vuoi subito uscire? » fece lei desolata, vedendo subito ricominciare, dopo tanta gioia, l'eterna pena delle madri. « Devi uscire subito? E non mangi qualcosa? »

« Ho già mangiato, mamma » rispose il figlio con un sorriso buono, e si guardava attorno assaporando le amate penombre. « Ci siamo fermati a un'osteria, qualche chilometro da qui... »

« Ah, non sei venuto solo? E chi c'era con te? Un tuo compagno di reggimento? Il figliolo della Mena forse? »

« No, no, era uno incontrato per via. È fuori che aspetta adesso. »

« È lì che aspetta? E perché non l'hai fatto entrare? L'hai lasciato in mezzo alla strada? »

Andò alla finestra e attraverso l'orto, di là del cancelletto di legno, scorre sulla via una figura che camminava su e giù lentamente; era tutta intabarrata e dava sensazione di nero. Allora nell'animo di lei nacque, incomprensibile, in mezzo ai turbini della grandissima gioia, una pena misteriosa ed acuta.

« È meglio di no » rispose lui, reciso. « Per lui sarebbe una seccatura, è un tipo così. »

« Ma un bicchiere di vino? glielo possiamo portare, no, un bicchiere di vino? »

“No, no, leave it,” he responded, evasively, “I’d prefer not to, in any case, I have to leave soon.”

“Leave? You get back after two years and want to leave right away?” she said distressed, feeling once again after so much joy, the eternal sorrow of mothers. “You have to leave right away? You won’t eat anything?”

“I’ve already eaten, mum,” her son replied with a kind smile, he looked around, savouring the beloved dimness of his home. “We stopped at an inn, a few miles back...”

“Ah, so you’re not alone? Who’s with you? Someone from your regiment? Martha’s boy?”

“No, no, he’s someone I met on the way. He’s outside waiting right now.”

“He’s right outside? But why didn’t you bring him in? You just left him in the middle of the road?”

She went to the window, and across the garden, over by the little wooden gate, she spotted a figure on the road slowly pacing up and down; he was all wrapped up and gave off a sinister air. Amidst the flurries of great joy in her soul was born a sharp, mysterious pain, inconceivable.

“It’d be better not to,” he replied, curtly. “It would be a pain for him, he’s like that.”

“What about a glass of wine? We could take it to him. Just a glass of wine?”

« Meglio di no, mamma. È un tipo curioso, è capace di andar sulle furie. »

« Ma chi è allora? Perché ti ci sei messo insieme? Che cosa vuole da te? »

« Bene non lo conosco » disse lui lentamente e assai grave. « L'ho incontrato durante il viaggio. È venuto con me, ecco. »

Sembrava preferisse altro argomento, sembrava se ne vergognasse. E la mamma, per non contrariarlo, cambiò immediatamente discorso, ma già si spegnava nel suo volto amabile la luce di prima.

« Senti » disse « ti figuri la Marietta quando saprà che sei tornato? Te l'immagini che salti di gioia? È per lei che volevi uscire? »

Egli sorrise soltanto, sempre con quell'espressione di chi vorrebbe essere lieto eppure non può, per qualche segreto peso.

La mamma non riusciva a capire: perché se ne stava seduto, quasi triste, come il giorno lontano della partenza? Ormai era tornato, una vita nuova davanti, un'infinità di giorni disponibili senza pensieri, tante belle serate insieme, una fila inesauribile che si perdeva di là delle montagne, nelle immensità degli anni futuri. Non più le notti d'angoscia quando all'orizzonte spuntavano bagliori di fuoco e si poteva pensare che anche lui fosse là in mezzo, disteso immobile a terra, il petto trapassato, tra le sanguinose rovine. Era tornato, finalmente, più grande, più bello, e che gioia per la Marietta. Tra poco cominciava la primavera, si sarebbero sposati in chiesa, una domenica mattina, tra suono di campane e fiori.

“Better not, mum. He’s a strange type, he can fly off the handle.”

“Well, then who is he? Why are you together? What does he want from you?”

“I don’t know him well,” he said slowly and gravely. “I met him on the road. He came with me, and here he is.”

He seemed to want to talk about something else, like he was ashamed of it all. And his mother, not wishing to put him out, immediately changed the subject. The tender light that was shining in her face began to dim.

“Listen,” she said, “can you imagine Mary’s face when she hears you’re back? Can’t you see her jumping for joy? You’re wanting to leave to go and see her, aren’t you?”

He only smiled, always with that expression of one who wishes to be happy but can’t for some heavy secret.

His mother couldn’t understand: why was he sitting there, so sad? Just like the day he had left so long ago. He had returned, a new life ahead of him, countless days free of worry, fine evenings together, an endless number of days and nights that stretched away over the mountains and into the infinity of years to come. For her there would be no more nights of torment when seeing the glare of fire on the horizon she would imagine that he too could be in the thick of it, laying on the ground between the bloody ruins, still, his chest pierced. He had finally returned, taller, more handsome and how exciting for Mary! It would be spring soon; they would get married in the chapel one Sunday morning surrounded by tolling bells and flowers.

Perché dunque se ne stava smorto e distratto, non rideva di più, perché non raccontava le battaglie? E il mantello? perché se lo teneva stretto addosso, col caldo che faceva in casa? Forse perché, sotto, l'uniforme era rotta e infangata? Ma con la mamma, come poteva vergognarsi di fronte alla mamma? Le pene sembravano finite, ecco invece subito una nuova inquietudine.

Il dolce viso piegato un po' da una parte, lo fissava con ansia, attenta a non contrariarlo, a capire subito tutti i suoi desideri. O era forse ammalato? O semplicemente sfinito dai troppi strapazzi? Perché non parlava, perché non la guardava nemmeno?

In realtà il figlio non la guardava, egli pareva anzi evitasse di incontrare i suoi sguardi come se ne temesse qualcosa. E intanto i due piccoli fratelli lo contemplavano muti, con un curioso imbarazzo.

« Giovanni » mormorò lei non trattenendosi più « Sei qui finalmente, sei qui finalmente! Aspetta adesso che ti faccio il caffè. »

Si affrettò alla cucina. E Giovanni rimase coi due fratellini tanto più giovani di lui. Non si sarebbero neppure riconosciuti se si fossero incontrati per la strada, che cambiamento nello spazio di due anni. Ora si guardavano a vicenda in silenzio, senza trovare le parole, ma ogni tanto sorridevano insieme, tutti e tre, quasi per un antico patto non dimenticato.

Why then, was he sitting there so pale and uncomfortable? He didn't laugh anymore, why wasn't he telling stories of the battles? And that cloak? Why was he holding it so tightly around himself? It was so hot in the house. Perhaps it was because beneath his uniform was torn and muddy? But she was his mother, how could he be ashamed in front of her? The pain seemed to have lifted, but now instead there was a sudden new uneasiness.

His bent his kind face a little to one side. She stared at him with worry, careful not to bother him, trying to understand what he wanted. Perhaps he was sick? Or was he simply exhausted from all that he'd been through? Why wasn't he talking? Why wouldn't he even look at her?

Her son, in fact, would not look at her; he even seemed to avoid catching her eye as if he was frightened of something. His little brother and sister gazed at him silently with a peculiar embarrassment.

"John," his mother murmured, not being able to hold herself back any longer. "You're finally back, you're finally back! Wait there, I'll make you a coffee."

She rushed into the kitchen. John stayed with his two much younger siblings. They wouldn't have even recognised each other if they had met on the street, so much had changed in the space of two years. They looked at each other now in silence, not finding the words, but smiling every now and then at one another, all three of them, as if part of an ancient pact, never forgotten.

Ed ecco tornare la mamma, ecco il caffè fumante con una bella fetta di torta. Lui vuotò d'un fiato la tazza, masticò la torta con fatica. "Perché? Non ti piace più? Una volta era la tua passione!" avrebbe voluto domandargli la mamma, ma tacque per non importunarlo.

« Giovanni » gli propose invece « e non vuoi rivedere la tua camera? C'è il letto nuovo, sai? ho fatto imbiancare i muri, una lampada nuova, vieni a vedere... ma il mantello, non te lo levi dunque?... non senti che caldo? »

Il soldato non le rispose ma si alzò dalla sedia movendo alla stanza vicina. I suoi gesti avevano una specie di pesante lentezza, come s'egli non avesse venti anni. La mamma era corsa avanti a spalancare le imposte (ma entrò soltanto una luce grigia, priva di qualsiasi allegrezza).

« Che bello! » fece lui con fioco entusiasmo, come fu sulla soglia, alla vista dei mobili nuovi, delle tendine immacolate, dei muri bianchi, tutto quanto fresco e pulito. Ma, chinandosi la mamma ad aggiustare la coperta del letto, anch'essa nuova fiammante, egli posò lo sguardo sulle sue gracili spalle, sguardo di inesprimibile tristezza e che nessuno poteva vedere. Anna e Pietro infatti stavano dietro di lui, i faccini raggianti, aspettandosi una grande scena di letizia e sorpresa.

Invece niente. « Com'è bello! Grazie, sai? mamma » ripeté lui, e fu tutto. Muoveva gli occhi con inquietudine, come chi ha desiderio di concludere un colloquio penoso. Ma soprattutto, ogni tanto, guardava, con evidente preoccupazione, attraverso la finestra, il cancelletto di legno verde dietro il quale una figura andava su e giù lentamente.

His mother came back with some steaming coffee and a big slice of cake. He downed the coffee in one and chewed the cake with obvious effort. "What's wrong? Don't you like it anymore? It used to be your favourite!" his mother wanted to ask him, but instead she stayed silent, not wanting to bother him.

"John," she instead proposed, "do you want to see your old room? There's a new bed, you know? I've painted the walls, a new lamp, come and see... but that cloak, don't you want to take it off? Can't you feel how warm it is?"

The soldier didn't respond, but got out of his chair and moved towards the nearby room. His motions had a sort of heavy dullness about them, as if he were much older than twenty. His mother had run ahead to open the blinds (but only a grey light filtered through, void of any cheerfulness).

"It's wonderful!" he said with fiery enthusiasm, as he got to the doorway and saw the new furniture, the immaculate blinds, everything so fresh and clean. But then he glanced at his mother's frail shoulders as she bent down to straighten the blanket on the bed, this also new. It was a look of inexpressible sadness that no one else could see. Anna and Peter were behind him, their little faces beaming, expecting a great scene of joy and surprise.

Instead nothing. "It's wonderful! Thank you, mum," he repeated, and that was all. His eyes were moving about, showing discomfort like one who wants to escape a painful conversation. But above all, every now and then, he would look with evident worry towards the window, at the little green wooden gate, behind which a figure paced slowly up and down.

« Sei contento, Giovanni? sei contento? » chiese lei impaziente di vederlo felice.

« Oh, sí, è proprio bello » rispose il figlio (ma perché si ostinava a non levarsi il mantello?) e continuava a sorridere con grandissimo sforzo.

« Giovanni » supplicò lei. « Che cos'hai? che cos'hai, Giovanni? Tu mi tieni nascosta una cosa, perché non vuoi dire? »

Egli si morse un labbro, sembrava che qualcosa gli ingorgasse la gola. « Mamma » rispose dopo un po' con voce opaca « mamma, adesso io devo andare. »

« Devi andare? Ma torni subito, no? Vai dalla Marietta, vero? dimmi la verità, vai dalla Marietta? » e cercava di scherzare, pur sentendo la pena.

