



# 'The sky here compensates for solitude'

Space and displacement in a migrant's tale

Brigid Maher

## I

IN recent years, the term 'translation' has come to be used not only to refer to what we have traditionally considered translation – the transfer of meaning from one language into another – but also in other extended or metaphorical senses. This includes most notably Bhabha's coinage 'cultural translation' (1994) as a way of describing processes of migration, displacement and identification in an increasingly mobile global society. Trivedi (2005) warns scholars within the still young field of translation studies to be wary of this appropriation of our key word 'translation' to convey meanings that often have little or nothing to do with language, let alone with the transfer of meaning from one language to another. While his point is well taken, points of overlap and contrast in the use of this versatile word, not to mention metaphorical extensions of its meaning, can shed light on the issue of interlingual translation as well as on other forms of literary expression in which language is a key concern. The present paper deals with translation in more than one sense of the word, but its focus remains on questions of language, expression, identity and interlingual literary translation. I explore these issues through an analysis of Rosa R. Cappiello's *Paese fortunato* (1981), a novel that expresses or 'translates' the narrator's bicultural and bilingual migrant experience; I also consider the actual interlingual translation of the novel, from Italian into English – *Oh Lucky Country* (Cappiello 1984, 2003) – and its reception in the English language.



*Paese fortunato* is probably best described as an autobiographical novel; while the narrator's name is also Rosa Capiello, it cannot be assumed that author and narrator are one and the same. Ingram (1998) notes that autobiography (and I would extend this to an autobiographical novel like *Paese fortunato*) is an important way for migrants, and others who see themselves as living a life 'in-between', to express their marginalization and their life 'in translation'; she also points out that in such autobiographical work, language and writing are often key themes. While language is only occasionally mentioned explicitly in *Paese fortunato*, it is nevertheless thematized throughout by means of the very idiosyncratic language and narrative techniques used to express the narrator's 'in-between' existence. Rosa is a young, poorly educated Neapolitan woman who migrates to Sydney in the 1970s. The novel is a graphic, grotesque and at times quite confronting account of her first year or so in Australia, and chronicles her culture shock, loneliness, anger and poverty, as well as her often unflattering opinions of the people around her, both Australians and fellow migrants.

Using the concept of 'space' as a central theme, I analyze *Paese fortunato* as an expression of the conflicted and ambivalent role of space in migration, while also considering the role of language and literature in creating space for such expression. I begin by examining the images on the front covers of the different editions of the novel, in an effort to understand the way publishers have used paratext to try and fit the novel into a familiar space for the prospective reader. I then consider the way space is represented in the novel itself, focusing in particular on the narrator's relationship to the spaces of her everyday life, as well as those she has left behind in Italy. The conflict and contradictions between the different spaces of Rosa's experience are reflected in the way her story is told, both in the novel's rambling (un-)structure and in the narrative voice, which mixes a number of different language varieties. Finally, by considering Gaetano Rando's translation of the novel and its reception by Australian critics, I examine the way Rando has sought to make space for Rosa's story within the English language and literature.

## II

A useful place to start in considering the spaces of *Paese fortunato* is the very place most readers start, the front cover. This can give us an insight into the ways in which publishers try to create a space for a text within a literary system, helping the reader to place it within the charted territories of their own literary landscape. If, following Genette (1997), we consider paratext as both a presentation of a text, and a making-present of a text (that is, placing it in the present), we can say that each cover is for a different time and a different stage in a book's existence. Different covers reframe a text to some extent, often in the interests of marketability, so that readers in the target culture will be more receptive to it (cf. Haase 2003). Kovala stresses the role of paratext as a form of cultural mediation between the text and the reader, which can both 'influence' and 'inform' their reading (1996: 135). This kind of cultural mediation is particularly interesting in the field of translation studies, where it can tell us something about how a translated text might be received and categorized within the target culture. The covers of the original Italian edition of *Paese fortunato* of 1981, its English translation of 1984, and the second edition of the translation published in 2003, send very different paratextual messages.

