

# Translating Food in Children's Literature

by *Elena Paruolo*

## Introduction

According to Roman Jakobson's definition, *interlinguistic* translation is only one of three kinds of translation (the other two are *intersemiotic* and *endolingustic* translation)<sup>1</sup>. As we know, the process of interlinguistic translation (that is to say, translation itself which consists of the interpretation of linguistic signs by means of another language) goes beyond a simple conversion from one language to another; it requires an operation of intercultural transfer that weaves together diverse cultures. A point of contention in translation theory can be put this way: must a translation convey the spirit, intentions and impressions of the original language to the new reader in the destination language or must the new text seem to be part of the new reader's own language and culture?

Walter Benjamin, in his essay *The Translator's Task* (published in 1923 as a preface to his translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*)<sup>2</sup>, in changing Baudelaire's French into German, argued that the translator does not have to make Baudelaire's work "sound" as if it were written in German. On the contrary, the translator must keep that feeling of "otherness" that comes with reading a book by a writer from another country. There are those, for example Dacia Maraini<sup>3</sup>, who agree with Benjamin, while at the same time observing that, when translating, one cannot help but invent and reinvent, as in the case of metaphors, «the most difficult things to translate», because one has to find an equivalent and can never translate literally. To which one must add that there are limits which must be maintained, as one can't go beyond the text and begin to ruin it, as some translators do, while hoping to improve it with ornaments that are not in the original text<sup>4</sup>.

Another matter raised by those who study translation theory is the need to make a distinction between translations for adults and those for children<sup>5</sup>. While translation, what Chesterman defines as "prototypical translation", has to conform to a set of norms (regarding faithfulness to

the original, the literary-aesthetic quality of the text, the commercial and editorial aspects)<sup>6</sup>, the translation of texts for children is also influenced by educational, pedagogical and editorial forces that can push the translator to simplify the vocabulary and syntax of the original text, and therefore its style; adding judgements and comments not present in the original, making cuts, etc.

In my paper I will make a few observations on the translation of a culturally specific given – that of food – in children’s literature. I will begin with a few words on theoretical approaches to the translation of children’s literature that – from the pages of *Translation Studies* – have contributed to the birth of *Child-Oriented Translation Studies*. Then, I will go on to examine some passages from the following works:

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*La belle au bois dormant* (1697)  
(Charles Perrault)

*The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*  
Translated by  
Andrew Lang (1889),  
E. Johnson *et al.* (1962),  
Angela Carter (1991).

*La bella addormentata nel bosco*  
Translated by  
Carlo Collodi (1875),  
Elena Giolitti (1957),  
Ida Porfido (2002).

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*Le avventure di Pinocchio* (1881-83)  
(Carlo Collodi)

*Pinocchio. The Tale of a Puppet*  
Translated by Mary Alice Murray (1891),

*The Adventures of Pinocchio*  
Translated by Ann Lawson Lucas (1996),

*Pinocchio*  
Translated by Emma Rose (2003).

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*The Wind in the Willows* (1908)  
(Kenneth Grahame)

*Il vento nei salici*  
Translated by  
Beppe Fenoglio (1982),  
Patrizia de Rachewiltz (1997).  
Adapted by Inga Moore –  
Translated by Mauro Rossi (2001).

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*Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1984)  
*Goldilocks and the Three Bears* (1982)  
(Roald Dahl)

*Biancaneve e i sette nani*  
*Treccedoro e i tre orsi*  
Translated by Roberto Piumini (2000).

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*Pinocchio* and *The Wind in the Willows* are two novels of children's literature (although often not considered purely children's books at all) which, in moving beyond the sphere of this specialized branch of literature, have become classics of the literary canon. Through a whole series of culturally specific references in their pages, they are deeply rooted in the cultures and societies of the times in which they were written. Like all classics, they have been subject to numerous translations and adaptations, both for children and for adults.

Like *Pinocchio* and *The Wind in the Willows*, Charles Perrault's *Contes*, like all fairy tales, are open to multiple levels of reading and, in fact, they pose the question of the (potential) "dual addressee"<sup>7</sup>. They are published both in editions for children and in editions for adults.

The editions of the works that I have consulted for this paper are directed specifically at children, aged six to eight (in the case of Charles Perrault, translated by Angela Carter, and of Roald Dahl). They were originally created for an adult audience in the case of Charles Perrault, translated into English by Lang and Johnson, and into Italian by Collodi, Giolitti and Porfido; and in the case of Kenneth Grahame, translated by Fenoglio and Rachewiltz. The translation-adaptation from Grahame (which I also analyse) is, however, addressed to children of eight years and over.

As far as *Pinocchio* is concerned, the Italian version (corresponding to the anastatic copy of the original published in 1883) and the versions in English of Murray and Rose are aimed at children. On the contrary, Ann Lawson Lucas' version is aimed both at children and at an adult audience.

My intention is twofold. On the one hand, I intend to delineate how the translation of food and drink brings into play two differing theoretical approaches (Klingberg – Oittinen) to translating for children and that the images of childhood they evoke will also differ. On the other, I intend to show how, moving from one translation to another in the texts under examination (translations made in different eras and addressed to different audiences) Italian and English translators have or have not shown the same attitude.

Göte Klingberg asserts that it would be better if translators described the foreign food or had recourse to a literal translation when possible. In reality, on the whole (as I have observed through the analysis of the very small sample included here), the trend to adapt is interwoven with the trend to preserve in the target text the culturally specific elements of food and drink which are present in the source text. We also find a tendency to resort to a mixed translation strategy (as, for example, in Ann Lawson

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Lucas) that is in part conservative and in part substitutive, even though this can at times give rise to incongruities within the text.