« Non so, mamma » rispose lui sempre con quel tono contenuto ed amaro; si avviava intanto alla porta, aveva già ripreso il berretto di pelo « non so, ma adesso devo andare, c'è quello là che mi aspetta. »

« Ma torni più tardi? torni? Tra due ore sei qui, vero? Farò venire anche zio Giulio e la zia, figurati che festa anche per loro, cerca di arrivare un po' prima di pranzo... »

« Mamma » ripeté il figlio, come se la scongiurasse di non dire di più, di tacere, per carità, di non aumentare la pena. « Devo andare, adesso, c'è quello là che mi aspetta, è stato fin troppo paziente. » Poi la fissò con sguardo da cavar l'anima.

“Are you pleased, John? Are you pleased?” she asked, desperate to see him happy.

“Oh yes, it’s truly wonderful,” he replied (but why was he still insisting to keep that cloak on?) continuing to smile with great effort.

“John,” she begged. “What’s wrong? What’s wrong, John? You’re hiding something from me, why don’t you want to tell me?”

He bit his lip, it seemed as if he was choking up. “Mum,” he replied after a while with a dull voice, “mum, I have to go now.”

“You have to go? But you’ll come right back, won’t you? You’re going to Mary’s, aren’t you? You can tell me the truth, are you going to Mary’s?” she tried to joke despite the pain.

“I don’t know, mum,” he replied again with that contained, bitter tone; he had started heading to the door, having already picked up his hat, “I don’t know, but I have to go. He’s waiting for me.”

“But you’ll come back later? You’ll be back? In two hours you’ll be back here, right? I’ll get your aunt and uncle, think of what a party it’ll be, try to get back a little before dinner...”

“Mum,” her son repeated as if he was begging her not to say any more, to stay quiet, for pity’s sake, to not worsen the pain. “I have to go, now. He’s out there waiting for me, he’s already been very patient.” He stared at her with a look that could stop her heart.

Si avvicinò alla porta, i fratellini, ancora festosi, gli si strinsero addosso e Pietro sollevò un lembo del mantello per sapere come il fratello fosse vestito di sotto. « Pietro, Pietro! su, che cosa fai? lascia stare, Pietro! » gridò la mamma, temendo che Giovanni si arrabbiasse.

« No, no! » esclamò pure il soldato, accortosi del gesto del ragazzo. Ma ormai troppo tardi. I due lembi di panno azzurro si erano dischiusi un istante.

« Oh, Giovanni, creatura mia, che cosa ti han fatto? » balbettò la madre, predendosi il volto tra le mani. « Giovanni, ma questo è sangue! »

« Devo andare, mamma » ripeté lui per la seconda volta, con disperata fermezza. « L'ho già fatto aspettare abbastanza. Ciao Anna, ciao Pietro, addio mamma. »

Era già alla porta. Uscì come portato dal vento. Attraversò l'orto quasi di corsa, aprì il cancelletto, due cavalli partirono al galoppo, sotto il cielo grigio, non già verso il paese, no, ma attraverso le praterie, su verso il nord, in direzione delle montagne. Galoppavano, galoppavano.

E allora la mamma finalmente capì, un vuoto immenso, che mai e poi mai nei secoli sarebbero bastati a colmare, si aprì nel suo cuore. Capì la storia del mantello, la tristezza del figlio e soprattutto chi fosse il misterioso individuo che passeggiava su e giù per la strada, in attesa, chi fosse quel sinistro personaggio fin troppo paziente. Così misericordioso e paziente da accompagnare Giovanni alla vecchia casa (prima di condurselo via per sempre), affinché potesse salutare la madre; da aspettare parecchi minuti fuori del cancello, in piedi, lui signore del mondo, in mezzo alla polvere, come pezzente affamato.

He headed towards the door, his siblings, still excited, hugged him and Peter lifted up a corner of the cloak to see how his brother was dressed underneath. “Peter, Peter! What are you doing? Leave him alone, Peter!” cried his mother, worried that John would get angry.

“No, no!” the soldier yelled too, noticing what his brother was doing. But it was too late. The two blue panels of cloth opened slightly for a second.

“Oh John, my darling, what have they done to you?” stammered his mother, holding her face in her hands. “John, that’s blood!”

“I have to go, mum,” he repeated for the second time, with desperate firmness. “I have already made him wait long enough. Goodbye Anna, bye Peter, farewell mum.”

He was already at the door. He left as if taken by the wind. He cut through the garden almost running and opened the little gate. Two horses left galloping, under the grey sky, not towards the village, but through the fields, northwards in the direction of the mountains. They galloped and galloped.

And so his mother finally understood. In her heart opened an immense void that never ever would the centuries fill in. She understood the story of the cloak, the sadness of her son and above all who that mysterious man was that paced up and down the street, waiting, that sinister character who had already been too patient. So merciful and patient to accompany John to see his old house (before leading him away forever) so he could farewell his mother; to wait several minutes outside the gate, standing. He, Lord of the World, amid the dust like a starving beggar.

Il mantello – The Cloak

Commentary

Il mantello was first published as part of Buzzati's first collection of short stories *I sette messaggeri* (1942) and was rewritten into the play of the same name by the author himself in 1960 (Buzzati, *Autoritratto* 179). It tells the story of a young soldier who has just arrived home from the front to the delight of his family. However the joy they had been awaiting so long is quickly dashed as the soldier slowly reveals he cannot stay. This is a further example of how Buzzati uses surrealism in his literature, he first presents a clean, familiar scene which he then twists with elements of the fantastic to reach a climax shrouded in mystery.

Akin to *L'uomo che volle guarire*, and indeed many of Buzzati's *racconti*, the physical and temporal setting of the story is not explicit. Thus, once again we are left with a situation in which the narrative is more concerned with theme and character development rather than conveying a particular setting. However, again the text still contains references that can help imply an approximate setting. Buzzati would have certainly had an idea of a place and time in mind while writing the story (though even these could have well been vague or entirely fictitious), but we can only catch a glimpse of these through fleeting references. The names are once again undoubtedly Italian (*Giovanni, Pietro, Giulio*) but these seem to be the only references to a specifically Italian setting. Again, we are offered some temporal clues, the soldier carries with him a *sciabola* (saber, sword), wears a *berretto di pelo* (fur cap) and a *mantello* (cloak, overcoat) which perhaps remove it from a time contemporary with its publication in the 1940s. Similarly there are references such as *caffè* which make it impossible for it to be set too early in, say, a medieval setting.

The very fact that Buzzati consciously left out any specific references towards a concrete setting signifies that they are secondary to plot and theme; if he had wanted the reader to have been certain of the setting, this would have been explicit, rather than simply indirectly referenced. Furthermore, even if Buzzati did indeed have a specific setting in mind while writing the story, for example a specific war, this does not mean that the themes are inapplicable to other scenarios, in fact I would claim that they are much the same. With such weighty thematic material such as death,

grief and family relations, the plot and ideas could be easily transferred to a number of different scenarios, real or imagined, and the setting can easily be interpreted differently depending on the context of the reader.

I would argue that at the core of this story, despite the inclusion of such heavy themes, is an intimate, bare study of relationships. It is because of this intimacy that I have employed some domesticating features in this translation. To truly relate to such characters there needs to be a significant degree of familiarity. However I have avoided a full-domestication, for example by a specific transition of scene. Due to the uncertainty of the original setting, I have chosen to retain this ambiguity, but have shifted it from an Italian speaking perspective to an English speaking perspective. While the transposition of some features was still required, this was a relatively minor manoeuvre given the lack of limiting references. Nevertheless, some changes must be made. In my translation I believe I have enlarged the ambiguity; rather than domesticating cultural references by using specifically New Zealand equivalents, I have instead translated them with even more generic terms:

<i>sciabola</i>	<i>weapon</i>
<i>berretto di pelle</i>	<i>hat</i>

Returning to the names used in the original, while they are certainly Italian, they are standard, almost expected names. I have replaced them in the translation with their English equivalents or similar regularly used names. My decision to do so was based on the fact that I believe the names Buzzati used do not really hold any significant bearing. Instead it almost appears as if they were used spontaneously, using story-telling generic names for familiarity's sake. Thus in the translation I have used direct equivalents (*Giovanni* > *John*) or similarly common names (*Mena* > *Martha*). I do not believe this enforces an 'English' setting on the work, however, as due to the commonplace of such names in fables and other narratives similar in style to this *racconto*, they seem more like 'stock-names' rather than names of particular significance. Likewise, the anglicised names make the setting ambiguous from an English speaking perspective, corresponding with the ambiguity from an Italian speaking perspective of the original. This is different from some of the other stories that contain names with additional meanings. For example in *L'uomo che volle guarire* the main character is *Mseridon*, a fictitious name, and therefore one that is

unique and important in the story as well as having additional significance. Neither, I would argue, are they names that have connotations of culture, such as *Jean Leclerc* from *Il re a Horm el-Hagar*. The names are Italian, but I believe this is not a consequence of the setting, but rather of the language in which the story was written.

The aspect most heavily domesticated in this story is the language. The language featured in *Il mantello* is characterised by passages of dialogue, interspersed with almost a sort of stream of consciousness of the mother. It is through these narrative devices that we begin to feel sympathy for the character of the mother in her desperation; we experience her torment, her rationale and her pain. Even though the story remains in the third person throughout, it reflects the emotion and sentiment of the characters' situation. It is because it is so personalised that I have intentionally domesticated aspects of the language to relate the story to the feelings of a target New Zealand audience.

Examples of this can be seen in the vocabulary I have chosen. Throughout the story I have tried to keep the language more 'homely'. Thus, in the translation we have words such as *mum* for *mamma*, and while these are direct equivalents, in a historical story one would most likely expect *mamma* to be rendered *mother*. I have also moved away from the style that I employed in *The King at Horm el-Hagar* and *The Man Who Wanted to Heal* to give an feeling of age. While this style exists to some degree, I have also included some more modern equivalents in my lexical selections:

<i>tornare</i>	<i>come back</i>	<i>(return)</i>
<i>dovere</i>	<i>have to</i>	<i>(must)</i>

These are examples of how I have translated words with more familiar, informal equivalents, and conversely showing the more formal terms in parentheses that I would have perhaps used if I was more concerned about achieving a sense of age.

Additionally, instead of avoiding contractions, I have included them frequently in the story, particularly in the dialogue, to make it more natural, fluid and more intimate which reflects the relationship between the characters as family members.

"John," she begged. "What's wrong? What's wrong, John? You're hiding something from me, why don't you want to tell me?"

Instead of:

“John,” she begged. “What is wrong? What is wrong, John?” You are hiding something from me, why do you not want to tell me?

Finally, perhaps the most domesticating feature of the language is the transposition of idioms. This is a common manoeuvre of domestication even in some works that are on the surface foreignising translations, as the unique nature of idioms dictates that they often do not correlate between languages in terms of content, but they often do through the message they imply. The original of *Il mantello* uses a host of Italian idioms which again add to the familiar and informal feel of the narrative. Instead of taking an approach of extreme foreignising, retaining these idioms in their foreign forms, I decided to present them in English language equivalents, again to retain the sense of domesticity and familiarity. I decided on these equivalents particularly with a domestic audience in mind, namely I wanted them to be familiar for a modern New Zealand audience, despite the perceived age of the text. An example is:

« Meglio di no, mamma. È un tipo curioso, è capace di andar sulle furie. »

“Better not, mum. He’s a strange type, he can fly off the handle.”