The cover of the most recent edition of the novel, the re-issue of Rando's English translation, is red ochre in colour, reminiscent of the burnt-red hues of Australia's semi-arid 'Red Centre'. In the bottom right-hand corner is an iconic image of the Australian outback: a long, straight, red dirt road, stretching ahead to the flat horizon and bright blue cloudless sky. This is a desert, and deserted, Australia, with no sign of 'civilization'. The picture on the cover of the first edition of the translation (1984) is a pencil-drawn image in mostly pastel colours displaying another Australian icon, but this time a city sight – the Sydney Opera House. A female narrator is hinted at by the presence of a rather wind-swept young woman gazing at the Opera House from behind a barrier, possibly the side of a boat. As we look at the cover, we are standing 'behind' her, seeing what she sees from the same point of view. Finally, the cover of the original Italian edition of the novel (1981), shows another sort of image again, part of Henri Rousseau's painting 'War, Or Discord on Horseback'. In contrast to the others, this image is

violent, dynamic, aggressive and loud. A woman on horseback brandishes a sword and bodies lie strewn on the ground around her. The colours are bright, bold, and not always realistic, and there is childishness to the way in which people and animals are rendered. The setting is fantastical, and could perhaps have a certain appeal for European (Italian) audiences as a representation of a kind of savage, larger-than-life New World jungle.

It must seem unlikely that such contrasting images could all match the same book, and in fact none of them bears much relationship to the literal content of the novel. Rosa never visits the outback and, despite the image of the road on the most recent edition, *Paese fortunato* is not in any way a journey novel, not even metaphorically speaking, as it lacks the necessary sense of direction. Rosa does live in Sydney, but the Harbour features precious little in the novel, which is set in rather less salubrious spaces of Sydney. She does not massacre anyone *literally* (on horseback or otherwise), though her story is full of discord and aggression, and she takes no prisoners when she rides in to attack (verbally) the people and cultures around her. However, in bringing up the question of the novel's paratext, my aim is not to assess which front cover is most appropriate, or which best reflects the content of the text or the expectations of its readers. The point is rather to draw attention to the many spaces of literature, and of translation. Each of these editions, with their cover images, colours and fonts, is an attempt to find (or create) a space for this book within the life of the prospective reader, and within a broader literary system (and publishing world). This placing of the text is important because it is essentially a little known text – it belongs to a 'minor' genre within the Italian canon, while in translation, it belongs to a 'minor' culture within the larger 'national' culture (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1986).

### III

The way *Paese fortunato* presents the notion of space is complex, reflecting the narrator Rosa's contradictory and often ambiguous relationship with the spaces in her life. In a most obvious sense, she is caught between two spaces – Italy and Australia – and two ways of life. Bhabha has described the liminal or 'in-between' situation of the migrant

as one which cannot be resolved and which becomes, rather, the site of an 'element of resistance', something that resists translation (Bhabha 1994: 224). A sense of liminality appears often in the writing of migrants, as space, memory and identity are explored and negotiated. André Aciman evokes this in his essay on 'Shadow cities' – the exile's need to recreate the spaces of their past, even if just in their memory, superimposing them on the spaces of the present, can be very strong indeed, and serves as way of preserving a world that has long since been lost, if indeed it ever existed at all (Aciman 1999).

The title of my article comes from *Paese fortunato*'s first sentence: 'The sky here compensates for solitude' (1). Rosa is impressed by the Australian sky and admires it on her way to the hostel in the migrant bus. However, any chance of this being a reflective, contemplative novel about nature and beauty is quickly eliminated, as the first thing Rosa misses from home is not at all what one would expect. She waxes lyrical:

*Oh, to discern a time-worn grey-stone urinal in some corner of a public square! [...] In my most intimate being a stone urinal in the shade of a gum tree was all I wanted as a background monument to my long-awaited celebration-initiation. [...] Where I longed for the human touch expressed in the architectural lines of a public toilet, the other girls missed their mothers, a terminated love affair, the national anthem, the promenades in the main street, the display of elegance, human understanding. (Cappiello 2003: 1)*

*Ah, non ammirare un pisciatoio in pietra grigia corrosa dal tempo, negli angoli di piazza. [...] Nei substrati della mia tanto attesa celebrazione-iniziazione, io volevo quel monumento e solo quello all'ombra di un eucalipto. [...] Mentr'io bramavo il tocco umano nell'architettura di una ritirata, ad altre mancava la mamma, un amore finito, l'inno nazionale, le passeggiate per il corso, lo sfoggio d'eleganza, la comprensione. (Cappiello 1981: 7-8)*

