

# Translation as Criticism



# Translation as Criticism:

Elizabeth Jolley's  
*Mr Scobie's Riddle*

By

Anna Gadd Colombi

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## ABSTRACT

A tendency to sacrifice culture-specific elements and stylistic peculiarities to preserve *bello scrivere* can be found within Australian literature translated into Italian. Norms and rules existing in the target language and culture (Italian) are in fact often prioritised over an author's own writing technique and elements specific to the source culture. Accordingly, unmarked structures are also often preferred to marked structures, with the result that Australian literature is often homogenised, its Australianness blurred.

On the other hand, a small number of Italian translations of Australian literature excel in their attempt to be source-oriented, oriented towards the original, its cultural and stylistic peculiarities, rather than target-oriented. Translations done following this approach inspired my academic translation into Italian of Elizabeth Jolley's *Mr Scobie's Riddle*.

In my doctoral thesis I translated Elizabeth Jolley's *Mr Scobie's Riddle* into Italian in its entirety, aiming for the preservation of culture-specific elements and Jolley's stylistic peculiarities and using compensation strategies wherever the cultural gap between Australia and Italy, or the structural differences between English and Italian, could potentially cause a loss in translation. In order for the specificity of Jolley's novel to be maintained in translation, three types of analysis were undergone: the first, a narratological analysis of the novel; the second, a translational analysis of the novel to translate, a type of analysis carried out before the beginning the translation process; finally, an analysis of the translated text and the main issues stemming from the contrast between the two languages and cultures involved. This publication brings together the translation and the analysis, the practice and the theory behind it, in an attempt to show the thought process behind my translational choices.

In order to be successful in my attempt to preserve culture-specific elements and stylistic peculiarities across the translational process I adopted a method oriented towards the source, which prioritises the source text's peculiarities and culture-specific elements while being transported into another language.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The three years spent on my doctoral thesis at The University of Western Australia have been a path of discovery: not only have I learnt and discovered in the discipline of Translation Studies, the main discipline of my doctoral research and an ongoing interest since my undergraduate studies, and Australian literature, a newfound interest, but I also discovered my vocation to teach at tertiary level, an extremely challenging yet gratifying activity, from what I can gather so far. None of this would have been possible without the international scholarships allocated by the Graduate Research School and Postgraduate Association at The University of Western Australia. I am extremely thankful for the incredible opportunity to study a doctoral degree and to live life in Perth, Western Australia.

I am forever indebted to my supervisors, Prof. John Kinder and Prof. Tanya Dalziell who helped me choose a topic of interest, in particular a Western Australian novel to translate into Italian and make available for Italian readers. Prof. Tanya Dalziell, in particular, guided me in the initial phases of the writing of my PhD thesis, a time when I was still unsure how to approach a doctoral degree.

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This publication contains only sole-authored work, some of which has been published and/or prepared for publication under sole authorship. The bibliographical details of the work and where it appears in the thesis are outlined below:

Gadd, Anna. "Space and Language in *Mr Scobie's Riddle*". *JASAL: Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, (2014), Vol. 14. No 1, 1-13.

"1. 1 The Outlook of the Migrant: Elizabeth Jolley's Experience and its Impact on *Mr Scobie's Riddle*"

"3.1.a Conceptual Words in *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie*"

*Lit edizioni* retains the rights to *Mr Scobie's Riddle* into Italian and has published a translation by Franca Pece, titled *L'enigma di Mr Scobie*,<sup>1</sup> in May 2014, while I was about to submit my doctoral thesis for examination. The academic translation present in this book should be regarded as a personal production by the author of this manuscript, not intended for publication as a stand-alone book, but rather as an exclusively

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *L'enigma di Mr Scobie* (Rome: Lit edizioni, 2014, trans. Franca Pece)

intellectual academic production which is one with its exegetical apparatus and which solves the purpose to gain insight into Elizabeth Jolley's novel.<sup>2</sup>