This is an example of how an idiomatic phrase can offer several different equivalents. Different dictionaries offer different equivalents of the idiom in English, some more idiomatic than others:

to lose one’s temper

to storm and rage (“Furia” Cambridge).

to get into a towering rage

to fly into a rage (“Furia” Collins).

to fly into a passion

to get furious (“Furia” Sansoni).

In these cases, I have always chosen to preserve the idiom, and the more idiomatic the better. After this has narrowed down the options, I have tried to utilise the idioms

that are commonly used in current New Zealand English, and as a basis for this, I have favoured idioms that I would naturally use myself. In this instance I utilised a more idiomatic phrase that did not appear in these bi-lingual dictionaries, but rather from my own vocabulary: *to fly off the handle*.

The Cloak is an example of how a work can be significantly domesticated without making this overtly obvious or through making major changes to the source text. My main concern in translating this work was to adapt the original context to the necessarily new context of the target audience. This could only be achieved through the domestication of some features. However, while this is a shift away from the source textually, the alterations are still based on fidelity towards this source. Changes have been performed to mimic the original conception of the source language audience, rather than the source language itself, which I deemed to be the preferable approach in this instance, given the lack of a specific culture, and the intimacy of theme.

The Taniwha

A Translation of

Il colombre

By Dino Buzzati

Il colombre

Quando Stefano Roi compí i dodici anni, chiese in regalo a suo padre, capitano di mare e padrone di un bel veliero, che lo portasse con sé a bordo.

« Quando sarò grande » disse « voglio andar per mare come te. E commanderò delle navi ancora piú belle e grandi della tua. »

« Che Dio ti benedica, figliolo » rispose il padre. E siccome proprio quel giorno il suo bastimento doveva partire, portò il ragazzo con sé.

Era una giornata splendida di sole; e il mare tranquillo. Stefano, che non era mai stato sulla nave, girava felice in coperta, ammirando le complicate manovre delle vele. E chiedeva di questo e di quello ai marinai che, sorridendo, gli davano tutte le spiegazioni.

Come fu giunto a poppa, il ragazzo si fermò, incuriosito, a osservare una cosa che spuntava a intermittenza in superficie, a distanza di due-trecento metri, in corrispondenza della scia della nave.

Benché il bastimento già volasse, portato da un magnifico vento al giardinetto, quella cosa manteneva sempre la distanza. E, sebbene egli non ne comprendesse la natura, aveva qualcosa di indefinibile, che lo attraeva intensamente.

Il padre, non vedendo Stefano piú in giro, dopo averlo chiamato a gran voce invano, scese dalla plancia e andò a cercarlo.

The Taniwha

When Steven Roy turned twelve years old, he asked his father, a sea captain and the master of a fine sailing ship, to take him on board as a gift.

“When I am older,” he said, “I want to go to sea just like you, and I will command even greater and finer ships than yours.”

“May God bless you, my son,” his father replied.

And as that very day his ship was due to depart, he took the boy with him.

It was a splendid, sunny day with a calm sea. Steven, who had never before been on the ship, happily wandered about the deck, admiring the complicated riggings of the sails. As he moved about, he asked the sailors about this and that, and smiling, they would answer all his questions.

As he reached the stern, the boy stopped, intrigued, to observe something that every now and then broke the surface of the water, about two or three hundred metres away, following the wake of the ship.

Even though the vessel was now soaring, carried by a brilliant rear wind, whatever it was always kept the same distance. And although he could not discern its nature, it had something indefinable about it that attracted him intensely.

His father, having not seen Steven for some time, came down from the bridge to look for him after calling his name in vain.

« Stefano, che cosa fai lí impalato? » gli chiese scorgendolo infine a poppa, in piedi, che fissava le onde.

« Papà, vieni qui a vedere. »

Il padre venne e guardò anche lui, nella direzione indicata dal ragazzo, ma non riuscì a vedere niente.

« C'è una cosa scura che spunta ogni tanto dalla scia » disse « e che ci viene dietro. »

« Nonostante i miei quarant'anni » disse il padre « credo di avere ancora una vista buona. Ma non vedo assolutamente niente. »

Poiché il figlio insisteva, andò a prendere il cannocchiale e scrutò la superficie del mare, in corrispondenza della scia. Stefano lo vide impallidire.

« Cos'è? Perché fai quella faccia? »

« Oh, non ti avessi ascoltato » esclamò il capitano. « Io adesso temo per te. Quella cosa che tu vedi spuntare dalle acque e chi ci segue, non è una cosa. Quello è un colombre. È il pesce che i marinai sopra tutti temono, in ogni mare del mondo. È uno squalo tremendo e misterioso, più astuto dell'uomo. Per motivi che forse nessuno saprà mai, sceglie la sua vittima, e quando l'ha scelta la insegue per anni e anni, per una intera vita, finché è riuscito a divorarla. E lo strano è questo: che nessuno riesce a scorgerlo se non la vittima stessa e le persone del suo stesso sangue. »

“Steven, what are you doing standing there?” He asked, spotting him at the stern, staring at the waves.

“Father, come and look.”

His father went over and looked to where the boy was pointing, but could not see anything.

“There’s a dark thing that every so often comes out of the wake” he said, “it’s following us from behind.”

“Despite my forty years,” his father said, “my eyes have never failed me. But, I cannot see a thing.”

But since his son insisted, he went and got his telescope and scanned the surface of the wake. Steven saw him turn white.

“What’s wrong? Why the face?”

“Oh, if only I hadn’t listened to you!” cried the captain. “Now my heart is only full of fear. That thing you see emerging from the water, following us: it isn’t a thing at all. It’s a taniwha. He’s what the sailors fear above all else, in every sea in the world. He’s a terrible and mysterious shark, more cunning than any man. For reasons perhaps no one will ever know, he chooses his victim and when he has, he pursues him for years and years, for an entire lifetime, until he manages to devour him. And the strange thing is this: no one can see him, except for the victim himself and the people that share his blood.”

« Non è una favola? »

« No. Io non l'avevo mai visto. Ma dalle descrizioni che ho sentito fare tante volte, l'ho subito riconosciuto. Quel muso da bisonte, quella bocca che continuamente si apre e chiude, quei denti terribili. Stefano, non c'è dubbio, purtroppo, il colombre ha scelto te e fin che tu andrai per mare non ti darà pace. Ascoltami: ora noi torniamo subito a terra, tu sbarcherai e non ti staccherai mai più dalla riva, per nessuna ragione al mondo. Me lo devi promettere. Il mestiere del mare non è per te, figliolo. Devi rassegnarti. Del reso, anche a terra potrai fare fortuna. »

Ciò detto, fece immediatamente invertire la rotta, rientrò in porto e, col pretesto di un improvviso malessere, sbarcò il figliolo. Quindi ripartì senza di lui.

Profondamente turbato, il ragazzo restò sulla riva finché l'ultimo picco dell'alberatura sprofondò dietro l'orizzonte. Di là dal molo che chiedeva il porto, il mare restò completamente deserto. Ma aguzzando gli sguardi, Stefano riuscì a scorgere un puntino nero che affiorava a intermittenza dalle acque: il "suo" colombre, che incrociava lentamente su e giù, ostinato ad aspettarlo.

....

Da allora il ragazzo con ogni espediente fu distolto dal desiderio del mare. Il padre lo mandò a studiare in una città dell'interno, lontana centinaia di chilometri. E per qualche tempo, distratto dal nuovo ambiente, Stefano non pensò più al mostro marino.

“Is that not just a legend?”

“No, I have never seen him before. But from the descriptions I have heard time and time again, I instantly recognised him: that bison-like nose, that mouth continuously opening and closing, those terrible teeth. Steven, there is no doubt. The taniwha has chosen you, and as long as you are at sea, he will never leave you alone. Listen to me: we’re heading back to land straight away; you’ll get off the ship and you’ll never pass the shore again, for any reason in the world. You must promise me this. Your future is not at sea, my son. Forget it. One can make his fortune on land as well.”

That said, the captain immediately changed course, returned to port and with the excuse of a sudden illness, took his son off the ship. Then, he left again without him.

Deeply disturbed, the boy stayed on the shore until the last peak of the masts sank beneath the horizon. There, from the pier that enclosed the harbour, the sea lay completely deserted. But, sharpening his eyes, Steven managed to catch a glimpse of a tiny black mark that surfaced every now and then from the water: *his* taniwha, slowly winding up and down, stubbornly awaiting him.

....

From that day on, his father tried in every way possible to make Steven forget his yearning for the sea. He sent him to study in a city inland, hundreds of miles away, and for some time, distracted by his new surroundings, Steven stopped thinking about the sea monster.

Tuttavia, per le vacanze estive, tornò a casa e per prima cosa, appena ebbe un minuto libero, si affrettò a raggiungere l'estremità del molo, per una specie di controllo, benché in fondo lo ritenesse superfluo. Dopo tanto tempo, il colombre, ammesso anche che tutta la storia narratagli dal padre fosse vera, aveva certo rinunciato all'assedio.

Ma Stefano rimase là, attonito, col cuore che gli batteva. A distanza di due-trecento metri dal molo, nell'aperto mare, il sinistro pesce andava su e giù, lentamente, ogni tanto sollevando il muso dall'acqua e volgendolo a terra, quasi con ansia guardasse se Stefano Roi finalmente veniva.

Così, l'idea di quella creatura nemica che lo aspettava giorno e notte divenne per Stefano una segreta ossessione. E anche nella lontana città gli capitava di svegliarsi in piena notte con inquietudine. Egli era al sicuro, sí, centinaia di chilometri lo separavano dal colombre. Eppure egli sapeva che, di là dalle montagne, di là dai boschi, di là dalle pianure, lo squalo era ad aspettarlo. E, si fosse egli trasferito pure nel piú remoto continente, ancora il colombre si sarebbe appostato nello specchio di mare piú vicino, con l'inesorabile ostinazione che hanno gli strumenti del fato.

Stefano, ch'era un ragazzo serio e volenteroso, continuò con profitto gli studi e, appena fu uomo, trovò un impiego dignitoso e remunerativo in un emporio di quella città. Intanto il padre venne a morire per malattia, il suo magnifico veliero fu dalla vedova venduto e il figlio si trovò ad essere erede di una discreta fortuna. Il lavoro, le amicizie, gli svaghi, i primi amori: Stefano si era ormai fatto la sua vita, ciononostante il pensiero del colombre lo assillava come un funesto e insieme affascinante miraggio; e, passando i giorni, anziché svanire, sembrava farsi piú insistente.

However, in the summer holidays, he returned home and as soon as he had a moment to spare, he rushed to the end of the pier, even though he thought it pointless. After such a long time, even assuming that the story that his father had told him was even true, the taniwha would have certainly given up the siege.

But Steven froze, astonished, heart beating. There, two or three hundred metres out from the pier, in the open sea, the sinister fish swam slowly up and down, every now and then raising his nose from the water and turning it towards land. Almost anxiously, he looked to see if Steven Roy was finally coming.

The idea of that hostile creature awaiting him day and night became for Steven a secret obsession. Even in the distant city he would wake in the middle of the night, uneasy. He was safe; hundreds of miles separated him from the taniwha, but still he knew that no matter where he was; in the mountains, the forests, the fields, the shark would be waiting for him. Even if he moved to the most remote of continents, the taniwha would station itself in the nearest sea with that unrelenting perseverance characteristic of the instruments of fate.