We can tell right from the first page, then, that this will not be any ordinary memoir about migrant displacement. Our expectations about what migrants might long for (family and lost loves, patriotism, familiar customs, empathy) are mocked by Rosa, as are those predictable, sentimental girls on the bus with her, as she reveals her longing for the

familiar, comforting sight of a public urinal in a town square, and wonders with suspicion where these Australians go to answer the call of nature. Clearly, this is a narrator who will be full of surprises – she does not mince words, her tone is very tongue-in-cheek and she refuses to take anything too seriously. This contrast – quite literally, between the sublime and the ridiculous, clear blue skies and unseemly public urinals – is indicative of the kind of grotesque comedy we find throughout the book, and is reflected numerous times in Rosa's attitude to space. At times she rhapsodizes about the beauty of Australia – 'even though I often thought of my home, my real home in the old country [...] I also wanted to die here surrounded by beauty and harmony [...] nothing was as beautiful as this' (p. 147) ('Pur pensando spesso a casa mia, all'altra casa mia, veramente mia [...] io desideravo crepare qua in bellezza e armonia', 194). Yet elsewhere in the book she bitterly declares: 'This country [Australia] will never be home. It will never be a refuge for anyone who isn't a sheep' (p. 86) ('Questa non sarà mai una casa. Non sarà mai un rifugio per chi non è pecora', 117).

Bachelard writes that 'without [the house], man would be a dispersed being' and Rosa's situation does indeed leave her as a 'dispersed being' (1969: 6). The places she finds most welcoming and home-like are not those we might expect. They include a brothel in Newtown owned by a motherly madam known as Maman, and the main street of Kings Cross, which is 'the only one in the whole city which is crowded day and night, noisy, lively, with that sensual atmosphere which makes you nostalgic for the disruptive Neapolitan way of life' (p. 32). Suburban Sydney holds little appeal for Rosa, who sees it as quite lifeless: 'the houses are all the same, more like funeral parlours and, inside, a pervasive smell of dead cats. Redfern [...] and lots of other suburbs, seems designed like a cemetery' (18) ('le case tutte uguali, rassomigliano ancora più a cappelle mortuarie e, dentro, sempre un odore di gatti morti. Redfern [...] e tanti altri suburbs, paiono edificati con criterio cimiteriale', 29-30). Rosa's own homes in Sydney are without exception squalid and miserable, and she oscillates between longing to live alone so she can write, and missing the communal life she shares when she lives with her wild, infuriating and almost hysterical female friends.

Rosa's 'ethnoscape' (Appadurai 1990) is characterized by instability, fleeting and unsatisfying relationships, squalor, sickness and loneliness, all against the backdrop of a less than harmonious mix of races and ethnicities. This cultural mix is no melting pot but an 'immense rubbish heap' (27) ('un immenso immondezzaio', 40), and the big happy family of migrants is incestuously related through an umbilical link of 'wheeling and dealing, trampling and dishonour' (27) ('sputtanare, arraffare, calpestare, disonorare', 40). While Rosa strenuously resists translation into the norms and values of her new home, it is clear that she also feels alienated from Italy, particularly from the Italians around her in Sydney, who are portrayed as ignorant, backward, chauvinist and 'rooted to fetishes' (113) ('abbarbicati ai feticci', 150). One gets the sense that it is this very parochialism that Rosa has sought to escape in migration, but it is present in Australia too, and any escape from this community into the solitary world of writing and one-bedroom lodgings is just a move to a different circle in the migrant's inferno, that of the lonely and rootless. Appadurai has noted the tendency among the 'deterritorialized' to create 'invented homelands', held together through memories, art, and cultural events that can provide the contact people miss from home (Appadurai 1990: 11-12). Rosa scorns such customs and nostalgia, with their focus on 'a past which kicks the present' (113) ('un passato che fa a calci col presente', 150) – she is unwilling to live in such a past, but is also unable to feel she has a place in her new home, where her status as 'stranger' and her sense of superiority and distance well and truly set her apart (Kirkby 1996).

These and other contradictions define Rosa's life, which revolves around what is surely a common conflict for a migrant (and for many others too) – the conflict between nostalgia and pragmatism, or as Rosa puts it, 'either feed your belly or nourish your spirit' (58). Rosa is particularly torn because her lack of education condemns her to back-breaking work in factories and pizzerie, while her love of reading and writing lead her to aspire to something different – the opportunity to find fulfilment through literary self-expression. The girls around her have no time for her writing, so she feels as out of place among her friendship group as she does in other aspects of her life.