## I

**Two theoretical approaches**

There are some children who grow up in families and contexts in which intercultural and interracial relationships are the norm. There are others who, while not being directly affected by cultural diversity, can become curious about different cultures, faraway countries and exotic peoples. Moreover, almost everything is foreign or new for a young child, and it seems probable that children do not make cultural distinctions but just accept what attracts them. It is the adults – in our case, the writers and the translators of children's books – who decide how much children should be exposed to diversity, and so make choices on their behalf. They can insert the names of foreign food in the text they are writing and, in the case of literary translation, keep or eliminate the cultural information in the original text. They tend to eliminate the information if they think that, reading a translated story, the children will not manage to identify with characters with strange or foreign names, or they will not appreciate the taste of an unknown dish, or could be confused by words they do not understand. If translation inevitably entails a certain degree of cultural context adaptation there is no point in translating a book if it loses all trace of the country where it comes from. Taking this into account, one could say that there are two basic theoretical approaches to translating for children.

The choice (theorized by Göte Klingberg in *Children's Fiction in the Hands of the Translators*)<sup>8</sup> of preserving in the translated text culturally specific givens – those of food and drink, for example – goes back to the idea of a child's capacity to absorb stimuli, coming from another culture, thanks to which they can later widen their awareness of the world. As Klingberg points out: «food is something of interest to children and the popularity of some books may have something to do with the interest the books take in food and their detailed description of it. What children in other countries eat and drink may thus awaken the readers' interest in the foreign culture. In translation deletion and change should therefore be avoided. The translator should tell what the characters really eat and drink. It is of no importance if the translator needs more words than the source text in such cases»<sup>9</sup>.

On the contrary, the choice (developed by Riitta Oittinen in *Translating for Children*)<sup>10</sup> of adapting to the target culture the culturally specific givens of the source culture – precisely food (but the discourse also holds for people's proper names, furnishings, flora, fauna, weights, measures, religious references etc.) – suggests rather that children (taking into account their limited understanding of the world) should not be exposed to aspects of a foreign culture that they are not capable of understanding.

In the cases in which the translated text assimilates the translation to the linguistic and cultural norms of the target readership we speak of *domestication*; in the cases in which the translation retains something foreign, different, exotic, contained in the source text – *i.e.* when cultural differences are respected – we speak of *foreignization*.

It was Antoine Berman and Lawrence Venuti<sup>11</sup> who introduced the concepts of *domestication* and *foreignization*. Venuti, in particular, argues for a *foreignizing* translation that becomes a carrier of difference. Post-colonial studies, which have contributed a cultural twist to this theoretical debate, are associated with Venuti's position. These studies have shifted attention from the purely linguistic aspects of translation to literary and cultural aspects and focused attention not only on European countries but also on non-European countries. Believing that it is important to show the reader a *cultural other*, they have acknowledged the importance of the *foreignizing* strategy in preventing the assimilation of the other to a Western cultural model.

## 2

### A selection of examples of translated works

Moving now to our examples, I will begin with Perrault.

Charles Perrault: *La belle au bois dormant* (1697)

“Je veux manger demain à mon dîner la *petite Aurore*. – Ah! Madame, dit le Maître d'Hôtel. – Je le veux, dit la Reine (et elle le dit d'un ton d'Ogresse qui a envie de manger de la chair fraîche), et je la veux manger à la *Sauce-Robert*.”<sup>12</sup>

*The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*

a.

“I have a mind to eat *little Morning* for my dinner to-morrow.”

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“Ah! Madam,” cried the clerk of the kitchen.  
 “I will [...] eat her with a *sauce Robert*.”<sup>13</sup>

b.

“For my dinner tomorrow”, she told him, “I will eat *little Dawn*”.  
 “Oh, Madam!” exclaimed the steward.  
 “That is my will”, said the queen; and she spoke in the tones of an ogre who longs for raw meat.  
 “You will serve her with *piquant sauce*”, she added<sup>14</sup>.

c.

“I want to eat *little Dawn* for my dinner tomorrow.”  
 “Oh, my lady!” exclaimed the butler.  
 “She’s just the very thing I fancy”, said the queen mother in the voice of an ogress famished for fresh meat. “And I want you to serve her up with *sauce Robert*”<sup>15</sup>.

*La bella addormentata nel bosco*

a.

– Domani a pranzo voglio mangiare la *piccola Aurora*.  
 – Ah, signora! – esclamò il cuoco.  
 – Voglio così – rispose la Regina; e lo disse col tono di voce di un’orchessa, che ha proprio voglia di mangiare della carne viva.  
 – E la voglio mangiare in *salsa piccante*<sup>16</sup>.

b.

– Domani a pranzo, mi voglio mangiare la *piccola Aurora*.  
 – Ah, Maestà! – disse il cuoco.  
 – Voglio così, – disse la Regina (e lo disse con un tono da orchessa che voglia mangiare carne tenera), – e la voglio mangiare in *salsa Robert*<sup>17</sup>.

c.

“Domani, per cena, voglio mangiare la *piccola Aurora*”. “Ah, signora!”, disse il maggiordomo. “Lo voglio”, disse la regina (e lo disse con il tono dell’orchessa che ha una gran voglia di mangiare carne fresca), “e voglio mangiarla in *salsa Robert*”<sup>18</sup>.

To translate Perrault does not only mean moving from one language to another but also moving from one period (the 17th century) to another (the 20th and 21st century), from one public (the aristocratic élite of the Parisian *salons*) to another (mainly young readers). There is a prolifer-

ation of English translations of Perrault's *Contes*, just as there are in other languages. Some translations add, others subtract, others misunderstand, others manipulate the French text, as is the case, for example, with the translation by Angela Carter (*Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Tales*)<sup>19</sup>. Many translations, directed only at a child audience, contain numerous editorial interventions.