Steven, who was a serious and hard-working boy, continued to make the most of his studies and as soon as he became a man, found a dignified and rewarding job in a store in the city. In the meantime, his father had passed away from an illness, his magnificent ship had been sold by his widow, and Steven found himself the heir to a tidy fortune. Work, friendships, pleasures, first loves: thus Steven lived his life. Nevertheless, the thought of the taniwha ate away at him like a mirage both deadly and fascinating at the same time; and as the days went by, instead of vanishing, it seemed to become more and more vivid.

Grandi sono le soddisfazioni di una vita laboriosa, agiata e tranquilla, ma ancora più grande è l'attrazione dell'abisso. Aveva appena ventidue anni Stefano, quando, salutati gli amici della città e licenziatosi dall'impegno, tornò alla città natale e comunicò alla mamma la ferma intenzione di seguire il mestiere paterno. La donna, a cui Stefano non aveva mai fatto parola del misterioso squalo, accolse con gioia la sua decisione. L'avere il figlio abbandonato il mare per la città le era sempre sembrato, in cuor suo, un tradimento alle tradizioni di famiglia.

E Stefano cominciò a navigare, dando prova di qualità marinare, di resistenza alle fatiche, di animo intrepido. Navigava, navigava, e sulla scia del suo bastimento, di giorno e di notte, con la bonaccia e con la tempesta, arrancava il colombre. Egli sapeva che quella era la sua maledizione e la sua condanna, ma proprio per questo, forse, non trovava la forza di staccarsene. E nessuno a bordo scorgeva il mostro, tranne lui.

« Non vedete niente da quella parte? » chiedeva di quando in quando ai compagni, indicando la scia.

« No, noi non vediamo proprio niente. Perché? »

« Non so. Mi pareva... »

« Non avrai mica visto per caso un colombre » facevano quelli, ridendo e toccando ferro.

« Perché ridete? Perché toccate ferro? »

« Perché il colombre è una bestia che non perdona. E se si mettesse a seguire questa nave, vorrebbe dire che uno di noi è perduto. »

Great are the satisfactions of a laborious life, comfortable and tranquil, but even greater is the attraction of the abyss. Steven had just turned twenty-two when, having bid farewell to his friends in the city and resigned from his job, he returned to his hometown and expressed to his mother his firm intention of pursuing his father's trade. The woman, to whom Steven had never said a word about mysterious shark, greeted his decision with joy. In her heart it had always seemed a betrayal of the family traditions to have a son who had abandoned the sea for the city.

Thus Steven began to sail, proving his seafaring qualities, his resistance to pain and his intrepid spirit. He sailed and sailed, and always, day or night, calm or storm, the taniwha dragged itself behind him in the wake of his vessel. Steven knew that it was his curse, his condemnation, but perhaps for that very reason he could not find the strength to tear himself away. And still, no one on board caught sight of the monster, except him.

"Can you not see anything over there?" he would ask his companions every so often, pointing at the wake.

"No, not a thing. Why?"

"I don't know. I thought..."

"You haven't seen a taniwha by any chance?" some said laughing, as they touched wood.

"Why laugh? Why touch wood?"

"Because the taniwha is a beast that does not forgive. And if one starts to follow this ship, it would mean that one of us is doomed."

Ma Stefano non mollava. La ininterrotta minaccia che lo incalzava pareva anzi moltiplicare la sua volontà, la sua passione per il mare, il suo ardimento nelle ore di lotta e di pericolo.

Con la piccola sostanza lasciategli dal padre, come egli si sentí padrone del mestiere, acquistò con un socio un piccolo piroscalo da carico, quindi ne divenne il solo proprietario e, grazie a una serie di fortunate spedizioni, poté in seguito acquistare un mercantile sul serio, avviandosi a traguardi sempre piú ambiziosi. Ma i successi, e i milioni, non servivano a toglierli dall'animo quel continuo assillo; né mai, d'altra parte, egli fu tentato di vendere la nave e di ritirarsi a terra per intraprendere diverse imprese.

Navigare, navigare, era il suo unico pensiero. Non appena, dopo lunghi tragitti, metteva piede a terra in qualche porto, subito lo pungeva l'impazienza di ripartire. Sapeva che fuori c'era il colombre ad aspettarlo, e che il colombre era sinonimo di rovina. Niente. Un indomabile impulso lo traeva senza requie, da un oceano all'altro.

....

Finché, all'improvviso, Stefano un giorno si accorse di essere diventato vecchio, vecchissimo; e nessuno intorno a lui sapeva spiegarsi perché, ricco com'era, non lasciasse finalmente la dannata vita del mare. Vecchio, e amaramente infelice, perché l'intera esistenza sua era stata spesa in quella specie di pazzesca fuga attraverso i mari, per sfuggire al nemico. Ma piú grande che le gioie di una vita agiata e tranquilla era stata per lui sempre la tentazione dell'abisso.

Still, Steven would not give in. The relentless threat that followed him only seemed to strengthen his resolve, his passion for the sea and his boldness in the hours of struggle and danger.

Believing that he had now become a master of the trade, he purchased with a partner a small freight steamer with the modest inheritance his father had left him. Shortly after, he became the sole proprietor and thanks to a series of fortunate expeditions, he then purchased a more serious merchant ship, setting out on more and more ambitious journeys. But the successes and the riches did not help to free his soul from his constant anxiety; though, on the other hand, he was never tempted to sell the ship and retire on land to undertake other endeavours.

Sailing was his one and only thought. After long voyages he would immediately be bitten with the impatience to leave again as soon as he set foot on land. He knew that the taniwha was waiting for him out there, and that the taniwha meant his ruin. It didn't matter. An untameable impulse dragged him ceaselessly from one ocean to another.

....

Until one day, all of a sudden, Steven realised that he had grown old, very old; and no one around him could explain why, rich as he was, he would not give up the wretched life of the sea. He was old and bitterly unhappy; his entire existence had been spent on some sort of insane flight throughout the seas to escape his foe. But for him, the temptation of the abyss had always been greater than the pleasures of a comfortable and tranquil life.

E una sera, mentre la sua magnifica nave era ancorata al largo del porto dove era nato, si sentí prossimo a morire. Allora, chiamò il secondo ufficiale, di cui aveva grande fiducia, e gli ingiunse di non opporsi a ciò che egli stava per fare. L'altro, sull'onore, promise.

Avuta questa assicurazione, Stefano, al secondo ufficiale che lo ascoltava sgomento, rivelò la storia del colombre, che aveva continuato a inseguirlo per quasi cinquant'anni, inutilmente.

« Mi ha scortato da un capo all'altro del mondo » disse « con una fedeltà che neppure il più nobile amico avrebbe potuto dimostrare. Adesso io sto per morire. Anche lui, ormai, sarà terribilmente vecchio e stanco. Non posso tradirlo. »

Ciò detto, prese commiato, fece calare in mare un barchino e vi salí, dopo essersi fatto dare un arpione.

« Ora gli vado incontro » annunciò. « È giusto che non lo deluda. Ma lotterò, con le mie ultime forze. »

A stanchi colpi di remi, si allontanò da bordo. Ufficiali e marinai lo videro scomparire laggiú, sul placido mare, avvolto dalle ombre della notte. C'era in cielo una falce di luna. Non dovette faticare molto. All'improvviso il muso orribile del colombre emerse di fianco alla barca.

« Eccomi a te, finalmente » disse Stefano « Adesso, a noi due! » E, raccogliendo le superstiti energie, alzò l'arpione per colpire.

One evening, while his magnificent ship was anchored off the coast of the port where he had been born, he felt death close at hand. So, he called his second officer whom he trusted dearly and ordered him not to object to what he was about to do. The man, out of honour, promised he wouldn't.

Having this assurance, Steven revealed the story of the taniwha to the officer who, dismayed, listened to how it had incessantly pursued his captain for almost fifty years, in vain.

“He has accompanied me from one end of the world to the other” he said, “with a fidelity that not even the noblest of friends could possibly show. Now I am about to die. He too, by now, must be terribly old and tired. I cannot betray him.”

That said, he took his leave, lowered a small boat and got in after getting himself a harpoon.

“I'm going out to meet him,” he announced. “It is right that I don't let him down now. I'll fight him with the last of my strength.”

With tired strokes of the oars, he distanced himself from the ship. The officers and sailors watched him disappear down on the placid sea, wrapped in the shadow of night. There was a crescent moon in the sky.

He did not have to labour long. Suddenly, the horrible nose of the taniwha emerged beside the boat.

“Here I am. At last,” said Steven. “Now it's just us.” And, amassing his remaining strength, he lifted the harpoon to fire.

« Uh » mugolò con voce supplichevole il colombre « che lunga strada per trovarti. Anch'io sono distrutto dalla fatica. Quanto mi hai fatto nuotare. E tu fuggivi, fuggivi. E non hai mai capito niente. »

« Perché? » fece Stefano, punto sul vivo.

« Perché non ti ho inseguito attraverso il mondo per divorarti, come pensavi. Dal re del mare avevo avuto soltanto l'incarico di consegnarti questo. »

E lo squalo trasse fuori la lingua, porgendo al vecchio capitano una piccola sfera fosforescente.

Stefano la prese fra le dita e guardò. Era una perla di grandezza spropositata. E lui riconobbe la famosa Perla del Mare che dà, a chi la possiede, fortuna, potenza, amore, e pace dell'animo. Ma era ormai troppo tardi.

« Ahimè! » disse scuotendo tristamente il capo. « Come è tutto sbagliato. Io sono riuscito a dannare la mia esistenza: e ho rovinato la tua. »

« Addio, pover'uomo » rispose il colombre. E sprofondò nelle acque nere per sempre.

....

Due mesi dopo, spinto dalla risacca, un barchino approdò a una dirupata scogliera. Fu avvistato da alcuni pescatori che, incuriositi, si avvicinarono. Sul barchino, ancora seduto, stava un bianco scheletro: e fra le ossicine delle dita stringeva un piccolo sasso rotondo.

“Ugh” moaned the taniwha with an imploring voice.

“What a long journey to find you. I too am destroyed by the effort. How far you have made me swim. Yet you fled and fled, never understanding a thing.”

“What?” cried Steven, the monster having struck a nerve.

“I have not pursued you throughout the world to devour you, as you had thought. The King of the Sea had only given me the charge of delivering this to you.”

And the shark stuck out its tongue, offering the old captain a small glowing sphere.

Steven took it in his fingers and stared at it. It was a pearl of immeasurable dimensions. He instantly recognised the famous Pearl of the Sea that gave to whoever possessed it fortune, power, love and peace of mind. But it was by then too late.

“Alas!” he said, sadly shaking his head. “How wrong it all is. I managed to condemn my own existence, and have destroyed yours.”

“Farewell, you poor man,” responded the taniwha. And he sank back into the black waters forever.

....

Two months later, pushed by the undertow, a small boat washed up on a rugged cliff. It was spotted by a group of fishermen who, curious, approached it. In the boat, still sitting, was a white skeleton: between the bones of its fingers it grasped a small round stone.

Il colombre è un pesce di grandi dimensioni, spaventoso a vedersi, estremamente raro. A seconda dei mari, e delle genti che ne abitano le rive, viene anche chiamato kolomber, kahloubra, kalonga, kalu-balu, chalung-gra. I naturalisti stranamente lo ignorano. Qualcuno perfino sostiene che non esiste.

The taniwha is a fish of great proportions, frightening to the eye, and extremely rare. Depending on the sea and the people that live on its shores, it is also referred to as a chalungra, kalubalu, kalonga, kahloubra, kolomber or colombre. Naturalists strangely ignore them. Others maintain they do not even exist.