The anger and aggression which pervade the novel stem in large part from Rosa's 'translation' of self from one place to another (cf. Besemeres 2002). She suffers the disjunction between where she comes from, and where she finds herself now, and her struggle with this is echoed in her inconsistency of opinion. Maier (2002) uses *dépaysement* to express the feeling that is integral to the experience of many exiles, migrants and expatriates. This word, or indeed its Italian counterpart *spaesamento*, with its connotations not only of being outside one's *paese* (village, country) but also of feeling confused and out of place, is quite apt for describing Rosa's situation. In his autobiographical reflection 'A Berlin Chronicle', Benjamin (1978) speaks of the way our memories (and in effect, our sense of self) are linked to place (cf. Bachelard 1969; see also Certeau 1984: Ch. IX on space and storytelling). Given this close connection we have to place, it is not surprising that Rosa's translation of her self from one home to another causes a considerable disruption in her life, as it results in a great loss. She misses the public spaces, the outdoor atmosphere, and city walking, which over the years created her memories and sense of self; all this is reflected, albeit rather perversely, in her fond longing for a public urinal.

#### IV

Throughout *Paese fortunato*, Rosa is condemned to move from house to house and job to job. She gets fired or is victimized by her boss, she is unable to pay the rent or her squalid lodgings become unbearable. This constant directionless movement in her life, the 'mis-spaced-ness' of her situation, is mirrored in the text's structure and style. Indeed, as far as structure goes, there really is none. *Paese fortunato* is a picaresque text in which we stumble with Rosa from one misadventure or humiliation to the next with no clear destination; at the end there is little sense of resolution.

In his book *The Grotesque*, Philip Thomson (1972) stresses how important a sense of discomfort is to the grotesque, as one must attempt to reconcile feelings of pity, horror and disgust with a sense of the comic. In Roman art, the grotesque was a style that consisted of an unsettling combination of 'human, animal and vegetable elements' (Thomson 1972:



12); similarly, Rosa's narration contains an unusual and confronting mix of stylistic elements. Thomson describes the grotesque as 'an appropriate expression of the problematical nature of existence' and notes that it 'tends to be prevalent in societies and eras marked by strife, radical change or disorientation' (p. 11). Little wonder, then, that this is a style that works well for Cappiello as an expression of her own disorientation and displacement. The grotesque elements of *Paese fortunato's* language and metaphors serve to make the reader feel some of the confusion, discomfort and displacement Rosa feels in her daily life. The disjunction between the hideous and the comic that is inherent in the grotesque reflects the disjunctions within the life of the narrator.

The novel's narrative style is jarring, in keeping with Rosa's mixed identities and her conflict-ridden, aggressive personality (cf. Luzi 1991). The characters are more like comic caricatures, and the narrator's frequent angry rants betray a Rabelaisian obsession with bodily functions, sex, hunger and sickness (cf. Bakhtin 1984: 19). The book's metaphors and imagery are often violent yet at the same time strikingly comic and grotesque. The language, too, is grotesque – larger-than-life, flowery and extravagant, mixing a high literary register with coarse, vulgar or colloquial language, and dialectal and Italian-Australian elements (Gunew 1985; Indyk 1992). The grotesque physicality of Rosa's voice comes across particularly vividly in her description of a nudist seer she and her friend visit for advice on starting a fortune-telling racket. The foyer of his apartment block is adorned with a 'pissing cherub', and the man himself comes to the door is 'naked as a maggot coming out of its cocoon' (p. 52) ('nudo come un bacherozzo che striscia dal bozzolo', p. 73). The general theme is reinforced by the verb 'afflosciare' used to describe the way Rosa and her friend collapse limply onto the sofa in surprise and distaste.<sup>1</sup>

*Paese fortunato* is, in a way, a 'translation' of Rosa's experiences from emotions into words, but the language of this 'translation', while clearly Italian, is a mixed variety that records in its grotesque shapes the vicissitudes of the narrator's experience. Rosa's Italian never allows the reader to forget the awkwardness of her situation, the 'in-betweenness' she feels. While Italian is her native language, she is clearly not entirely

at ease with standard or literary Italian, and elements of dialect, spoken language and English can be discerned in her narrative voice. This clash between major and minor varieties of language creates a kind of 'linguistic fragmentation' (Lecerle 1990: 243). Even though this mixed variety is not a typically literary one, Rosa exploits the points of tension in her language to create a strong and expressive text that is particularly intense in its evocation of the pain and violence of poverty and migration. She uses this language to give voice to the migrant's cry: Rosa's story is like the cry of one of her fellow migrants, Mariolino, whose cry is that of all migrants. 'He sings, despite being tone deaf, the soledad which is in each one of us [...] [The] song is broken, stagnant, old through centuries of emigration' (117) ('Canta, seppur stonato, la soledad che è in ognuno di noi, la furia che è in ognuno di noi [...] [Un canto] rotto, stantio, vecchio di secoli d'emigrazione', 156). (Cf. Kafka's use of Prague German as described by Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 23-26.)