In *La belle au bois dormant*, "Sauce-Robert" is referred to a sauce of finely chopped onions, to which is added salt, pepper, vinegar (or white wine) with a little flour, butter, and, finally, a pinch of mustard. It accompanies various kinds of meat. Already well-known by the time of Rabelais, in the 16th century, the chef Robert, its inventor, called the sauce «tant salubre et nécessaire»<sup>20</sup>.

In the translations under examination here, Collodi and Johnson fall back on a modification, changing *Sauce-Robert* into *salsa piccante* (*piquant sauce*). Lang and Carter, on the other hand, keep the cultural reference. In English, the word "sauce" is written and pronounced as in French (*sauce*), consequently the cultural reference can be dropped if *Robert* (the name of its inventor), written identically in the two languages, is pronounced in the English and not in the French manner. In Italian, "sauce" is translated by the equivalent "salsa" and the name *Robert* stands, differing from the Italian Roberto.

I would like to emphasise that this first example shows how even proper names can be transformed or retained in translation. The *petite Aurore*, of the French fairy tale, becomes *little Morning* and *little Dawn* (retaining in this way its semantic content) in the translation into English, in which there is no equivalent proper name to *Aurora*, in contrast to the Italian which retains the proper name.

I will now turn my attention to *Le aventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino* (1881-83)<sup>21</sup>, looking at the three English translations made by Murray, Lucas and Rose: *Pinocchio. The Tale of a Puppet* (1891)<sup>22</sup>, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1996)<sup>23</sup>, and *Pinocchio* (2003)<sup>24</sup>. I would like to emphasise that food is an important feature in the novel. The very name of the puppet, Pinocchio, is a Tuscan word for "pine nut" (the more common Italian word is *pinolo*). Pine nut is an ingredient used in *castagnaccio*, or chestnut-flour cake, in small biscuits, or added with raisins to a hare stew.

I will also focus on *The Wind in the Willows* (1908)<sup>25</sup> in two translations (*Il vento nei salici*, first edition 1982, 1997) and in an Italian translation/adaptation (2001).

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Carlo Collodi: *Le avventure di Pinocchio* (1881-83)

A quest'ora, invece di fieno, potrei mangiare un cantuccio di pan fresco e una bella fetta di *salame!*... il sapore della paglia tritata non somigliava punto né al *risotto alla milanese* né ai *maccheroni alla napoletana*<sup>26</sup>.

a.

Instead of hay I might now be eating a hunch of new bread and a fine slice of *sausage!*... the taste of chopped straw did not in the least resemble a savoury dish of *macaroni* or *rice*<sup>27</sup>.

b.

Instead of eating hay, I might be having a chunk of fresh bread and a nice slice of *salami!*... chopped straw [...] tasted nothing like either *shepherd's pie* or *steak and kidney pudding*<sup>28</sup>.

c.

"I'd be eating a nice *ham sandwich* instead." He took a mouthful of straw. It wasn't exactly *mushroom risotto* or *spaghetti with tomato sauce*<sup>29</sup>.

Murray was the author of the first full translation of Collodi's novel (1891). As Goldthwaite emphasises, hers remains «the best available in a children's edition [...] as fresh today as it was a century ago»<sup>30</sup>, even if at certain points it is too literal and it is not free from errors. Rose<sup>31</sup> is the author of the most recent translation of *Pinocchio* published in Great Britain<sup>32</sup>. Overall, it reflects an English that is close to that of children in the twenty first century.

Lawson Lucas translated *Pinocchio* in 1996. As she says in the preface, hers is not a translation specifically or exclusively for children but it is also for adults and an academic readership. And perhaps this is the reason for its mixture of different translating procedures. At one extreme, it leans towards a very accurate translation, even changing the name of an established character, that of the "Fata dai Capelli Turchini", from the *Blue-Haired Fairy* to the *Indigo-Haired Fairy*, because, in Lucas opinion, the correct translation of the Italian "turchina" is *indigo* rather than *blue*. As Maria Nikolajeva observes: «This may sound reasonable, yet there are some possible counter-arguments. Indigo feels more exotic in English than the neutral blue, and it is unlikely that the author's intention was to be exotic. Further [...] it is not desirable to change an established character's name, even if the new translation shows greater fidelity to the original»<sup>33</sup>.

To take into account those elements which form part of the culture of the source language, Lucas appends explanatory notes to her translation as, for example in the case of the proverbs on lies which, to users of the target language and culture, might well have seemed nonsensical; this is because in English the two proverbs on lies simply don't exist<sup>34</sup>. She also makes additions to the text, always with the aim of helping the reader to understand.

At the other extreme, having in mind a child audience, Lucas tends towards adaptation, demonstrating a preference for the critical approach of Oittinen over that of Klingberg. She tends towards accessibility rather than historical equivalence in the case of names (she changes Geppetto to Old Joe, for example) but also in the case of food. She replaces Italian dishes with English, changing *risotto alla milanese* into *shepherd's pie* and *maccheroni alla napoletana* (pasta with tomato sauce) into *steak and kidney pudding*. But, as Gillian Lathey observes: «Collodi's recipes [...] constitute precisely the kind of "mystery" the scholar, as opposed to the general reader, would relish. There is a further paradox, in that the contemporary British readers – adults or children – [...] are much more likely to eat Italian food on a regular basis (pizza, pasta and macaroni for example) than shepherd's pie»<sup>35</sup>. Appending explanatory notes, Lucas' translation is not really suited to children. On the other hand, making modifications (as in the case of names of typical dishes, but also of proper names, titles of books etc.), it is not suited to an adult audience, composed in addition of academics, who very likely having knowledge and experience of other cultures, are not looking for a translator as cultural mediator.