Il colombre – The Taniwha

Commentary

Buzzati described the titular work of his seventh collection of *racconti* as ‘*una allegoria del solito tema dell’uomo che si è completamente sbagliato nella vita*’ (*Autoritratto* 154). *Il colombre* tells the ill-fated story of a man who accepts his fate without question, allowing it to consume every part of his being; until it becomes for him a deadly obsession. Only at the last moment does he realise that he has spent his life fleeing, ignorantly, from the greatest gift imaginable.

Buzzati himself cites the story as one of his finest (*Autoritratto* 154). It deals with themes typical of his literature; notably fate, the journey of life and the deceptiveness of appearances. He continues to liken the story to his greatest critical success: *Nel “Colombre” c’è quasi Il deserto dei Tartari in pillola...*” (154-155). But naturally the *conto* is much more simple and concise; at its roots it is a bare story, in the style of a fable, with a simple message.

Once again in *Il colombre* there is the expected shift from the real to the surreal. We are introduced to the principal characters in Buzzati’s typically formal style, immediately setting a scene rooted in reality. However, the surreal soon enters with the existence of the supernatural. The allegorical mechanism of supposed destiny here is personified in the character of *il colombre* a creature that, thanks to local myth, has gained a fierce reputation. Immediately after the introduction of the character the semblance of the story changes, it becomes akin to a fable, and following the expectations of such narratives, additional supernatural elements (magical objects, mythical beings) are later introduced.

Both the temporal and geographical settings of the story remain undefined throughout the original and there is a noticeable lack of specific references in the text. No clear setting is ever mentioned, but due to the use of nautical jargon and sporadic lexical references such as *piroscafo* a rough time period and a vague setting can be discerned. However, this setting is still dependent on the reader to mould it in his own imagination. Akin with many historical fables, the setting is changeable

depending on the context of the reader. So the story could just as likely be set in any part of the world, and can be adapted as such with no direct change to the text. The only explicit element that ties the story to a supposed Italian setting is solely the name of the principal character: *Stefano*.

The setting, being underdeveloped, is rather inconsequential and certainly secondary to the universal themes presented. No specific culture is ever referenced, so adapting the story to a context for a specific audience is in no way detrimental or dismissive to a foreign culture. Returning to Buzzati's description of the story: *'una allegoria del solito tema dell'uomo che si è completamente sbagliato nella vita'*, even here Buzzati is expressing a universal, he is critiquing mankind, a collective group and their misgivings, rather than imposing judgements on a particular culture. Furthermore, the story is allegorical. It is clearly and necessarily fictitious, and certainly there is a possibility that Buzzati was not discussing a culture at all, or that if he was it was hypothetical or entirely fictitious.

This story is excellent in terms of open interpretation, and therefore processes of domestication can comfortably be applied without hindering the messages of the story. In an exercise to examine the potential benefits and issues of domestication in translation I have decided to reset the story into a non-specific New Zealand setting, drawing on cultural references, if necessary, to express this decision. However, although I have now placed a setting onto the story, I believe I also maintain the ambiguity of the original by never explicitly referencing it. It is no more a specific setting than the original, and likewise if given to an audience outside of that intended (in this case New Zealand), it is still open to appropriate interpretation in other cultures and is still as perfectly intelligible as the original.

Domestication as an approach, just as translation itself, is defined by interpretation. When domesticating a story, a translator is faced with innumerable possibilities. For example, I could have heavily domesticated the text, perhaps resetting it in a specific temporal period, or specify more explicitly the culture. I had always wished to maintain the sense of a unspecific past, however, as this is characteristic of the story's fable like sentiment. As I believe that a translator should only perform such an extreme form of full-domestication into his own culture and period, this type of

full transposition in this case was not viable. It would be irresponsible if say, I completely reset the setting in pre-colonial Māori culture, since I am removed from both that time and culture, and therefore am inadequate to represent it. Thus, considering my own context, the only setting which would be suitable for a complete reworking of the setting is contemporary New Zealand, and as this conflicted with the historical feel of the *racconto*, this was not a feasible option. Thus, while elements have been domesticated, they are not absolute. To retain the ambiguity of the setting, I was careful not to ground it too heavily in a domestic setting. I have only made additional changes where I have deemed them absolutely necessary, specifically where they can directly conflict with a New Zealand setting.

But why domesticate? What benefits does this bring to the story? The benefit is familiarisation and accessibility; this is why anything is domesticated, to make it more accessible. Ultimately there are features of the text which I consider are better conceptualised with domestic renderings. The best example of this, and the most significantly altered feature of the *racconto*, is the idea of the sea monster. *Il colombre* of the original is not a mythical creature. It was entirely the author's own invention; Buzzati reveals how he arrived at the name in an interview:

“...ecco come mi è venuto questo nome: una mia amica, che si chiama Stefania Armanino, mi raccontava che un suo amico americano, invece di dire « How many kilometers? » diceva « How many colombers? »... Diceva lei che gli americani deformavano la parola. Questo « colombers » mi è piaciuto. Allora ho immaginato una bestia, un mostro, e così è venuta fuori questa storia...” (Autoritratto 153-154).

Conversely, in my translation the *taniwha* is indeed the product of the Māori culture, rather than the invention of an individual. However, instead of this creating complications, I think the correlation is uniquely favourable. Firstly, although the *colombre* is a personal construct, it still is created from an Italian perspective. In the above excerpt we see how the name is in fact an Italianisation of a pseudo-English word, thus it is a product of Italian culture. Additionally, in its new Italian form, the word takes on additional connotations influenced by the Italian language. From the word we get hints of other words such as *ombre* (shadows) or *colomba* (dove), which in this case favourably correlate with the dual evil/good nature of the creature.

Interestingly, this also reflects the preconceptions of *taniwha* who in Māori culture (and subsequently in greater New Zealand culture) are known both as guardians of the waters and terrible beasts (Orbell 149).

If the word had been left in Italian, or in a similar form (such as the case of Venuti's translation *The Colomber* in his collection *Restless Nights*), it would instantly lose these connotations, thus sacrificing the conceptions that the original audience perhaps perceived from the word. Therefore using *taniwha*, a word that is already charged with common perceptions in the target audience, I have achieved a similar result. And while this alteration is an unequivocal domestication and can change the perception to a local setting for the target audience, I believe such a perception is not limiting. Here, I have employed the *taniwha* as more of a contextual representation, utilising the preconceptions of the target audience, rather than a device that necessarily dictates that the story is now rooted in a new culture. Finally as there are other references (for example, the nautical jargon) that base the story in a more historical past (if in a New Zealand context, certainly in the nineteenth century) the inclusion of the word *taniwha* is more for the cognition of the target audience rather than to accurately reflect the time period.

The beasts also align in their physical descriptions. Buzzati gives his *colombre* a varied physical description, though it remains fierce and terrifying throughout.

“Quello è un colombre. È il pesce che i marinai sopra tutti temono, in ogni mare del mondo. È uno squalo tremendo e misterioso, più astuto dell'uomo.”

Remarkably this corresponds virtually seamlessly with descriptions of *taniwha*. Fearsomeness, cunning, and the ability to appear in multiple physical forms are qualities equally applicable to *taniwha* (Reed 259-260). Even when the true nature of the *colombre* is revealed, this too corresponds; despite their fearful exteriors, *taniwha* are sacred beings, highly respected in Māori folklore (Orbell 149-150). Even on an etymological level the two creatures correspond. *Taniwha* has roots in Proto-Polynesian as a word meaning *shark species* or *fish* (“Tanifa”). Buzzati uses both these terms in the original Italian, describing the beast both as a *squalo* and a *pesce*. However, it is clear that these references are not categorical, as he also describes the

creature as a *mostro*, *bestia* and *creatura* highlighting the additional supernatural qualities of the being.

The transposition of the creature was a relatively simple process. Even though it is referenced in a number of ways, since the references directly corresponded to the source text, and therefore could be directly translated, the only concrete change was the name:

<u>Italian original</u>	<u>English translation</u>
<i>colombre</i>	<i>taniwha</i>
<i>pesce</i>	<i>fish</i>
<i>squalo</i>	<i>shark</i>
<i>monstro</i>	<i>monster</i>
<i>creatura</i>	<i>creature</i>
<i>bestia</i>	<i>beast</i>

The name also plays an important role in the pseudo-scientific note at the end of the story. Buzzati employs this fictional device to further the sense of reality that he strives to achieve in his surrealistic narratives:

“Il colombre è un pesce di grandi dimensioni, spaventoso a vedersi, estremamente raro. A seconda dei mari, e delle genti che ne abitano le rive, viene anche chiamato kolomber, kahloubrrha, kalonga, kalu-balu, chalung-gra. I naturalisti stranamente lo ignorano. Qualcuno perfino sostiene che non esiste.”

Naturally, the retention of this passage was necessary in the translation, and additionally in global mythology the motif of the sea monster (here represented by the *taniwha*) is universal and therefore equally appropriate in this story as well. Basically what Buzzati presents is a linguistic progression of his artificial word, using exotic inflections. In the version present in translation, I have retained these words, but reversed the order to make the progression more fluid, and have also added the final word: *colombre*, as a homage to the original:

“The taniwha is a fish of great proportions, frightening to the eye, and extremely rare. Depending on the sea and the people that live on its shores, it is also referred to as a

chalungra, kalu-balu, kalonga, kahloubriha, kolomber or colombre. Naturalists strangely ignore them. Others maintain they do not even exist.”

Aside from this major transposition of the creature, the changes required for domestication were relatively minor as the references restricting the possibility of a New Zealand setting were few, providing ideal conditions for such a process to be undertaken. Despite the inclusion of the *taniwha* I still wanted to retain the fable-like attributes of the original, most notably the ambiguity of setting and the possibility for contextual interpretation.

Nevertheless additional elements were altered. As with *The Man Who Wanted to Heal* and *The Cloak* I have anglicised the Italian name. Only one name, besides the *colombre*, is given: *Stefano Roi*, which much like the other stories is the only reference which is explicitly Italian, and here is replaced with a domesticated version *Steven Roy*. Additionally, as with *The Cloak*, I have favoured translating idioms with equivalents in current usage, as in the case of:

« *Perché ridete? Perché toccate ferro?* »

“*Why laugh? Why touch wood?*”

The remaining language I have translated once again into a standard language with some antiquated inflections in syntax and vocabulary to reflect the historical setting, much as in *The Man Who Wanted to Heal*.

The Taniwha is undoubtedly the most domesticated of the stories presented in this project. Nevertheless, I believe this translation exemplifies how even a more extreme domestication process can still retain the integrity of the source text. Examining the changes shows that, in reality, they can be fairly minor. Many elements have been left unaltered; the plot, themes, characters and ambiguity of setting have all been retained. The aspects that have been domesticated (the monster, the perceived setting, idiom) are designed to fulfil requirements that will reproduce the features received by the original audience which, while not textual fidelity, I would argue is a

form of contextual fidelity. The result, I believe, is a thematically and contextually faithful translation of the original which caters to the needs of a new audience.