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# INTRODUCTION

The present manuscript consists of a revision of my doctoral thesis, titled: “Australia Translated: A source-oriented translation of Elizabeth Jolley’s *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*”, and undertaken at The University of Western Australia between 2011 and 2015. The thesis encompasses a source-oriented translation into Italian of Jolley’s 1983 novel, as well as an exegetical component with analyses and comments on the translation. The book is divided into two volumes: one for the exegetical component and one for the creative component. The exegetical component (Volume 1) contains an introductory chapter and different types of analysis of Elizabeth Jolley’s *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* and my translation. The creative component (Volume 2) contains *L’indovinello di Mr Scobie*, the entire translation of Jolley’s novel into Italian by the author of this publication. This book should be seen as an academic publication which captures both the outcome of my thinking process, as well as the thinking process behind my translational decisions. Theo Hermans laments how, “when we study existing translations [...] we can only see the outcome of the translator choices”<sup>1</sup> and how “the motives, the pattern of instructions which informed the choices, can only be inferred”.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this publication is to show both. The two-volume structure of this publication should allow for an easier consultation of the entire project. Showing both the choices and the motives behind them can be useful in a few different disciplines of the humanities: Translation Studies and particularly the field of applied translation; Italian Studies and Australian Literature. While scholars in Translation Studies may find this publication useful, particularly those with an interest in source-oriented techniques and foreignisation, the present work does not aim to be seen as prescriptive, as it does not contain any prescriptive norms which can be generalised and used in applied translation. It does instead describe my experience translating Jolley’s highly challenging novel into Italian.

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<sup>1</sup> Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, 23.

## The exegetical component

This book commences with an introductory chapter – Chapter 1 – titled: “Translating Elizabeth Jolley with a Source-oriented Approach” which is composed of two sections. The nature of this chapter is contextualising. In the first section, “1.1 The Outlook of the Migrant: Elizabeth Jolley’s Experience and its Impact on *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*”, information on the writer, her major successes, her themes and techniques and some contextualizing notions on *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* and on Australian literature can be found. The second section is titled “1.2 A new Approach to Translating Australian Literature” and describes the field of Australian literature translated into Italian, together with the main tendencies in such field. It also describes how some works of Italian translation from Australian literature distance themselves from such tendencies to adhere more closely to the source text (the original), rather than prioritising the norms and rules of the target language and culture (language and culture one translates into; hence Italian). These last translations inspired my approach when translating *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*.

Chapter 2 comprises a narratological analysis of the source text. This type of analysis was carried out *a priori*, before commencing translation, and serves the function of covering the main aspects of the novel, in order to reproduce them in translation. Due to the importance of the setting in the novel, the first section in Chapter 2 is dedicated to the Setting (“2.1 Setting”). Issues and arguments which stem from the setting of the novel, such as the affective dimension of the setting and the contrast between indoors and outdoors of the nursing home in which the novel is set are covered in “2.1 Setting”. 2.2 deals with free indirect discourse, narrator, voice, point of view and distance in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*. The section contains an in-depth analysis of such elements, which create in the novel a kaleidoscope of different perspectives which need to be maintained in translation. “2.3 Noise, Sound and Music in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*” comprises an analysis of one of the most important aspects of the original novel: the noise, sound and music dimension. This dimension, far from being mere background to the novel, is used to describe places, characters and even events narrated, which are often heard or overheard rather than being narrated by a more conventional third-person omniscient narrator. The final section, “2.4 Language and Languages in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*” is a study of another pivotal dimension of the novel which regards the variety of sociolects and foreign languages included in the novel.