Murray falls back on the simpler *macaroni* and *rice*, and Rose on *mushroom risotto* and *spaghetti with tomato sauce*. Although Rose uses two Italian words (*risotto* and *spaghetti*) that these days have become part of everyday English, she does not refer to the dishes named by Collodi, because in *risotto alla milanese* there are no mushrooms, as specified in *mushroom risotto*, rather there is saffron; and *spaghetti* is a different kind of pasta from *maccheroni*. As far as *salame* is concerned, Lucas translates *salami* (adopting the English spelling), Murray resorts to *sausage* (which means a sausage of fresh meat rather than cured meat as in *salame*). Rose simplifies with a *ham sandwich*, perhaps because it is more familiar to the child readership that she has in mind<sup>36</sup>.

Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (1908)

I.  
"What's inside it?" asked the Mole, wriggling with curiosity.

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“There’s cold chicken inside it”, replied the Rat briefly;  
 “coldtonguecoldbamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchbrollscressandwidgespot-  
 tedmeatgingerbeerlemonadesodawater”<sup>37</sup>.

*Il vento nei salici*

a.

– Che c’è dentro? – s’informò la Talpa, fremente di curiosità.  
 – C’è pollo freddo, – replicò il Topo brevemente; – lingua fredda...<sup>38</sup>

b.

“Cosa c’è qui dentro?” chiese Talpa, che moriva dalla curiosità.  
 “C’è pollo freddo”, rispose Topo baldanzoso  
 “linguafreddaprosciuttocrudoroastbeeffreddocetriolininsalatapagnottefres-  
 shearanciatacquamminerale...”<sup>39</sup>.

2.

They went and foraged accordingly... The result was not so very depressing  
 after all... a tin of sardines – a box of captain’s biscuits, nearly full – and a Ger-  
 man sausage encased in silver paper.

“There’s a banquet for you!” observed the Rat...

“No bread!” groaned the Mole dolorously; “no butter, no...”

“No *pâté de foie gras*, no *champagne*!” continued the Rat<sup>40</sup>.

a.

Andarono a foraggiare di conserva... Il risultato non fu, dopo tutto, sconfortan-  
 te... una scatola di sardine, una cassetta di biscotti e una salsiccia tedesca avvol-  
 ta in carta stagnola.

– È una cenona! – commentò il Topo...

– E il pane? – gemette la Talpa dolorosamente; – e il burro, e... –

– E il *pâté de foie gras*, e lo *sciampagna*? – incalzò il Topo<sup>41</sup>.

b.

Si misero alla ricerca. Il risultato non fu poi così male... una scatola di sardi-  
 ne... una scatola di gallette, quasi piena ... e un salame pepato in carta stagno-  
 la.

“Eccoti un banchetto!” osservò Topo...

“Niente pane!” si lamentò Talpa miseramente. “Niente burro, niente...”

“Niente *pâté de fois gras*, niente *spumante*!” continuò Topo<sup>42</sup>.

3.

But he bustled about and so did the Rat, and soon they found some *guava jelly*  
 in a glass dish, and a cold chicken, a tongue that had hardly been touched, some

*trifle*, and quite a lot of lobster salad; and in the pantry they came upon a basketful of *French rolls* and any quantity of cheese, butter and celery<sup>43</sup>.

a.

Ma si diede egualmente da fare, e così il Topo, e in breve recuperarono un po' di *gelatina* in un tondo di cristallo e pollo freddo, una lingua poco meno che intatta, *altri intingoli*, e insalata di aragoste in abbondanza; e in dispensa procacciarono un cestino di *tramezzini alla francese* e cacio e burro e sedani<sup>44</sup>.

b.

Ma si diede da fare insieme a Topo e ben presto trovarono della gelatina di mirtilli su un piatto di vetro, del pollo freddo, della lingua appena toccata, del *dolce di marzapane ricoperto di marmellata, con crema e panna* e un piattone di insalata di aragoste; nella dispensa c'era una cesta di *panini* e tutta una varietà di formaggi, burro e sedano<sup>45</sup>.

One of the two translations of *The Wind in the Willows* which I use here is the work of the Italian writer from Alba, Beppe Fenoglio (1922-1963) who has translated other prestigious authors, amongst whom are Eliot, Hopkins, Pound, Yeats, Bunyan, Shaw, and Marlowe. The manuscript text of his translation of Grahame is not dated. It consists of five school exercise books in which may be found many variations<sup>46</sup>. It was first published in 1982.

In the example (1), in the long chain of food and drink words found in the English text, Fenoglio chooses to translate only *coldtongue* (as *lingua fredda*). Patrizia de Rachewiltz is less drastic. She cuts *pickled* (*sottaceti*) leaving only *cetriolini* (*gherkins*) and omitting *cressandwidgespottedmeatgingerbeer*. She also makes some errors when she translates *cold ham* as *prosciutto crudo*, *lemonade* as *aranciata*, and *soda water* as *acqua minerale*. Moreover she chooses *roast beef freddo* rather than *cold beef*, perhaps because the Italian public has adopted *roast beef* into its own vocabulary. It is inexplicable, though, why she should mix foreign with domestic elements, resorting to the use of two English words in the midst of a list translated wholly into Italian: “*linguafreddaprosciutto crudoroastbeeffreddocetriolininsalatapagnottrefreshearanciataacquaminerale...*”.

In the second example (2), *pâté de fois gras* remains unchanged in both translations. Not so for *champagne*, which Fenoglio changes to *sciampagna* (an obsolete term) and de Rachewiltz substitutes with *spumante* which is, however, not *champagne*, but something else.

In the third example (3), *guava jelly* (which is an Edwardian delicacy, almost unknown today, that reminds us that Grahame was writing at the beginning of the 20th century) *trifle* and *French rolls* are translated by Fenoglio respectively as *gelatina*, *altri intingoli* and *tramezzini alla francese*. It's notable that in the quote from example (1), Fenoglio does not translate *French rolls*.