Translator's Note

Shifting Strategies

It is an accepted belief that translation is, in its nature, an exercise of negotiation and compromise, and it is on this assumption that the translator must make conscious and informed decisions in his or her methodological approach. In translation, concessions are inevitable, though it remains imperative that the translator objectively examines the options available to him to reach his own responsible decisions. It is because of this interpretational aspect that I argue that there can be no definitive translation, but rather the opportunity for interpretation that can see a singular work translated in many different ways, each intended for different audiences, and each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, in the relatively new discipline of translation studies, there are two seemingly polarised approaches: domestication and foreignisation. Contemporary theories tend to favour a foreignising approach, stressing fidelity towards the original text. I have presented the translations in this project to examine different domesticating practices. Thus, I am presenting methodologies distanced from current modern trends. While the individual processes applied to each story are described in their respective commentaries, here I present a more general discussion about modern translation methods.

Ambiguities in Terminology

Since World War II there has been a marked change in the study of translation. Previously the greatest emphasis was placed on linguistic transition, the language used in the text. However, since such theorists as Noam Chomsky, there has been a shift of emphasis to the role of translation in the study of representations of culture. This has led to two extremes of methodology and ideology. These distinctions are, however, present throughout Translation Studies in many guises. The terminology employed in the discipline is not explicit, but ambiguous; each theorist seems to adopt his own, which depends on the sway of his own argument. Buffoni notes some of these common couplings: domesticated/foreign, visibility/invisibility,

violability/inviolability, liberty/fidelity, betrayal/cohesion, fluency/literality (11). All represent different approaches to examining translation, but all express contrast; seemingly a translation must be categorised into one or the other with no cross-contamination permitted. This view was shared by nineteenth century German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher who expressed his own coupling in his 1813 lecture on translation with his famous remark: “In my opinion there are only two [such methods]. Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him” (49). He goes on to claim: “These two paths are so very different from one another that one or the other must certainly be followed as strictly as possible, any attempt to combine them being certain to produce a highly unreliable result...” (49). Even theorists that conflict with Schleiermacher’s foreignising ideologies share the view that these two distinctions cannot be merged. Eugene Nida, who advocates fundamental equivalence over formality of form, notes the polarised distinctions that a translator is inevitably faced with (14). This idea of such a strong conflict of ideals naturally would lead to arguments about a ‘correct’ approach, to the point that some scholarship has interpreted such polarisation as a black and white division of theory within the discipline. However, in practice, translations cannot always be so clearly defined. Undoubtedly a translation can be both faithful and unfaithful in certain aspects, and while the two approaches are polarised in their principles, in reality modern translations represent varying methodological practices, even within a single work, as can be seen in the Buzzati translations presented here.

Nevertheless, to express and examine the differences of such methodologies, distinctions must be made. Thus, in this discussion I am adapting the terminology of prominent American translation theorist Lawrence Venuti as introduced in his book *The Translator’s Invisibility*. A champion of Schleiermacher himself, Venuti expanded on his doctrine by defining two forms of approach: ‘domesticating translation’ and ‘foreignising translation’ (16-39). However, these terms represent an ideal and not reality; they are necessarily categorical, and are used here to describe the specific manoeuvres within the processes of their respective methodologies, as

well as a hypothetical product of the practices through which we can examine and discuss the features of such approaches.

Definitions

Domestication

Every single translation, regardless of its methodological approach, has gone through a process of domestication. Such a process by definition is the transposition of the foreign into the familiar which is precisely what any translation sets out to do. Arguably, changing the language of a text is the procedure that is most closely aligned to the ideas of domestication, the act of stripping a work of its native language and twisting the information to fit into the restraints of a new target idiom. Therefore, under this assumption, all translations are to an extent domestications, though certainly the degree of domestication will vary.

The label domestication covers three translation approaches; each which endeavour to familiarise certain elements of a particular work; namely the language, the original's temporal and spatial setting and cultural references (which also affects the language of the original), and the themes of the original text. Different domestications may employ any or all of these features.

The familiarisation of language is unavoidable in translation. Translation is the transposition a work from a foreign language into a familiar one, thus even a literal word-for-word translation would still be an act of domestication. Rather than forcing the formal structure of one language onto another, a domesticating translator is prepared to make any changes necessary to reproduce the message of a text in coherent forms in the target language (Nida 2). Nevertheless, there are varying degrees to how the language can be affected. Many translations contain oblique translation strategies such as transposition, modulation, equivalence and adaptation to render the presented language more fluent to the target audience, therefore improving readability (Vinay and Darbelnet 132-137). However, there can be a more conscious decision to adapt language to make it more familiar to an audience. For example, in a previous translation project, I presented a work by Italian author Nico

Orengo as a full-domestication which required a complete resetting in a new domestic context; originally the story was written in a standard Italian with sporadic use of a specific Italian dialect, which I translated into a modern New Zealand English, a specific English variant deliberately chosen to reinforce the new setting and to be more accessible for the target audience. To make a translated text familiar to its target audience, however, does not necessarily require a dramatic change of setting. The original setting of the work can still be retained, kept “foreign”, with the linguistic changes promoting other strategies. Stylistically the language can also be domesticated to reflect different linguistic registers which could otherwise become lost in a straight translation, using domestic concepts of socio-economic or ethnic variants of language as equivalents to those presented in the source text.

Perhaps at its most extreme, domestication can involve a complete reworking of the setting of the source text. A ‘full-domestication’ not only aims to transpose the language, but also the setting of the original, including all the cultural specificities to which it is tied. Again, I used this approach when translating Orengo in which I transposed the story from its original setting in Piedmont, Northern Italy to the King Country of New Zealand. This type of domestication is highly personalised and certainly interpretive. I believe the result in the instance of the Orengo translation, was a work that appeared different from the original, but was still intrinsically tied to the source text and remained faithful to the structure, plot and themes present in the original text. While this transposition of setting is extreme, there are alternative, less overt ways that settings can be domesticated; for example by changing individual items to equivalent cultural references or concepts to those more familiar to a target audience.

The domestication of thematic material or messages is perhaps the most controversial aspect of such methodologies. This involves a new rendering of the ideas presented in the original, as interpreted by the translator, most frequently to align with expected social norms of the target culture. With the diversity of cultures and their respective values and belief systems, certainly there are instances when this type of process adversely affects the author’s original intentions for the work, creating a work which may differ from the author’s initial conceptions.

Foreignisation

Conversely, a foreignisation attempts to resist turning to familiarity, instead highlighting the unique foreignness of the original. This process is based on a desire for fidelity to the original text, a yearning to align with it as closely as possible, making minimal changes, while still presenting an acceptable product in the target language. The principle aim is to preserve the integrity of the source text and its culture. As with domestication, the elements which can go through a process of foreignisation are the language, the setting, and the theme.

Linguistically, a foreignising translation may attempt to retain certain elements of the source language, often for stylistic effect and also to make it known, or to remind the reader that the text and the characters within it are foreign. Berman notes that paradoxically, the only way to give access to the original language is by accentuating this very strangeness (277). Examples are the retention of foreign names and direct borrowings from the source language. The degree to which this can be done is variable and extends from moderate usage of foreign words already familiar to the target audience, to inclusion of sentences or indeed entire passages in the original language.

Likewise, settings can also go through a process of foreignisation. In this form of translation there is a shift from something that would be familiar in the target culture (assuming the target culture itself is represented in the narrative) to something that is foreign in the source culture. Instead of trying to disguise this fact, it is instead celebrated. Peculiarities present in the environment or the time are not explicitly explained, or adapted but are rather boldly presented to the reader, again in an attempt to heighten the awareness of the foreign.

Finally, an attempt can be made to try to retain the foreignness of the messages and themes of a work, which are themselves steeped in cultural values regardless of which cultures are being represented within the text. There can be a conscious aim to maintain the original messages despite the audience's lack of understanding, even to challenge the audience, rather than adapting such messages into a more acceptable and understandable form with the risk of trivialising the original story.

Modern Trends

The current trend in English-language translation is to favour foreignisation as championed by Lawrence Venuti. Venuti makes his positioning clear, referring to the domestication process as an “ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text” (*Translation as Cultural Politics* 210). He also claims that such methodologies have the ability to “...(re)constitute and cheapen foreign texts, to trivialize and exclude foreign cultures, and thus potentially to figure in racial discrimination and ethnic violence, international political confrontations, terrorism, war” (208). Venuti’s stance is supported and influenced by many additional translation theorists such as Berman who derides domestication’s historical prevalence in translation studies, stating that rather than retaining an essence of the foreign, it negates, acclimatises and naturalises it which serves as an unethical repression of sources texts and cultures (277).

Historically the favoured approach was certainly domestication. This is exemplified in the myriad versions of many stories and folktales. The story that an English audience would know as *Cinderella*, today exists in literally thousands of versions in many languages. The origins of the story are still debated, although variants can be seen in many cultures dating back thousands of years (Dundes xiii-xvii). The story has been developed and adapted for centuries for many audiences, and each version was influenced by the culture of its audience. Certainly the story would have originally been passed on through oral tradition, but even after the publication of definitive literary versions, such as those by Perrault and the Grimm Brothers, the story continued to be transformed for subsequent audiences. This process of renewal continues today, highlighted by constant new versions of story, including those set in modern contemporary cultures. While differing from modern translation issues (we do not know the original author or the original culture or have a fully definitive text) the handling of such works demonstrates how people often domesticate narratives to make the themes more accessible. What unites all the versions is theme; despite the changeable elements, the versions of Cinderella unite in a single plot, “a person in a mean or obscure position, by means of supernatural assistance, makes a good marriage” (Lang vii).

Domestication has also been long preferred in the translation of canonical or biblical texts. Although translation in this field has its own unique issues, the complicated problems of translation remain; communicating messages and interpretation in theological texts is particularly significant. In the Bible, though the origins of scripture are contested amongst religious denominations, the books that were eventually translated into English were written in Greek and Hebrew (Nida 6-7). Through Latin we eventually arrive at early European language versions. Certainly linguistic interpretations of the source texts have had, and still do have, a significant effect on the numerous and diverse religious groups which recognise the biblical canon. The translators of these works were much removed from the time and culture of the original, and naturally domesticated unfamiliar words and idiom; how else could people relate to new ideas? An example is the domestication of proper nouns. This was obligatory domestication as language phonologies do not always correspond and adjustments are often necessary (Nida 30). A specific example of this is the name *Jesus* which is derived from the Greek *Iēsous*, itself a domestication of the Hebrew *Yēshūa* (“Jesus”), and many modern languages have their own variant of the name. Domestication of the texts likewise carried over ideas into art. The depictions of Christianity are so varied amongst cultures, often showing clear influences from the cultures for which they were created rather than fidelity towards the cultures which were the source of these figures. Varying domestic interpretations of biblical texts underlay differing denominations within Christianity, and thus domestications are indeed complementary to understanding of the divisions within the faith.

Domestication was also prevalent in literary works and its influence prevailed well into the twentieth century, as is seen in the example of Sir John Denham’s introduction to *The Destruction of Troy* (1656). He says in the work’s prologue “if Virgil must needs speak English, it were fit he should speak not only as a man of this Nation, but as a man of this age” (qtd. in Steiner 64-65). It was a shift in translation theory that marked the challenging of such practices. Continental post-structuralism and emerging associated disciplines such as literary criticism, psychoanalysis and social theory began to challenge theories of domestication (Venuti, *Translation as Cultural Politics* 210). New theories of identity and therefore cultural identity could be jeopardised by acts of reckless domestication, and these acts were beginning to be

seen as dismissive and prejudiced. Additionally new post-modernist fields such as post-colonialism, feminism and sociology strengthened the notions of identity and popularised new foreignising strategies. These ideas have dominated translation theory since the mid-twentieth century and continue to do so today often resulting in the criticising of alternative practices. Whilst today the ideas and conceptions of what is foreign have undoubtedly changed in the modern globalised world (itself formed by breaking cultural barriers), I argue that the benefits of domestication still remain valid and offer alternative advantages from the popularised foreignising strategies.