The analysis contained in “Chapter 3: Translational Analysis of *L’indovinello di Mr Scobie*” binds together two types of analysis: an *a*

*priori* translational analysis of *Mr Scobie's Riddle* and an *a posteriori* translational analysis of *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie*". The *a priori* analysis of the source text follows the top-down model identified by Torop<sup>3</sup> which commences with the identification of a dominant and subdominant(s) of a source text and moves on to key words (conceptual words, functional expressions and fields of expression), deixis, culture-specific elements and intertextuality. While acknowledging the importance of identifying dominant aspects of a novel to translate, I chose to adopt a less structuralist approach to translational analysis, in which different aspects of the novel – which are those listed in the sections of Chapter 2 – are considered to be on the same level of importance rather than obeying a hierarchical structure. Aside from this exception, I adhered closely to Torop's model to analyse *Mr Scobie's Riddle* before translating it into Italian. The second type of analysis, *a posteriori*, contains comments on issues and arguments stemming from the translation. Most of these issues are due to cultural or linguistic differences between Australia and Italy and Australian English and Italian. The two types of translation analyses are bound together in this study for easier consultation: the *a priori* analysis is a prevision of possible problems in translation; while the *a posteriori* is a comment on problems a translator did occur into in the process. For this reason it is more convenient to have the two in the same chapter rather than in separate chapters as I initially planned. This chapter includes many extracts from *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie*, and a detailed description of translation losses and compensation strategies discovered. Many translational hypotheses are listed throughout the chapter with the purpose of showing issues and arguments stemming from the process of translation as well as different translating techniques.

The sections in Chapter 3 mirror the sections in Chapter 2: "3.1.a Conceptual Words in *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie*" builds from issues already described in "2.1 Setting" from a narratological point of view; "3.1 Deixis in Translation" is a continuation of "2.2 Free indirect discourse, narrator, voice, point of view and distance in *Mr Scobie's Riddle*" which only explores the elements belonging to the above categories which proved troublesome in the process of translation; "2.3 Noise, Sound and Music in *Mr Scobie's Riddle*" finds its translational counterpart in "3.1.c Fields of Expression: the Fugue of Voices, Noise, Sound and Music in *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie*"; finally, reflections in both "3.3 Treatment of Culture-specific Elements in *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie*" and 3.4 derive

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<sup>3</sup> See Bruno Osimo, *Traduzione e Qualità. La valutazione in ambito accademico e professionale*. (Milano: Hoepli, 2004), 91-92.

from notions previously outlined in “2.4 Language and Languages in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*”.

## The Creative Component

The creative component of this book,<sup>4</sup> which can be found in Volume 2, is an academic source-oriented translation of *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* into Italian. This translation was completed after the narratological analysis and the *a priori* translational analysis took place. My purpose in the translation of Jolley’s novel was to adhere as closely as possible to the source text, trying to preserve the narrative technique, stylistic peculiarities, themes, linguistic and cultural elements present in the source text in my translation into Italian. I chose to translate the novel in its entirety to test my source-oriented approach against a whole novel rather than extracts of the novel. Where possible, I avoided translation loss through the use of compensation strategies, bearing in mind the key aspects of Jolley’s novel.

The choice of the title “*L’indovinello di Mr Scobie*” (Mr Scobie’s Riddle) reflects my source-oriented approach: the foreign identity of Scobie, and, more precisely, his Anglophone identity, is made evident by the title Mr, left unaltered in the title. A target-oriented approach would instead prescribe a translation of “Mr” into the target correspondent: “Signor” in our case.

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<sup>4</sup> *La presente traduzione accademica è una mia produzione personale da considerarsi prettamente accademica, esclusivamente intellettuale e non pensata per la vendita. Pertanto non può essere copiata, pubblicata, riprodotta o venduta a terzi. Chiunque lo faccia incapperà nelle responsabilità civili e penali dello Stato di appartenenza o dello Stato che regola i diritti d'autore dell'opera in oggetto.*

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## CHAPTER ONE

# TRANSLATING ELIZABETH JOLLEY WITH A SOURCE-ORIENTED APPROACH

This introductory chapter is part of the exegesis of this book and its nature is contextualising. The chapter is composed of two sections. In the first section, “1.1 The Outlook of the Migrant: Elizabeth Jolley’s Experience and its Impact on *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*”, information on the writer, her major successes, her themes and techniques and some contextualizing notions on *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* and on Australian literature can be found. The second section is titled “1.2 An Approach to Translating Australian Literature” and describes the field of Australian literature translated into Italian, together with the main tendencies in such field. It also describes how some works of Italian translation from Australian literature distance themselves from such tendencies to adhere more closely to the source text (the original), rather than prioritising the norms and rules of the target language and culture (language and culture one translates into; hence Italian).