De Rachewiltz resorts instead to *gelatina di mirtilli*; and for *trifle* (a sweet which does not exist in Italian cuisine) she explains what is being dealt with, translating *dolce di marzapane ricoperto di marmellata, con crema e panna*. Even if she is mistaken, for the base is sponge-cake spread with jam, not marzipan, she rightly goes on to say *crema* for *custard* and *panna* (though not *panna montata*) for *whipped cream*. She translates *French rolls* as *panini*; whilst, in the first example (1), they were translated as *pagnotte fresche* when she might have kept the same wording.

The adaptation of *The Wind in the Willows*, for children aged eight and over, keeps only the first piece examined (the other two are cut):

- Cosa c'è lì dentro? – chiese Talpa, torcendosi dalla curiosità.
- Pollo freddo – rispose conciso Topo.
- linguafreddaprosciuttomanzofreddocetriolininsalatapaninimortadellabibitalozenzerolimonatagazzosa...<sup>47</sup>

Worth noting is that also this translation takes out *cressandwidges* even though the translator might perhaps have been tempted to keep the expression and this because, in *cressandwidges* (*cress sandwiches*) – usually egg and cress sandwiches – the word *cress* (little sprouted cress seeds, cut and put into egg sandwiches or into a mixed salad) is familiar to English children (who sometimes grow cress at school to learn about seeds) but not to Italian children who would have had to learn an aspect of another culture. *Pottedmeat* (*potted meat*) – a meat paste which is spread on sandwiches, a simpler kind of pâté made from meat not liver and without the cream – is kept and translated as *mortadella*, a pork meat sausage loved these days mainly by adults. *Gingerbeer* – a soft drink (non-alcoholic), fizzy with a ginger flavour – is also retained and translated with *bibita allo zenzero*, to evoke the classic drink of English fiction of the 1920s-1950s. For example, the children in Enid Blyton books always take it on picnics. Not by accident, a clichéd phrase, in her work, is “lashings of ginger beer” (lots of ginger beer).

On the whole, the translator of this children's adaptation has followed the original text more closely than the other two, even though their translations were directed at a more adult audience.

Lastly, I will turn to two poems by Roald Dahl, included in *Revolting Rhymes* (1982) translated in Italian as *Versi perversi* (1993):

Roald Dahl, *Revolting Rhymes* (1982)

1.  
 "Oh Mirror, what's for lunch today?"  
 The thing would answer in a trice,  
 "Today it's *scrambled eggs* and *rice*."<sup>48</sup>

a.  
 "Dimmi un po',  
 oggi, a pranzo, che cosa mangerò?"  
 Lui rispondeva in quattro e quattro otto:  
 "Delle *uova stracciate* e del *risotto*."<sup>49</sup>

2.  
 Now just imagine how *you'd* feel  
 If you had cooked a lovely meal,  
 Delicious *porridge*, steaming hot,  
 Fresh coffee in the coffee-pot,  
 With maybe toast and marmalade.<sup>50</sup>

a.  
 Prova un momento a immaginare:  
 ti sei alzata presto a cucinare  
 e, dopo tanto generoso sforzo,  
 è pronta una buona *pappa d'orzo*,  
 il buon caffè aromatico, fumante,  
 la marmellata e il pane croccante.<sup>51</sup>

In his rewriting in verse of *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, Dahl takes specific names of food such as *scrambled eggs*, *rice* and *porridge*. In his translation, Piumini takes *risotto* in place of *rice*, *uova stracciate* for *scrambled eggs*, and *pappa d'orzo* for *porridge*. In this way he overplays the meaning of *rice* (which is not equivalent to *risotto*) and does not translate a culturally specific dish, that is to say *porridge* but, being obliged to find a rhyme in Italian, he probably needed to make a change.

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### To conclude

The translator should make a clear choice between the academic and the child reader – as no translation can suit both – hence it would be better if he/she adopted one strategy and not a mixed strategy. The richness of a language and a culture is present in the details and it is perhaps the translator's duty to preserve and transfer the individuality of the language and culture into his/her own. The question, in each individual case, is whether the cultural detail is indeed significant and whether it is significant for children.

Anthea Bell, an English translator of German and French children's books, though she gives due regard to the preservation of the original atmosphere of the original text, sometimes anglicizes the names of the characters, explaining that it is necessary because of «the in-built English distrust of, and resistance to, anything foreign». «It seems to afflict us, from the publishing point of view», she writes, «from picture-book age onward, once the words begin to assume equal importance with the illustrations»<sup>52</sup>.

Such English rather conservative behaviour towards “anything foreign” is further expressed in children's literature books in which the foreign characters, as well as the exotic names for dishes, are always looked at suspiciously. As Commander Walker says to his children in Arthur Ransome's *We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea* (1937), «You never know what you get when you try something with a fancy names»<sup>53</sup>. It is not by accident that the exotic food, *Turkish delight* (which assumes clearly sexual connotations in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: C. S. Lewis, Chronicles of Narnia*, 1950-56), offered by the Queen to Edmund, becomes a threat to the child who, eating it and wanting more and more, ends up losing his innocence and betraying his brothers, something that surely wouldn't have happened if he'd stuck to some of his own country's traditional food! As underlined by Ann Alston, in children's literature «The consumption of wholesome English food contributes to the children's hero status»<sup>54</sup>, the *other* is something to steer clear of.

However, to return to our examples of translated texts. In the Nineties, when translating *Pinocchio* (1996), Ann Lawson Lucas<sup>55</sup> felt the need to make some changes with regard to foreign food. In the 2000s, Emma Rose (*Pinocchio*, 2003)<sup>56</sup> tends, on the other hand, to keep the exotic names.

The examples taken from *Pinocchio* and Perrault's fairy-tales show that the trend to adapt is interwoven with the trend to preserve in the tar-

get text the culturally specific elements of food and drink present in the source text and that, on the whole, there seems to be less domestication in the 2000s.