Advantages of Foreignising.

The purported advantages of foreignising methodologies derive from the concept of fidelity.

It is a noble intention to preserve a culture as much as possible. If such preservation is indeed possible, a foreignising strategy should provoke the target audience, to enlighten and to increase understanding and empathy, and hence break boundaries between cultures. Examples of the power of translation in changing domestic ideas exist, such as in Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, and other politically motivated works are examples of this potential. Even when more literary works are translated without such specific agenda, they may still have the power to introduce foreign cultures and ideas to each other. Most importantly, however, the foreignising translator is trying to preserve the integrity of the source culture, in preference to any domestic agenda or opinion. This foreignising translation seeks to mirror the original as closely as possible, without importing any additional views. The translator's voice should remain silent, invisible.

Benefits may also be influenced by financial pressures. A publishing house would be unlikely to seek a full-domestication of a foreign work. People enjoy reading about foreign places. Literature is for many a leisure activity of escapism; no one only wants to solely read works set in a familiar environment or with familiar views. Secondly, as full-domestication requires a new setting, this setting cannot be domestic to the entire new audience, given the international nature of publishing. For

example, in the English language, if a work was domesticated for a North American audience, the setting would remain a foreignisation for the rest of the English speaking world. Unless every single country or even community had its own domesticated version, the practice would lose credibility. Therefore, while some aspects of the work may be domesticated, the setting will in the vast majority of cases, retain its foreignness and foreign references.

Issues of Foreignising

A foreignising translation has the power to intimidate and disconcert an audience. Even a light, approachable original text could be transformed through intentional stylistic modification to something quite different. Homer's *Odyssey* is thought to have been originally performed as a sung verse for pure entertainment (Merrill and Walsh 15), but now exists in the English translation as a weighty epic novel laden with obscure and utterly foreign references that for full conception require additional study. So therein lies the question: what is the fidelity of a foreignising translation aimed at? It is clear that there is a strong movement towards the original text and away from the reader in the target language (as described by Schleiermacher) but in foreignising the language, there will be repercussions to the original feel of the work, an intrinsic part of the work's identity. Furthermore, if a work is peppered with foreign words and phrases, foreign linguistic inflections and a host of cultural references and connotations that they imply, they may serve only to confuse the reader, despite being intended as communicating basic concepts in the original language and culture. This both jeopardises fluency in the translation and can restrict the work to an elitist, more erudite readership that will perhaps be more familiar with the source language, culture and linguistic issues in general. Nida, describes the awkward 'translationese' of formally faithful translation practices, which paradoxically is unfaithful to the content and impact of the message in favour of style (13).

Venuti is quick to warn of the dangers of destructive domesticating strategies that seek to trivialise concepts, but perhaps it is equally dangerous to assume as a translator that you are sufficiently familiar with the author's culture and intentions

and therefore are qualified to present them in a way to challenge your audience's cultural perceptions. The author will unavoidably imprint his own very personal perceptions into his works (which may, or may not, be representative of his own culture's values); to translate is to interpret. But in claiming that you have created a 'foreignising translation' risks influencing the reader's conception of the authenticity of the work. Simply because a translator has made an effort to reflect the views and ideology of a foreign culture, by no means signifies that he was successful in doing so. Even within the same culture, such topics are of constant debate. Contemporary literary works are critically analysed by people from within the same culture to understand the intention of the author, more often than not with conflicting opinions. Thus, given that translations are also separated by linguistic and cultural barriers and often vast time periods, a supposed fidelity of a translation to the author or his cultural ideologies must be subjective. Conversely, if a translation is domesticated, and this is made evident to the reader, this interpretational aspect is clearly understood. This can be taken a step further in a full-domestication process; if the source culture is not referenced, there is no risk of degrading it. This may be seen by the supporters of foreignisation as marginalisation of the source culture, which undoubtedly to an extent it is, but it does not destroy or inflict any domestic values on the source culture, it remains intact in its original, intended and unadulterated form in the source text.

Issues of Domestication

As one would expect, the advantages of foreignisation correlate with the disadvantages of domestication. The extent to which domestication can affect culture is hugely variable. This can range from the most potentially detrimental type of domestication in which one deliberately aims to change the message of the original to undermine the source culture or promote one's own, to a full-domestication which removes the references of the original culture completely, with innumerable variations in between. However, in the modern practice of translation, no ethical translator is going to promote this former style of domestication, which is in reality and practice, more akin to propaganda. The latter however, provides both positives and negatives. As I have previously noted, the omission of culture could be viewed

as less detrimental than alteration. It is significantly different from other domestication strategies as it does not rely on an interpretation of another culture, it simply abandons it. Thus, all opinion is focused on the target culture; the source culture is 'left at peace'.

In between these two extremities are countless variations. In the majority of cases a translator cannot belong to both cultures he or she is concerned with; interpretation will inevitably play a role, and is with all subjectivity, variations will occur which may hinder the integrity of the culture presented in the original. Thus, a translation could unintentionally inflict domestic values onto a work shifting the work away from its original intention.

If only domesticating strategies were employed in a culture, the result would be isolating. Thus, if all translations were presented in the target culture, it would close itself off to new ideas and its role in the global community. In fact, I would attest that works that were created for this very purpose that express new ideas or are designed to challenge an audience be it domestic or foreign, are ill-suited to extreme domestication practices.

Advantages of Domestication

The popularity of domestication in the past proves that there are indeed beneficial aspects of such methodologies. While there are numerous advantages of domesticating practices, they all are defined by familiarity.

When an audience is presented with a domesticated story, they are more likely to relate to and therefore appreciate its themes. Conversely, if themes retain their foreignness, they risk appearing exactly so: foreign. While foreign themes indeed have the ability to provoke and inspire, they also risk being disconcerting, irrelevant or misunderstood. An agent of the culture is certainly more capable of communicating to others within his culture, rather than to others outside of it.

Familiarity of language is a principal argument supporting domesticating practices. Literature is meant to be enjoyed and while some may relish foreign idiosyncrasies in a text, the majority would not. Nida states that comprehension requires the elimination of expressions that could be misunderstood or are difficult or 'heavy' in favour for understandable equivalents (2). This view is even supported by many translators in favour of foreignising translation strategies, even in their works they still present the text, at least linguistically, in a form that still reads fluently for their general domestic audience, as not do to so would hinder the success of their work.

I believe that the key argument for a domestication process is readability. A foreignising translation often requires the reader to have a greater degree of intellectual background knowledge, limiting its access to a more erudite readership and likewise limiting its scope and access. Conversely, a domesticating translation or a translation that utilises domesticated features is certainly more accessible. This demand for domesticated language is exemplified in constant new translations of classic works such as *La Divina Commedia* by Dante Alighieri. This is an example of a work that has been translated many times, in many languages and many different time periods. If a modern reader was presented with an earlier English translation from the eighteenth century, it would clearly be influenced by the language of time, making it seem archaic not in the form of its medieval heritage, but rather as a result of the concepts of eighteenth century England. The story hasn't changed, but the language has. Accessibility when it comes to translation is revealed by the fact that such classic works are constantly revised, going through new domestication processes to appeal to modern audiences. Below are excerpts from the beginning of *Canto I* of Dante's *Inferno*: Dante's original verse, and two translations of the same piece one by Charles Rogers (1782) and the other by Robert Durling (1996):

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
ché la diritta via era smarrita.
Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
che nel pensier rinova la paura!
Tant' è amara che poco è più morte;*

*ma per trattar del ben ch'i' vi trovai,
dirò de l'altre cose ch'i' v'ho scorte* (Dante Alighieri 26).

*WHEN in my middle Stage of Life, I found
Myself entangl'd in a wood obscure,
Having the right path mis'd: but to relate
The horrid wildness of that rugged wood
Renews a dread, which that of death itself
Can scarce exceed: yet I will first recount
Those things I met with, ere I shall declare
The salutary good I after found* (Rogers 1).

*In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to
myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost.
Ah, how hard a thing it is to say what that wood
was, so savage and harsh and strong that the
thought of it renews my fear!
It is so bitter that death is little more so! But to
treat of the good that I found there, I will tell of
the other things I saw* (Durling 27).

These excerpts show that domestication refers to time as well as culture and the excerpts underline the importance of readability for specific audiences. The story itself remains unaltered, as does its original time setting and cultural references, however the language has not only been transposed but also domesticated to correspond with the respective contemporary state of English in these two time periods; the differences are extreme, but they still remain accepted translations of their times. This is a condition unique to translation, in Italian the definitive version remains the original, yet in translation the work is continuously available for revision. Readability is paramount in the commercial success of a translation. Providing a general audience with a fluid, natural, 'transparent' text is more likely to be achieved through the linguistic domestication of a work.

Even within a single language there are many of examples of how literature is adapted to better suit different audiences within a singular culture. This can be seen in simplified versions of various texts, again for example classics, that have been rewritten for young adults or children. Instead of remaining faithful to the original language, these editions are instead faithful to the story itself, exemplifying the need of familiarity of language and theme for meaningful comprehension. A specific example of adapting language for additional audiences is Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*, which the author himself reworked into an 'international edition' with specific changes to the text to facilitate the cultural the transfer from one cultural system to another, to an English-speaking readership unfamiliar with the specificities of Māori culture (Seemann 117). I would argue that this position is just as applicable to inter-lingual translation strategies; the translator has a responsibility to provide for his audience and must consider differing strategies to do so.

Intention and Audience

In translation, the question first asked by the translator should not be *how* do I translate, but *why* do I translate? Why do we translate literature? Who are we translating for? The gravity of these questions cannot be underestimated when it comes to selecting a methodological approach. Translation cannot be void of an agenda, it always serves a purpose: communicative, academic, financial. And this purpose itself will unavoidably define the final form of the translation.

Communication certainly is a primary function of all translations, but to communicate effectively and efficiently, a text should be presented in an appropriate form for the intended audience. Furthermore this implied audience will necessarily differ from that of the source text; the discourse is operating in a new pragmatic context (Hermans 199). Nida states that that success of a translation is determined by the extent of the comprehension of an average reader from the intended audience (1-2). If two different translators were to be given the same original work, one asked to translate it for an academic journal of literary criticism and the other for a publishing house for general release, one should expect differences in the translations, in fact if they were identical, surely one of the translations would be unsuited for the target

audience. It is imperative to know your reader, even if at the time of translation he is hypothetical. So, who do we translate for? I argue it is certainly for the reader, but the reader must be redefined for each translation. Thus, following this vein, there can be innumerable translations born from a single original source and each translation can be considered ‘correct’ (Nida 1-2).

The power of the financial aspect of translation reinforces this position. As with general fiction, the most financially successful translations, the ‘bestsellers’, are predominantly the most accessible for the target audience, in this case the general public. Therefore, a translator can be equally masterful in rendering a text for a mass general audience as in rendering a text for an academic audience (as long as the needs of his readers are fulfilled). This is not to take anything away from a highly academically-charged translation project, which is produced with the intention of being examined and scrutinized by others in such a profession, as this is also providing for an intended audience; instead it is in fact exemplary of the importance of knowing the translation’s purpose.