### **1.1 The Outlook of the Migrant: Elizabeth Jolley’s Experience and its Impact on *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*<sup>5</sup>**

Elizabeth Jolley has been called “one of the most distinctive literary voices of the late twentieth century. [She] left a wide-ranging body of work – novels, short stories, radio plays, essays, poetry.”<sup>6</sup> This body of work is intensely permeated with the Australian motifs of migration, isolation, place, displacement, and with the English Romantic theme of the

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<sup>5</sup> Part of this section has already appeared in print in the article Gadd, Anna. “Space and Language in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*: translating displacement into Italian”. *JASAL: Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, (2014), Vol. 14. No 1, 1-13.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Sheridan, “Celebrating Elizabeth Jolley” (In memoriam), *Australian Literary Studies*, vol 24, no 1, (2009), 95.

individual search for solace in nature, which, in the Australian literary tradition, is set in and adapted to the often hostile and threatening Australian landscapes. Numerous elements specific to Australian culture, flora and fauna are abundantly present in Jolley's work alongside elements belonging to her motherland England.

Jolley was born in Birmingham, England, to an Austrian mother and an English father, received a Quaker education, was trained as a nurse, and migrated to Western Australia in 1959 with her husband Leonard Jolley. She wrote 15 novels and 4 collections of short stories. Before the publication of *Miss Peabody's Inheritance* and *Mr Scobie's Riddle* in 1983, she was unpublished for more than 20 years, much like what occurs to her character Miss Hailey in *Mr Scobie's Riddle*, rejected 42 times<sup>7</sup>. Although her novels and short-stories are not autobiographical, the displacement felt by her characters might be "conditioned by the cultural and geographical transformations she has experienced."<sup>8</sup> According to Bennett, Jolley's work "is distinguished by the outlook of the migrant"<sup>9</sup> and, as she herself declared, she was interested in the "migrant spirit", in the sense of "people who move from one country to another in the spirit of hopes and dreams."<sup>10</sup> She described herself as a migrant who wants to make the most of the new country<sup>11</sup> and she claimed her writing would have been completely different without her experience as a migrant:

The new country makes an enormous impact on you. Because of this impact, something fresh, you attempt to make a bridge between the past and the present, something which you might not do if you stayed in the same place. I think when you do move, such a big move as this is, I mean coming to Australia, though the language is the same, it is a foreign country compared with the Midlands of England. People often ask me what would my writing have been like if I stayed in England; well, I don't know, but I think it would have been very different because of the experiences that I've had over here. I've been teaching out in the most remote parts of

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<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Mr Scobie's Riddle*, (Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1983), 218. "I don't need to tell you that my novel has been rejected for the forty-second time." From now on *Mr Scobie's Riddle* will be cited as MSR.

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Riemer, "Displaced Persons – Some Preoccupations in Elizabeth Jolley's Fiction", *Westerly*, vol 31, no 2, (1986), 65.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Bennett, *An Australian Compass. Essays on Place and Direction in Australian Literature*, (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1991), 135.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Berryman, "Spirit of Hope in a New Land", *Bicentenary '88, Newsletter of the Australian Bicentennial Authority*, vol 6, no 4, (1986), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Kirkby, Joan and Christina Wilcox. *The Nights Belong to the Novelist: Elizabeth Jolley, Australian Writer*, (Film. 1987).



the Wheatbelt and going to faraway places, the kind of thing that would never have come my way, you know, so that I've had lots of experiences here that I would have never had in England.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly to her own experience, her characters are often migrants to Western Australia. Among the characters in *Mr Scobie's Riddle* are, in fact, many wayfarers and the nursing home they reluctantly inhabit is a "place for the wayfarers."<sup>13</sup>