## V

Given the unique way Rosa's emotions and experiences are 'translated' into a narrative style, the task of translating Paese fortunato into English, undertaken by Gaetano Rando, cannot have been an easy one. It is clear that Rando paid considerable attention to the question of how to render Rosa's narrative voice in English, resisting any temptation to squeeze the text into some uncomfortable English or Australian literary niche (Rando 1995: 64). While one occasionally finds evidence of an attenuation of some of the text's aggression and emotion, on the whole he has not attempted to tidy up the language, and states in his introduction that he considered it more important to render Rosa's idiosyncratic narrative style than to be overly constrained by standard notions of 'good English' (Rando 1984: iii-iv). In a sense, then, translating the text required him to carve out a space within the English language and literary culture in which to fit this woman's unique voice and story. Below is an example of the text's unusual style:

*While I was engrossed in these reflections, Beniamina trotted off determined to phone for a taxi, which would have cost us thirty-five cents extra for the*

*call. Well, Sofia and I were keeping a very tight rein on our money, not because we are misers, but just so we could survive the rapid price rises, inflation and so forth, and that gesture of a filthy rich type who can afford to have the taxi come to the door, paying for the luxury with our life and indigence, made Sofia really sound off. (Cappiello 2003: 104)*

*E mentre io riflettevo, Beniamina trotto decisa a fare il numero di telefono, perché arrivasse il tassí a domicilio, che poi sarebbe costato a noi trentacinque cent in piú per la chiamata. Ora io e Sofia spaccavamo anche il cent, non per taccagneria, ma giusto per sopravvivere alla corsa dei prezzi, l'inflazione e cosí via, e quella bravata di ricca sfondata che si permette il tassí alla porta, pagandone il lusso sulla nostra pelle e sulla nostra indigenza mandò Sofia su tutte le furie. (Cappiello 1981: 139)*

The long second sentence, in both the original and the translation, replicates spoken language and the thought processes that might accompany the accumulation of resentment Rosa feels about Beniamina's extravagance. The passage is marked by its mix of colloquial expressions such as 'trotted off', 'a tight rein', 'filthy rich type' and 'sound off', with others of a higher register, such as 'engrossed', 'determined', 'we are' (rather than 'we're') and 'indigence'. Rando's translation choices echo the style of the original, which likewise mixes registers. Throughout the novel, the expressive power of 'long words' is often complemented in surprising ways by the frustrated, angry or ironic tone of colloquialisms.

Sometimes the mix of registers and tones, when examined closely, turns out to be a juxtaposition of free indirect discourse representing the speech of another character in the book, and Rosa's own, usually ironic and derisive, reaction to what they say. Strikingly, it is not always easy to decide whose voice is whose, but of course the novel was never going to be a clear, objective account of Rosa's life and relationships. This is a further illustration of how the very form of the text manifests the disjunction Rosa experiences between herself and the people around her.

*At the Portuguese couple's place where I was staying, an insipid Rumanian used to live, a fat and stupid man who hanged himself from the bathroom ceiling after filling himself with wine. He preached my salvation in deadly earnest. Seeing I was from the South, and going on all those worn-out*

*idiotic commonplaces put about by people who had reached the apex of slovenliness, I needed to blend with his noble blood in order to raise myself up the social ladder. Yuck. A good job he didn't survive. It was a pain in the bum to listen to him. (Cappiello 2003: 35)*

*Dai portoghesi, dove stavo in affitto, alloggiava un rumeno slavato, grasso e cretino che si impiccò al soffitto del bagno, avendo fatto prima il pieno di vino. Predicava accoratamente la mia salvezza. Essendo io del Sud, stando alle dicerie sorpassate e idiote di chi vegetava al sommo della sciatteria, mi occorreva l'incrocio col suo sangue elevato, per inalzarmi sui gradini sociali. Ci teneva a salvarmi. Peuh! Fortuna non sopravvisse. Era una pena in culo starlo a sentire. (Cappiello 1981: 51)*

In this excerpt, swear words and slang express Rosa's disgust at the man, while other phrases ('preached my salvation', 'raise myself up the social ladder') quote or echo the Rumanian's earnest yet cynical attempts at seduction, adding ironic overtones.