Turning to Italy, when Fenoglio (1982)<sup>57</sup> and de Rachewiltz (1997)<sup>58</sup> translate *The Wind in the Willows*, they go as far as making cuts, even though not writing for the child reader. A look also at the translations of Perrault's fairy-tales and Dahl's poetry (where the changes are mainly to do with rhyme) shows that with the Italians, as well as the English, the trend to adapt is interwoven with the trend to preserve, but there can also be quite significant cuts, as in the case of Fenoglio.

### Appendix

Included here are the transcripts of my interviews with two Italian translators of children's and young adult literature to illustrate how they dealt with some problems of translating food<sup>59</sup>.

#### Beatrice Masini

(She has translated several books for children and the majority of the *Harry Potter* books. She writes books for children and adolescents, and picture books for younger children. She has won several prizes included the Andersen Award.)

It certainly hasn't happened very often in my work that I've encountered foods which have been tricky to translate, but it's happened sometimes. I can think of the seemingly simple task of translating "pudding" as "budino". The Italian concept of "budino" as a wobbly and single-flavoured pudding is miles away from the rich and sumptuous ingredients found in a British "pudding". So, therefore, why translate it? Also, should "blancmange" be translated as "biancomangiare"? Here, however, history plays a part – it has been in Italy since the 12th century. It was one of the dishes prepared by Matilde of Canossa to make peace between the Pope and the King, and so it is perfectly possible that her local servants used the Italian name for the dish that was also *Italian*. Although, I must admit to liking the word "blancmange" which melts in the mouth and has a wonderful musicality.

In *Harry Potter*, the tastiest food, and certainly the most appreciated by the readers, is that offered on the Hogwarts Express food trolley where just the liquorice wands beat the offerings of *Trenitalia* hands

down, and also the wonderful treats of Honeydukes, the sweet shop in Hogsmeade, haunt of the students on their rare outings from school. However, as I only began translating the *Harry Potter* books from the third book onwards, I had little to do with the naming of the sweets that Harry marvels about in the first book on his way to Hogwarts. There are of course sumptuous banquets in the school, but the food on offer is basically a richer array of that already offered at parties, and so not much invention was needed. I've always been fascinated by the ingredients and taste of Butterbeer: at an official Harry Potter party I went to years ago they served some and obviously I tried it, only to be rather disappointed and disgusted (it was seven p.m.) by the fact that it was milky, its lukewarm insipid taste a long way from the majestic alcoholic original.

My most recent gastronomic trips as a translator have taken me to the simple kitchens of North Carolina in the Thirties and Forties of the last century; thanks to Tony Earley and his unforgettable books, *Jim the Boy* (published in 2009 by Fanucci as *Il giovane Jim*) and its sequel *The Blue Star*, published by Fanucci in 2010<sup>60</sup>. Here, I found myself completely at home: the vague but strong familiarity I felt when reading *Jim the Boy* for the first time was due to the fact that it was set in the same sorts of places as *The Yearling* by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, one of my favourite books as a child and young teenager. My memories of the natural world, the colours, as well as the tastes, were still vivid and as a translator I had to do little more than put them into words, making use of the thirty years and the knowledge gained in between – a *professional* knowledge that owes much to my primary role as a reader. Freshly baked biscuits, scrambled egg and bacon, black coffee, apple fritters that leave greasy stains on the brown paper, buttermilk, a diluted type of milk always on the lips of Jim's much-loved uncles: the plain, simple but tasty food of the poor American farmlands – wholesome but uncomplicated food. Tony Earley, who I met in Pordenone, at a delightful open air dinner, observed the *polenta* on his plate with curiosity and called it *grits* and in a flash made it part of his rural world that has hardly changed much in a hundred years.

To conclude, I must say that there are few examples of food, whether it be listed, bitten into or refused, that caused any problems, thinking back over the children's books I have translated. I must deduce that the children's dining tables, wherever they may be, are covered in simple or international dishes; or, the conclusion I prefer is that eating and food are not such important elements of a story, in comparison to all the other

things: having adventures, fantasising, going off to explore the world or just re-inventing it.

Laura Cangemi

(She has translated fiction, mainly for children, from Swedish, Norwegian and English. She was mentioned by IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) Italy as the best translator for the publication Honour List 2008.)

To summarize what guides my choices when translating different types of food into Italian for children's books, I can say that I think it's essential to keep to the original food as far as possible, trying to translate it "visually" (even perhaps briefly describing its shape or ingredients). I find that by attempting to pass on, as much as possible, the idea of the cultural environment where the action takes place, you show respect to the young readers of the new language. Children are not stupid, only young, a fact that shouldn't be forgotten by those who constantly try to simplify and "domesticate" the texts with the excuse that the readers "won't understand".

Of course it's far more complicated and much harder to describe a Swedish school kid's bread and butter topped with cheese or lumpfish roe than to just say "he had lunch", but I'm convinced that these small details create "added value" that it would be a real pity to lose.

In Astrid Lindgren's books, for example, there are staple foods that are absolutely impossible to change, often part of the traditional country life the author draws on: *grot*, the hot porridge oats with sugar and cold milk, eaten for breakfast or instead of dinner, that many Swedes still regularly eat; *kroppkakor*, a type of dumpling (but I try to avoid using this word, preferring to describe it as a "ham and potato doughball"; the cinnamon doughnuts, that sometimes I was tempted to call "rings" because of their shape (but the name conjures up a commercial product which has no relation to these traditional homemade cakes, found in every family's freezer after making a huge batch); the typical Swedish meatballs that by now everyone knows thanks to the IKEA cafeteria etc.

*Grot*, for instance, is very important in Henning Mankell's Joel books (beginning with *A Bridge to the Stars*): it is the boy, having always had to take care of himself, who, before going off to sea at 16, teaches his father to clean the dirty caked saucepan by letting it soak in cold water. If the Italian reader doesn't know the exact meaning of "porridge oats", I'm

sure he still gets the message: a basic food, eaten regularly, not necessarily liked by children but considered good for them by adults and especially grandmothers.