As a migrant to Western Australia and a traveller myself, I was fascinated by this aspect of *Mr Scobie's Riddle* and by the puzzle of different personal stories that is *Mr Scobie's Riddle*. On reading the novel for the first time I was struck to discover that every character had a different social and cultural background and, therefore, a different story to tell. The beauty of *Mr Scobie's Riddle* lies in the fact that characters often tell their stories through different sociolects or even different languages, which stand as a sign of their different cultures, hopes and dreams. As I read the novel, I wondered how to maintain this variety in translation and I decided to research into a method which would allow for their transfer across languages. The variety of sociolects is achieved in *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie*, my Italian translation, by using oral and informal registers of Italian to render the oral and informal registers present in the source text. Whenever grammar errors appear in the source text they are mirrored by errors in the target language. In order to achieve authentic Italian language in my target text, I sometimes chose to shift the error from a certain linguistic level onto a different one, more authentic in Italian, to ensure errors would be not be mere translations of the English errors, artificial and unnatural in the target language. As far as the variety of foreign languages is concerned, they were also maintained as such in my target text, avoiding operations of "domestication" of other languages and cultures.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ray Willbanks, *Australian Voices – Writers and their Work*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 112-113.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Riemer, "Between Two Worlds – An Approach to Elizabeth Jolley's Fiction". *Southerly*, vol 43, no 3, (1983), 247.

<sup>14</sup> Domestication is a concept theorised by Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, (London; New York: Routledge, 1995). 'Domestication' describes the prioritisation of the target language, its norms and its culture-specific elements. 'Foreignization', on the other hand, prioritises the source text's stylistic peculiarities and culture-specific elements over the norms and culture-specific elements existing in the target language and culture. These concepts will be further explained in Chapter 3 in regards to my treatment of stylistic peculiarities and culture-specific elements in translation.

*Mr Scobie's Riddle* narrates the lives of a group of elderly people in the nursing home of St Christopher and St Jude, owned and managed by Matron Hyacinth Price, an "eager for profit, domineering and manipulative"<sup>15</sup> "big-nurse" figure who towers above the elderly. The novel is set in Australia, in an undisclosed location. From hints spread across the novel, we can understand that it is set in Perth, Western Australia. In the words of Deniel, *Mr Scobie's Riddle* is a novel with driving energy and comic agility, characterized by a sharp style, which moves to and fro between the mournful and the comic grotesque, the public life and the private life, and the present and the past.<sup>16</sup> These movements are made possible by a number of linguistic and narrative devices, such as the use of free indirect speech and by a peculiar use of the deixis, which move the perspective from one character's point of view to another or back to the narrator. Hence the narration is extremely vibrant and never tedious, as the reader "bounces" unexpectedly from one character's mind to another. These devices will be explored in detail in section "2.2 Free Indirect Discourse, Narrator, Voice, Point of View, and Distance in Mr Scobie's Riddle and 3.2 Deixis in Translation".

The preoccupations emerging in *Mr Scobie's Riddle* – space, place, displacement, migration, search for self, quest for identity, search for a place to belong – are exquisitely Australian motifs. The dimension of space, in particular, has long played a pivotal role in the Australian literary tradition as one of the most prominent and recurrent patterns. "The wilderness mythology in Australian literature"<sup>17</sup>, or, as Inglis Moore defines it, "the spell of the bush", is

a dominant in Australian society and literature alike as the primary force, since the social patterns as a whole were born of the land itself and bred in the bush. This dominant runs throughout our writing, from the old bush songs to *The Tree of Man* and *Voss*. The bush has been the matrix of our sentiments and ideals, symbol of a distinctive national character, and a religious mystique invoking salvation for the spirit.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Gerald Manning, "Sunsets and Sunrises: Nursing Home as Microcosm in 'Memento Mori' and 'Mr. Scobie's Riddle'", *ARIEL A Review of International English Literature*, vol 18, no 2, (1987), 35.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Deniel, "Variations on a Theme", *Westerly*, vol 31, no 2, (1986), 54.