It will be clear from the above examples that Rando eschews conventional English literary style. The effect of the language of the translation is jarring and strange, and this is very close to the kind of effect the original has. When the novel appeared in Australia in translation, a number of reviewers seemed rather perplexed by it, especially as regards its style and structure. One reviewer (Macklin 1985) discerns some talent in Cappiello, but puts the book's chaotic plotline and over-the-top characterization down to a lack of discipline and craftsmanship, rather than seeing it as an expression of the narrator's state of mind. Others are much more critical, and their criticisms come back to the book's lack of structure, its grotesque, emotional outpourings, and the vulgar and unconventional language (cf. e.g., Brown 1985; Luke 1985). One gets the overwhelming impression that these reviewers do not really know where to 'put' this text, because it does not fit into any of the systems they are familiar with. We could borrow here Chesterman's notion of 'expectancy norms' (1997: 64) or Jauss's 'horizon of expectations' (1982: Ch. 1), concepts which capture the idea that people come to the act of reading with a set of expectations that they have built up over time and through previous reading; *Paese fortunato* does not sit easily with what readers (or at least

reviewers) expect from, for example, 'migrant literature' or even 'good writing'. Because of the way grotesque works of art combine disparate styles in an unfamiliar, unsettling way, this kind of indignant reaction is not uncommon, nor is it a new phenomenon – Thomson (1972: 12) cites a critic from early Christian Rome whose response to grotesque art is not so very different from those of Cappiello's Australian critics.

The reviewers' inability to see anything funny in the text is no doubt also in part due to differences in 'comic paradigms' (Tymoczko 1987), which can make it hard to understand or appreciate what is supposed to be funny in texts from different cultures or historical periods. With a text like *Paese fortunato* we are faced with what Verena Jung (2004) calls heteroskopic audiences – the background assumptions and comic paradigms of the audience of the translation are quite different from those of the Italian audience of the original. While it should be noted that this is the kind of text that even for an Italian audience would make for difficult reading and potentially cause some controversy, it is nevertheless likely that an Italian audience would be more familiar with grotesque humour, linguistic expressionism (Luzi 1991), exaggeration and caricature as forms of the comic.

## VI

A poem that makes a great impression on Rosa is A.D. Hope's 'Australia', in which Australia's cities are 'like five teeming sores' – an image that describes very aptly the Sydney Rosa inhabits. Hope also writes of Australians as 'the ultimate men [...] / Whose boast is not: "we live" but "we survive", / A type who will inhabit the dying earth' (Hope 2000: 54). Rosa, too, is someone of whom we could say, *she survives*. But achieving this survival is almost all-consuming. She puts a lot of her energy into retaining her sense of self, resisting absorption into the world around her, much of which she despises, while at the same time seeking a voice that is in her own and that will serve to 'translate' her experiences into literature. She chooses her own kind of language for this self-expression, resisting any pressure to conform to literary norms and insisting that readers take her on her own terms, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us. The

further translation that takes place, the actual interlingual translation from the original Italian into Rando's English version, while naturally displacing her from her initial form of expression, generally seeks to retain and recreate for the Anglophone reader, some of the discomfort and resistance present in the original.

A text like *Paese fortunato* grows out of a number of different spaces without fitting neatly into any one of them. It is not easy to categorize, which is perhaps why it is not easy to think of what might be an appropriate image for the front cover. Is it Italian literature? Australian literature? Migrant literature? These are complex questions that cannot be treated in any depth here, but the subject is worth touching upon briefly. The inclusion of *Oh Lucky Country* among Sydney University Press's 'Classic Australian Works' certainly suggests that, for some critics at least, the work belongs to some sort of canon of Australian literature, despite the fact that it was not written in English. This highlights the important role of the translator of a text such as this, as it is only through Rando's work that the Australian reading public can have access to a novel that is – purportedly – one of our very own 'Classics'. There are certainly positive aspects to the acceptance into Australian literature of works about Australia or what it means to be Australian, but written by non-Australian, and especially non-Anglo, writers. Indeed, given Australia's mix of ethnic and cultural backgrounds this seems only appropriate. However, due caution should also be exercised to ensure that works like *Paese fortunato* are not entirely subsumed into a mainstream canon that will conceal or ignore their unusual culture-specific features. In a piece about the reception of the work of Gabriel García Márquez, Munday (1998) shows that when a writer is accepted into the canon of another culture, a cultural appropriation of their work can result, and with it a disregard for their particular cultural background and literary style. Slotting *Paese fortunato* into the sub-category of migrant literature can also be problematic. As Buikema (2005) points out, a text that makes expressive and effective use of language and narratological techniques should be valued and evaluated in and of itself, and not only in terms of the migrant identity of its author and protagonists.