There are also, however, situations in which the reference to food carries a precise role that it is impossible to convey with a literal translation. This is true, for example, in the case of a book by Pija Lindenbaum, *Bridget and the Gray Wolves*, in which she talks about Dajm chocolate bar wrappers (similar to Mars bar wrappers) scattered around the woods. Seeing as the book is intended for very young children (3-5 year olds) and that the Mars bar doesn't have the huge market share of Dajm in Sweden, I opted for Kinder eggs, extremely popular in Italy and so instantly recognisable. In the same way, in my translation of Mikael Engström's book, *The Three Legged Dog Pack*, I had to find an equivalent for a commercial brand of Swedish ice-cream that was very popular in the past and I opted for the classic "Cremino" (the stick restricted the choice even further). In the same way, for the sticky, pink and white goo of another commercial ice-cream in Johanna Thydell's, *If You Hear a Scream, It's Me*, I chose Twister, less popular but which fitted the bill perfectly.

Once, in Martin Widmark's *The Hotel Mystery*, I had to completely change all the references to food because the whole solution to the mystery revolved around the names of different types of apples. These obviously needed to be easily recognised by an Italian reader who otherwise would have not only understood nothing but also wouldn't have enjoyed reading the book. So, in the Empire family, the dog became Golden, the daughter Melinda etc.

In conclusion, what would Astrid Lindgren's book *Emil in the Soup Tureen* be like without a proper understanding of the different sumptuous foods laid out by little Emil to attract the old people of the hospice? A crucial scene in a book by one of Sweden's best authors would be lost.

## Notes

1. R. Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1963.
2. W. Benjamin, *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, in C. Baudelaire, *Tableaux parisiens*, Deutsch Übertragung mit einem Vorwort über die Aufgabe des Übersetzers von Walter Benjamin, R. Weißbach, Heidelberg 1923.
3. An Italian writer and translator from English.
4. Taken from my interview/conversation with Dacia Maraini in my paper: *Meeting "The Secret Share": Dacia Maraini reads Joseph Conrad*, in M. Curreli (ed.), *The Ugo Mursia Memorial Lectures*, Second Series, Edizioni ETS, Pisa 2005, p. 158.
5. For Bravo-Villasante, for example, «whether it is a question of a translation for children or adults, the problems of the art of translation are the same». What is important when trans-

lating for children, is that the expert does not "adapt", by doing so, reducing, expanding, or in other words, altering the original texts. (C. Bravo-Villasante, *Translation Problems in My Experience as a Translator*, in G. Klingberg, M. Orvig, S. Amor, eds., *Children's Books in Translation. The Situation and the Problems*, Proceedings of the Third Symposium of the International Research Society for Children's Literature, August 26-29, 1976, Almqvist/Wiksell International, Stockholm 1978, pp. 46-50). For Oittinen, on the other hand, «the dialogic situation of translating for children differs in significant ways from that of translating for adults [...] it includes several other elements besides the text in words (e.g. the translation of picture books)».

- (R. Oittinen, *Translating for Children*, Garland, New York-London 2000).
6. A. Chesterman, *Causes, Translation and Effect*, in "Target", 10, 2, London 1998, pp. 205-8.
  7. E. O'Sullivan, *The Fate of the Dual Addressee in the Translation of Children's Literature*, in "New Comparison", 1993, pp. 109-19.
  8. G. Klingberg, *Children's Fiction in the Hands of the Translators*, CWK Gleerup, Lund 1986.
  9. Ivi, p. 38.
  10. Oittinen, *Translating for Children*, cit.
  11. See L. Venuti, *Rethinking Translation*, Routledge, London-New York 1992 and *The Scandals of Translation. Towards an Ethics of Difference*, Routledge, London-New York 1998.
  12. *La belle au bois dormant*, in C. Perrault, *Contes* (1697), édition présentée, établie et annotée par J.-P. Collinet, Gallimard, Paris 1981, pp. 137-8.
  13. *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*, in A. Lang (ed.), *The Blue Fairy Book*, Dover Publications, New York 1965 [first published by Longmans, Green and Co., 1889], p. 61. Lang says in his introduction that «the tales of Perrault are printed from the old English Version of the Eighteenth Century», thus he certainly refers to Robert Samber's edition of 1729.
  14. *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*, in C. Perrault's *Complete Fairy Tales*, translated from the French by A. E. Johnson *et al.*, Puffin Books, London 1999 [first published in England by Constable in 1962], p. 11.
  15. *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*, in *Sleeping Beauty & Other Favourite Tales* (1977), chosen and translated by A. Carter, Gollancz Children's Paperbacks, London 1991, p. 17.
  16. *La bella addormentata nel bosco*, in C. Collodi, *I racconti delle fate* (1875), Bompiani/Adelphi Edizioni, Milano 1976, p. 20.
  17. *La bella addormentata nel bosco*, in C. Perrault, *I racconti di Mamma l'Oca*, translated by E. Giolitti, Einaudi, Torino 1957, p. 33.
  18. *La bella addormentata nel bosco*, in C. Perrault, *Fiabe*, edited by I. Porfido, with a Foreword by D. Galateria, Letteratura Universale Marsilio, Venezia 2002, p. 21.
  19. Carter, *Sleeping Beauty & Other Favourite Tales*, cit.
  20. See <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accueil>.
  21. C. Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino*, Felice Paggi Libraio-Editore, Firenze 1883.
  22. *Pinocchio. The Tale of a Puppet*, translated from the Italian by M. A. Murray, Dent & Sons, London/E. P. Dutton & Co., New York 1891.
  23. *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, translated with an Introduction and Notes by A. L. Lucas, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 1996.
  24. *Pinocchio*, translated by E. Rose, Walker Books, London 2003.
  25. K. Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, Methuen, London 1908.
  26. Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino*, cit., p. 191.
  27. *Pinocchio. The Tale of a Puppet*, transl. by Murray, cit., p. 226.
  28. *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, transl. by Lucas, cit., p. 138.
  29. *Pinocchio*, transl. by Rose, cit., p. 158.
  30. J. Goldthwaite, *The Further Adventures of Pinocchio*, in "Signal", 82, January 1997, pp. 69-70.
  31. Rose's translation is less faithful to Collodi's novel. Rose takes some liberties: for example, she decides not to translate the summary of the text in chapter headings that, as in chapter VII,

anticipate some events that will only take place in the succeeding chapter. On the other hand, in her translation, Murray too, has made omissions, translating, for example, only the first of three proverbs quoted by Pinocchio in chapter XXXVI.