<sup>17</sup> Kate Lyons, "The Corner of your Eye and Beyond the Bush: Mythology of Place in Australian Literature", (Doctor of Creative Arts, Sydney: University of Technology, 2008), 253.

<sup>18</sup> Tom Inglis Moore, *Social Patterns in Australian Literature*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 19.

The same *topoi* of spirituality and quest for identity in an – often deserted – space are also present in contemporary fiction set in cities, rather than exclusively in the bush, in the form of “relationships between memory, landscape, the self and an Australian mythology of place”<sup>19</sup> – all themes thoroughly explored in Jolley’s *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*.

In “Between Two Worlds – An Approach to Elizabeth Jolley’s Fiction”, A. P. Riemer describes the nursing home of St Christopher and St Jude as a “place of dislocation”<sup>20</sup> where patients are perplexed, confused and trapped between two worlds as they long for their usual lives, but they are incapable of pursuing them either in the outside world or in the nursing home, where they are “voided” and bossed about by unsympathetic Matron Price. Riemer’s description of the patients’ dislocation, or displacement as I will refer to it in this book, is portrayed in the novel through the vivid contrast between the *indoors* and the *outdoors* of the nursing home and through the use of conceptual words such as “home”, “house” and “place”, as we shall see in 2.1 *Setting: indoors and outdoors, homes, houses and places* and 3.1.a *Conceptual Words in L’indovinello di Mr Scobie*. Riemer’s essay describes some of the dominant themes in Jolley’s narrative and in particular in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*: the patients’ displacement in the nursing home, the European cultural influence and the symbolic importance of biblical references, which are dominant aspects to bear in mind in translation.<sup>21</sup>

The pervasive theme of the search by “lost” Australians for an *oikos* – a home, a place to belong – is paired in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* with a sense of the past: a sense of the literary traditions of the motherland England. As in many other works of Australian literature, the English Romantic poets are cited in Jolley’s novel from a different perspective and are set in a different place. Australian characters often retreat into a landscape which has the qualities of isolation, human desolation and in which Nature becomes hostile and threatening:

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<sup>19</sup> Lyons, “The Corner of your Eye”, 253.

<sup>20</sup> Riemer, “Between Two Words”, 248.

<sup>21</sup> While I acknowledge that according to Torop – whose model for the analysis of translated texts I use in Chapter 3 – the identification of one dominant and subdominants is the starting point in translation, I choose not to reduce such a complex novel as *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* to one sole dominant aspect. Rather, I believe a series of intricately connected themes should be prioritised in translation. These themes are outlined in this introductory section and will be further analysed in Chapter 2 (from a narratological point of view) and Chapter 3 (from a translational point of view).

Within the Anglo-American literary tradition, famous exponents of English Romanticism and their works are instrumental in signposting the *topos* of the individual's search for solace through communion with the sublime. However, in the Australian literary tradition, this theme has been filtered by a different society and under different circumstances so that the universal theme of English Romanticism has become culturally specific in an Australian discourse where Nature is often hostile and threatening.<sup>22</sup>

Formica describes how Tim Winton's characters also retreat in the Western Australian landscape, where they find desolation and isolation. This retreat into the landscape, typical of Australian and especially Western Australian works, can be either real or imaginary. In the case of *Mr Scobie's Riddle* the landscape is sometimes imaginary, as the places the characters retreat into ceased to exist as real places when their families ordered their demolition (Mr Privett) or when they put tenants in them (Mr Scobie). The landscape to retreat into in *Mr Scobie's Riddle* only exists in the memories of the patients: a remembered landscape to retreat into in the mind, with the hopes of heading back to it physically in the near future. It is in these remembered landscapes that the English Romantics are introduced in Jolley's novel. Wordsworth's poem *She dwelt among untrodden ways*, for example, is mentioned by Scobie in the nursing home right before he remembers the mysterious hill which was behind his house in Rosewood East:

*She dwelt among untrodden ways* – Mr Scobie tried to remember a poem. Wordsworth was one of his favourite poets.