Venuti himself expresses the different ‘communities’ of receptors created by a translated text. He notes that a translation “...creates a domestic community of interest around the translated text, an audience to whom it is intelligible and who put it to various uses” (*Translation, Community, Utopia* 491). While I concur that translation does indeed have this power of uniting different domestic audiences and breaking boundaries (which itself may be an intended outcome), for such a project to be successful, this intention must be clear from the initial stages of the transposition. Though Venuti certainly does not believe that translations exist without agenda, he admits his favoured ‘foreignising translations’ serve such a purpose (*Translation as Cultural Politics* 216), he criticises the widening of appeal of translations in such contexts as bestsellers as it waters down foreign ideas to merge with broad domestic cultural discourses (*Translation, Community, Utopia* 496). However, these types of translations are indeed fulfilling their purpose. They would not become bestsellers if they were ineffective in meeting the requirements of the intended audience, they are simply a communicating in a different way, driven both by commercial and mass-communicative pressures, which are integral parts of these translations intentions.

Intention can also be more ambiguous. What do you want the reader to gain from the story? The communication of ideas certainly, but what purpose do these ideas have? And in what form should they receive them? These are also important questions to ask before choosing a methodology as foreignisations and domestications have diverse effects on different audiences. What was the original intention of the story? Literature itself also has an agenda, it can be presented to provoke, inspire, entertain, criticize or challenge an audience. Should then a translation serve the same agenda as the original? Nida believes that the response of a translation must be comparable to the presumed reaction to the message of the receptors in the original setting, a type of fundamental rather than linguistic fidelity (1-2). This leads to the question: what method achieves this result? Once again there is no simple answer, as both attempt to do this. Firstly in a foreignisation, the setting is not tampered with, so the receptors of the translation and the receptors of the original are 'experiencing' the same intended setting, using linguistic and stylistic manoeuvres to underpin the setting and keep the message as unadulterated as possible. However, this itself is problematic; the original receptors would have been receiving domesticated messages, and conversely the same messages have been foreignised in the translation, which certainly provokes a reaction that is not just altered but contrasting. The original readers would not be affronted with such foreignisms, intentionally awkward syntax, and other features akin to foreignisations that alter the mode of communication that the readers of a translation would encounter, and therefore, their experiences are different.

Alternatively, a domesticating translation tries to convey the same messages in a similar environment to that in which they were initially received. This does not necessarily require going to the extremities of the approach by employing a total transposition to a domestic setting, it could simply involve an adjustment of the language to suit the needs of the intended audience, therefore correlating with the equivalent domestic linguistic environment that would have been present in the original. The fidelity surrounding such linguistic styling is also twofold: in a foreignisation, there is an effort of fidelity towards the original language (and as language is a mechanism of culture, towards the culture itself), whereas in domestication there is also an essence of fidelity to the linguistic environment in which the work was originally received. It attempts to reconstruct the situation of the

original audience and as much as possible mimic the circumstances of its primary conception. Thus, both approaches are trying to achieve an essence of fidelity, but in ways that are not just different, but opposite.

Myth of Definitive Translation

There is no perfect translation. This is proven by the fact that translation strategies even warrant debate and discussion. Rather, different translations are received favourably by different audiences. While one can certainly have their own opinion on the validity of a translation, just as one can have their preferences of literature, such opinions are subjective. Thus, the myth of the ‘definitive translation’, despite the efforts of publishing houses, is ultimately unfounded. Furthermore a translation can never be the original. Even the most foreignising of translations still has a huge interpretive aspect, it is a reproduction, a copy and despite yearning to be as faithful as possible to the original, this faithfulness can never be absolute. Interpretation is inescapable, especially if dealing in the understanding or representations of reality “there could be no objectivity, not even a claim to it” (Benjamin 77). Cognition is always personalised. Whenever someone reads, images are evoked; and these images could never be the same between any two individuals. And the translator, who himself is in the first instance a reader, could not possibly grasp the exact same images as the author, especially when the reader and author are separated by time or culture.

The original endures in its natural intended form (saving historical cases where such editions have been lost) and is continually available for further adaptation for literary translation or transposition into other media. In this way translations can be powerful, extending the reach of a work. Benjamin notes the ‘afterlife’ of a translation: “a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life” (76). This process of renewal allows the existence of multiple translations of the same original work.

Even many translators themselves have troubles removing themselves from their own translation projects. The process of translation always has a clear beginning, but the finality of the process is not always easily defined. If you gave the same translator a work they had previously translated even a year later, alterations would not be uncommon, but expected. One could spend a lifetime searching for a perceived perfection in a single translation without it ever reaching it. However, in reality, translations must have an end, there are limits: publishing deadlines, submission dates that dictate that the process must culminate in a tangible product.

In effect, the translation process is a chain of countless decisions, and while these decisions are affected by a methodological approach, research and prior knowledge the possibility of variation is infinite. Returning to the single translator, if you gave him a novel to translate, and then asked him to do so again, exactly the same, without referring to his first translation, the chances of the two products being identical is minute. Somewhere a different word will be used, a sentence will have a different form, punctuation would fall in different places; in fact a host of differences would be expected. So if such variation is to be expected by a single translator, the variation between different translators would be even greater. Furthermore, when two translators are separated by time, background, experience or even culture, the opportunity of disparity is greater still.

Concepts of Culture

Foreignising strategies aim to resist the temptation or potential to trivialise cultures, or to adapt them to better suit the expectations of a domestic audience. However, when examining the vast array of literature, the way in which culture is explicitly expressed is so varying that a singular methodological model cannot be applied to every work. An example is the absence of culture within the original text. While it is true that literature is a bi-product of culture, a culture does not need to be expressed in it, and it certainly does not need to be the author's own. Much fiction is written in a foreign setting in the first place, and indeed sometimes these environments are entirely fictitious. Thus, if an author is portraying another culture in his original, carrying this over through translation we would be getting the original culture

reflected twice. Foreignising translators warn of the potential degradation of culture, of a translator forcing his own culture's values onto another, but what if the original is already degrading and inflicted with foreign ideas? Should translation be less moralistic than literature itself? The supposedly sacred voice of the author could distort culture as readily as that of the translator. Furthermore even if the author is writing about his contemporary culture, it is still an issue of perception. No account of culture can be labelled as definitive. A translator is already working with an interpretation.

Even when a culture is expressed, the opportunities of variation are innumerable; when a poem is compared to an epic novel, the amount of cultural references will certainly be different. In some situations, for example in much poetry, a notion of culture is merely implied. Such implications are particularly difficult for a translator; how could such implications be shifted from a point of instinctive comprehension (the source audience) to assumed conception (the target audience)?

Still, one would argue that every work is drenched in culture as language is already loaded with it; language *is* culture. Therefore, how could one culture be expressed by the language of another? If language is culture, a translation is merely one culture expressing another, simply by translating it. Just by doing this the translation is losing an integral part of its culture, perhaps even the most important part of the work's identity, which in turn makes additional domesticating changes seem less destructive.

This variation of cultural representation can be seen in the four Buzzati works presented here. In *Il re a Horm el-Hagar* cultures are explicitly portrayed: French, Arabic, Egyptian. These are not the author's own, thus are already subject to foreign interpretation. In the other three *racconti*: *L'uomo che volle guarire*, *Il mantello*, and *Il colombre*, while cultures are certainly portrayed, they are instead implicit. Buzzati would have had a culture in mind, be it fictitious or real, when he was imagining these stories, but by leaving out specific references he has left the audience a choice of open interpretation, that will undoubtedly vary between readers.

Reckless domesticating practices certainly can adversely affect foreign cultures. But what cultures are more at risk of misinterpretation or misrepresentation? In the works I have translated in this study, the cultures presented vary. The story *Il re a Horm el-Hagar* dealt with are based on actual cultures: French, Egyptian Arabic, conversely in *L'uomo che volle guarire* and *Il colombre* the cultures are not explicitly referenced. Nevertheless, the common trait of these cultures is that they are not the author's own. Thus, we are already dealing with representations with possible foreign inflictions. The other combined characteristic, however, is the culture that produced the works, regardless of the representations; it is Italian. Italian is neither a minority culture nor language; the risk of marginalisation through the domestication of selected individual works which are not explicit portrayals of culture is minor. Conversely if I was dealing with a minority culture, or a text deliberately filled with specific cultural references with cultural portrayal being a core part of the work's identity, domestication would have been a more controversial, perhaps unethical approach.

Shifting Strategies – Conclusions

So what should a translator do: foreignise or domesticate? Both sides indeed present convincing arguments, but there are still some points to consider. Not all translations immediately lend themselves to extreme domestication strategies such as a full-domestication. If the transition is awkward, requires an extensive reworking or if cultural references cannot be easily matched with logical equivalents, to try and domesticate for the sake of doing so will inevitably end up hindering the text. Additionally, just because a work lends itself to domestication, this is not the only option. Domestication instead can be used as one approach which may offer an audience a unique insight to the story, which may open up the themes, making them more accessible in a way that perhaps is closer to how the original readers experienced them. In the works presented here, I tried to apply a full domestication to all of them, three of them resisted the transition of setting (as discussed in their commentaries), and thus in those cases I did not proceed. However all the stories still contain varying elements of domesticating strategies, highlighting the possibility

that, despite the claims of some theorists, there can be a merging of theoretical practices while still producing a reliable result.

Basically one must return to the idea of intention. What was the story intended to do? This can be difficult to determine, especially when the author is no longer accessible. And indeed there are instances where works have taken on a life of their own, far surpassing the author's intended message or meaning. Thus, it is in the hands of the translator to interpret intent, and make his own informed decisions when faced with these apparently conflicting methodologies.

For example, translating Buzzati required research to gauge the author's intention of the stories. I believe his *racconti* were never intended to be high literature; in interviews he stresses the importance of enjoyment while reading. His terse, simple style is certainly a key feature of the accessibility and broad popularity of his literary works. He successfully used this style to deal with weighty thematic motifs and universal life issues. And it is, in part, this very universality that opens much of the works up to possible methods of domestication. His creative output of reworking his stories and assisting their development into foreign translation or into other mediums show that he relished the idea of development of his works. Thus, I consider his works excellent in terms of interpretation, and believe that elements of domestication are beneficial to the stories' conception to a new intended audience.

I am not advocating domesticating strategies as invariably a more correct or favoured approach in the field, but rather I am promoting it as one valid approach within the modern translation discipline. There can be no perfection in translation; a translated work can appear in many guises across an infinite spectrum of languages, times and cultures. How a translator chooses to interpret an original text will always be subject to his individual situation. Each work must be examined on a case by case basis to evaluate its propensity to either process. However, even in saying this, I believe a work can be (and many are) represented in translation in a variety of forms, each with their own merits and weaknesses. The idea of a 'good' translation is subjective, and different audiences will undoubtedly favour different approaches. The concept of fidelity does not solely have to be linguistic or cultural, but also contextual and conceptual. Paradoxically, being faithful to one of these characteristics often requires

sacrificing the other, but nevertheless both are attempts to retain the identity of the source text.

Despite the marginalisation of domestication in contemporary translation studies, I believe it is a methodology that still offers unique advantages in the translation of many texts. Additionally, I would argue that the two seemingly polarised approaches of domesticating and foreignising can successfully be represented within a single work, as exemplified by the translations of Buzzati that I have presented in this project. Domestication is a highly personalised, interpretive approach that requires not only research of the source culture and language, but also an examination of the domestic culture itself. However, rather than this necessarily resulting in conflict between two cultures, it can also, if performed responsibly, be unifying; a true meeting of cultures through the appreciation of the text.

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