32. There is a new translation of *Pinocchio*, by Geoffrey Brock, published by NYRB, November 2008, which includes an introduction by Umberto Eco. This version tends to turn colloquial Nineteenth Century Tuscan into colloquial modern English, or rather colloquial American.

33. M. Nikolajeva, *What Do We Translate When We Translate Children's Literature?*, in S. L. Beckett, M. Nikolajeva (eds.), *Beyond Babar. The European Tradition in Children's Literature*, Scarecrow Press, Oxford 2006, p. 287.

34. In consequence, the passage: «Le bugie, ragazzo mio, si riconoscono subito, perché ve ne sono di due specie: vi sono le bugie che hanno le gambe corte, e le bugie che hanno il naso lungo: la tua per l'appunto è di quelle che hanno il naso lungo» (Collodi, *Le avventure di Pinocchio*, cit., p. 70) becomes: «Lies are quickly recognized, my lad, because there are two kinds: there are those with short legs (*with which the truth soon catches up*) and there are those with long noses (*which stare you straight in the face*), as it happens, yours is the long-nosed sort» (*The Adventures of Pinocchio*, transl. by Lucas, cit., pp. 57-8).

35. G. Lathey, *The Translator Revealed. Didacticism, Cultural Mediation and Visions of the Child Reader in Translator's Preface*, in J. V. Coillie, W. P. Verschueren, *Children's Literature in Translation: Challenges and Strategies*, St. Jerome Publishing, Manchester 2006, p. 15.

36. In French, as in English, translations of *Pinocchio* are numerous. The first dates back to 1902. In the translation of 1985, addressed to children, the names of Italian dishes are retained and, for *salame*, the translator uses *saucisson* and not *salami*, a term which exists in French but refers to a product of lower quality than *saucisson*. «En ce moment, au lieu de foin, je mangerais un morceau de pain frais avec une belle tranche de saucisson!... le goût de la paille ne ressemblait en rien à celui du risotto à la milanaise ni des macaronis à la napolitaine». (*Les aventures de Pinocchio. Histoire d'un pantin* (1985), traduit de l'italien par Nathalie Castagné, illustrations de Carlo Chiostrì, Éditions Gallimard Jeunesse, Paris 1998, p. 197).

37. K. Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, Wordsworth Classics, Hertfordshire 1993, p. 15.

38. *Il vento nei salici*, translated by B. Fenoglio, Einaudi, Torino 2007 [first edition 1982], p. 8.

39. *Il vento nei salici*, translated by P. de Rachewiltz, Edizioni C'era una volta, Pordenone 1997, p. 7.

40. Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, cit., p. 76.

41. *Il vento nei salici*, transl. by Fenoglio, cit., pp. 77-8.

42. *Il vento nei salici*, transl. by de Rachewiltz, cit., pp. 74-5.

43. Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, cit., p. 183.

44. *Il vento nei salici*, transl. by Fenoglio, cit., p. 192.

45. *Il vento nei salici*, transl. by de Rachewiltz, cit., p. 190.

46. Grahame was very important in the development of Fenoglio as a writer because he took him as a model. To translate Grahame was for Fenoglio an apprenticeship in learning to become a writer. It's no accident that traces of the English writer are to be found in the literary works of Fenoglio although he is never directly cited.

47. *Il vento nei salici*, adapted by I. Moore, translated by M. Rossi, *La collana fantastica*, Einaudi ragazzi/Edizioni EL, Torino 2001, p. 14.

48. R. Dahl, *Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs*, contained in *Revoltin' Rhymes*, Puffin Books, London, 1984, pp. 17-8.

49. *Biancaneve e i sette nani*, in *Versi perversi*, translated by R. Piumini, Salani/I Criceti, Milano, 2000, p. 18.

50. R. Dahl, *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, contained in *Revoltin' Rhymes*, Puffin Books, London 1982, p. 25.

51. *Treccedoro e i tre orsi*, in *Versi perversi*, translated by R. Piumini, Salani/I Criceti, Milano 2000, p. 26.



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52. A. Bell, *The naming of names*, in "Signal", 46, 1985, p. 3.
53. A. Ransome, *We didn't mean to go to sea*, Red Fox, London 1993, p. 295.
54. A. Alston, *Colonization of food in children's literature: apple pie or Turkish delight*, in C. Keenan, M. Shine Thompson (eds.), *Studies in Children's Literature, 1500-2000*, Four Courts Press, Dublin 2004, p. 83.
55. *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, transl. by Lucas, cit.
56. *Pinocchio*, transl. by Rose, cit.
57. *Il vento nei salici*, transl. by Fenoglio, cit.
58. *Il vento nei salici*, transl. by de Rachewiltz, cit.
59. The translations of the two interviews from Italian are mine.
60. T. Earley, *Jim the boy*, Back Bay Book, New York 2000; T. Early, *Il giovane Jim*, transl. by B. Masini, Fanucci, Roma 2009; T. Early, *The Blue Star*, Fanucci, Roma 2010.