Rosa's existence unfolds on a battleground of prejudice, bitchiness, violence, abuse and mayhem. Returning to the question of the cover images of the different editions of the novel, one begins to feel it is little wonder that Feltrinelli publishing house chose Rousseau's 'War, or Discord on Horseback' for the cover of the original Italian edition in 1981. We can read the choice of the Sydney Opera House scene for the cover of the translation as a re-placing of the text, a re-presentation of it. We are dealing now with a different text for a different audience. The cover is gentler, not so much as hinting at the aggressive and confronting attitudes that lie in wait between the covers. It suggests something more contemplative and traditionally feminine than the matted locks of Discord on horseback. The Australianness of the text is explicitly indicated by the image of the Opera House. The cover of the second edition of the translation is perhaps intended to be that of a canonized text, insofar as the picture is small and subtle, while the title and author's name are written quite large. It is interesting to note the 'ultra-Australian' red ochre colour scheme and picture chosen to grace its cover – once again, the publishers seem very keen to place this as an *Australian* book (as if including it as a 'Classic Australian Work' might not be enough). This is somewhat surprising, and not only because the actual scenery depicted on the covers of the translations (the Opera House and the Outback) does not reflect the content of the book. These two design choices seem to constitute quite robust efforts to proclaim the book's Australianness, when actually, part of what makes it so exciting and innovative is that it is quite obviously a book born out of a bicultural experience, and it shows its colours unashamedly. Its very structure and language attest to a struggle with (at least) two cultures, languages, places, and ways of seeing the world, and its portrayal and judgements of Australia are ambivalent to say the least. Moreover, this is an impression that is, if anything, enhanced, rather than weakened, by Rando's bright and creative translation, which embraces the text's complexities and is not afraid to pull the English language into a few contorted shapes when necessary.

Regardless of questions of categorization and canonization, what is clear is that *Paese fortunato* is a text that puzzles some reviewers, because

it does not live up to their expectations about what constitutes good and worthwhile writing. As has been illustrated above, *Paese fortunato's* unconventional style is an expression of the situation in which the narrator finds herself – nothing in her life is stable, and her storytelling reflects this. There is a paradox here: Australian readers are often interested in hearing reflections upon our country from foreigners, visitors and migrants, but perhaps we are not so keen to receive those reflections on their terms. Rosa is interesting because of her bicultural experience as a migrant, but some readers will react against the fact that she chooses to express this experience and this cultural mix in the very *way* she tells her story.

Any translation involves re-placing something, that is, both literally replacing the original words, phrases and structures with new ones from the target language, and also moving the text into a new *place* in the hope that it will fit into the lives of its new audience. This process involves considerable negotiation of audience expectations. Rando's translation makes the book accessible and acceptable to its new audience, while seeking to avoid compromising the integrity of its narrative voice. Publishers use paratextual strategies to try and make the text attractive to prospective readers through the use of colours and images on the front cover that will convey a message readers are able to interpret. Finally, reviewers, too, have a role in the text's reception in translation, as they present it to the public in the context of a literary system readers are likely to be familiar with. As the case of *Paese fortunato* shows, there are a number of complexities associated with the translation of a text from one cultural space to another when that text is already stretched across a number of spaces to begin with. There is an added complexity in the fact that the text is being translated 'back' into Australian culture, the culture in which the story takes place. The novel manifests very directly some of the struggles of migration, and the different, not always complementary, ways in which efforts are made to find space for the text within the Anglophone, and particularly the Australian, literary system, reveal the constraints upon literature, as well as some of the expectations and assumptions of the readership. Textual spaces can be every bit as hard to explore, conquer or settle as geographical ones.



## REFERENCES

- Aciman, André. 1999. Shadow cities. In *Letters of Transit: Reflections on exile, identity, language, and loss*, edited by A. Aciman. New York: The New Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. *Public Culture* 2 (2):1-24.
- Bachelard, Gaston. 1969. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by M. Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and his World*. Translated by H. Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1978. *Reflections: Essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writings*. Translated by E. Jephcott. New York: Schocken Books.
- Besemeres, Mary. 2002. *Translating One's Self: Language and selfhood in cross-cultural autobiography*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, Helen. 1985. Australia seen with fresh eyes. *The Canberra Times*, 6 April, p. 18.
- Buikema, Rosemarie. 2005. A poetics of home: On narrative voice and the deconstruction of home in migrant literature. In *Migrant Cartographies: New cultural and literary spaces in post-colonial Europe*, edited by S. Ponzanesi and D. Merolla. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books.
- Cappiello, Rosa R. 1981. *Paese fortunato*. Milan: Feltrinelli.
- . 1984. *Oh Lucky Country*. Translated by G. Rando. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press.
- . 2003. *Oh Lucky Country*. Translated by G. Rando. Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Certeau, Michel de. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by S. F. Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chesterman, Andrew. 1997. *Memes of Translation: The spread of ideas in translation theory*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1986. *Kafka: Toward a minor literature*. Translated by D. Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*. Translated by J. E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gunew, Sneja. 1985. Rosa Cappiello's *Oh Lucky Country*: Multicultural reading strategies. *Meanjin* 44 (4):517-528.
- Haase, Donald. 2003. Framing the Brothers Grimm: Paratexts and intercultural transmission in postwar English-language editions of the Kinder- und Hausmärchen. *Fabula: Zeitschrift für Erzählforschung / Journal of Folklore Studies* 44 (1-2):55-69.
- Hope, A.D. 2000. *Selected Poetry and Prose*. Edited by D. Brooks. Rushcutters Bay, NSW: Halstead Press.
- Indyk, Ivor. 1992. The migrant and the comedy of excess in recent Australian writing. In *Striking Chords: Multicultural literary interpretations*, edited by S. Gunew and K. O. Longley. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Ingram, Susan. 1998. Translation, autobiography, bilingualism. In *Unity in Diversity? Current trends in translation studies*, edited by L. Bowker, M. Cronin, D. Kenny and J. Pearson. Manchester: St Jerome.
- Jauss, Hans Robert. 1982. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Translated by T. Bahti. Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press.
- Jung, Verena. 2004. Writing Germany in exile - the bilingual author as cultural mediator: Klaus Mann, Stefan Heym, Rudolf Arnheim and Hannah Arendt. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25 (5&6):529-546.
- Kirkby, Joan. 1996. Abject discourse and the imperial gaze in Rosa Cappiello's *Oh Lucky Country*. In *A Talent(ed) Digger: Creations, cameos and essays in honour of Anna Rutherford*, edited by H. Maes-

- Jelinek, G. Collier and G. V. Davis. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Kovala, Urpo. 1996. Translations, paratextual mediation, and ideological closure. *Target* 8 (1):119-147.
- Lecerclre, Jean-Jacques. 1990. *The Violence of Language*. London: Routledge.
- Luke, Margot. 1985. *Oh Lucky Country* by Rosa R. Cappiello. *Fremantle Arts Centre Broadsheet* 4 (2):2-3.
- Luzi, Alfredo. 1991. Espressionismo linguistico ed emarginazione sociale: la scrittura di Rosa Cappiello. In *La letteratura dell'emigrazione: gli scrittori di lingua italiana nel mondo*, edited by J.-J. Marchand. Turin: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.
- Macklin, Robert. 1985. Coping with the Lucky Country. *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, 12-13 January, p. 12.
- Maier, Carol. 2002. Translation, dépaysement, and their figuration. In *Translation and Power*, edited by M. Tymoczko and E. Gentzler. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Munday, Jeremy. 1998. The Caribbean conquers the world? An analysis of the reception of García Márquez in translation. *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* LXXV:137-144.
- Rando, Gaetano. 1984. Introduction. In *Oh Lucky Country*, by R. R. Cappiello. St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press.
- . 1995. On translating Australian writers: the Italian case. *Southerly* 55 (2):62-66.
- Thomson, Philip. 1972. *The Grotesque*. London: Methuen.
- Trivedi, Harish. 2005. *Translating culture vs cultural translation*. <http://www.uiowa.edu/~iwp/91st/may2005/pdfs/trivdei/pdf> Accessed 28 March, 2007.
- Tymoczko, Maria. 1987. Translating the humour in early Irish hero tales: A polysystems approach. *New Comparison* 3:83-103.

## NOTES

- 1 Unfortunately, some features of this grotesque scene are lost in translation, as Rando simply uses 'lean against the backrest of the sofa for support' to translate *afflosciare*. It is also worth pointing out that in this context *maggot* is probably not the best translation of *bacherozzo*, given that maggots do not emerge from cocoons. Rando may have chosen the word for its evocation of visceral feelings of disgust and for the maggot's general whitish, squirmy nature rather than for biological accuracy; perhaps *grub* would have been a better alternative. It is also significant that *strisciare* is translated simply as *coming out*, which lacks the Italian verb's connotations of base worm-like slithering. *Efebo* and *cherub* are not really equivalent either, with *efebo* suggesting – pejoratively – an effeminate quality that is absent from the angelic *cherub*. These changes effect a slight attenuation of the grotesque; this may have been a conscious effort by the translator to soften the effect for the English reader, or might simply be coincidence. An examination of this question will be the subject of a separate study.