*She dwelt among untrodden ways*, he had no book, *She lived unknown and few could know...*

The hill behind his house, the other side of the road, accompanied the half-remembered poem in Mr Scobie's mind.<sup>23</sup>

As we shall see in "2.1 Setting", the hill behind Mr Scobie's house represents his desire to leave St Christopher and St Jude and return home. It is both a place of the past – his memories – and a place of the future – his desire to start a new life there. Due to the fact that Scobie will never make it out of the nursing home, the hill is in fact unreachable for him and represents an unreachable desire which will never come true. The aspect of the hill as an inviting mystery represent an ideal setting for Wordsworth's

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<sup>22</sup> Denise Formica, "Mesas and Muses: The Effectiveness of Translation Strategies in the Transfer of Culturally Specific References in Tim Winton's *Dirt Music*", *Literature and Aesthetics*, vol 17, no 2, (2007), 154.

<sup>23</sup> MSR, 143.

poem, as the hill is just as untrodden as the ways the woman in Wordsworth's poem dwells among. The hill is therefore an instantiation of the projection of Wordsworth's poem and English Romantic Poetry onto the Australian landscape and Australian literature.

We have seen how Elizabeth Jolley's own migrating experience from England to Australia and her cultural heritage shaped her work and in particular her novel *Mr Scobie's Riddle*. The English literary heritage, her Australian experience and the European cultures and languages spoken by the characters in *Mr Scobie's Riddle*, merge together in a beautifully complicated *ensemble* which present a particularly challenging problem for the translator. An appropriate translational approach which aims for the preservation of such features needs to be found and put to use.

This is a particular challenge in view of the prevailing approaches to the translation of contemporary Australian Literature, at least in the Italian publishing world which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3.

## 1.2 An Approach to Translating Australian Literature

The main purpose of my doctoral thesis was to translate one work of contemporary Australian literature into Italian with a source-oriented approach. Such an approach aims for the preservation of stylistic peculiarities and culture-specific elements in translation.

In *L'indovinello di Mr Scobie* I have adopted an approach to translating Australian literature which is relatively new within the field of the Australian literature available in Italian: such approach is a "source-oriented" approach.<sup>24</sup> As we shall see below, a "source-oriented" approach prioritizes stylistic features and culturally-specific elements of the "source text" (the original) rather than the features and elements belonging to the "target culture" (the culture of the translated text). Most of the Australian literary production translated into Italian does not seem to follow this approach, but rather to give more importance to the rules existing within the Italian literary polysystem.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> While a source-oriented approach has been advocated for and/or used in the translation of many Italian works of literature translated into English (see Paolo Bartoloni, *Interstitial Writing: Calvino, Caproni, Sereni and Svevo*, Market Harborough, UK: Troubador, 2003), Australian works of literature are not always translated into Italian using this approach. When making the claim that a source-oriented approach is relatively new in the field, this book only refers to the direction from Australian English into Italian and not vice versa.

<sup>25</sup> According to Itamar Even-Zohar a national literary polysystem is the combination of all of the different texts produced by a nation in their national

My main purpose when translating the novel *Mr Scobie's Riddle* into Italian is to preserve, in my target text, all stylistic peculiarities, *topoi* of Australian and English Literature, culture-specific elements, as well as references to other European languages and cultures appearing in the original. Wherever a direct preservation of such elements is not possible, for linguistic or cultural reasons, I have used compensation strategies in order to avoid translation loss.

This book creates new knowledge in that not only does it make Elizabeth Jolley's *Mr Scobie's Riddle* available to Italian readers and Italian scholars in their native language, but, departing from existing studies on Jolley's narrative technique and providing thorough narratological and translational analyses of *Mr Scobie's Riddle*, it paves the way for further studies on Jolley's style since, to borrow Tim Parks's words, "much can be learnt about a work of literature by considering the problems involved in its translation".<sup>26</sup> It also paves the way for further research on the translation into Italian of other Jolley's novels, short stories or radio plays.

I have chosen to translate *Mr Scobie's Riddle* because of its formal properties,<sup>27</sup> which represent a challenge for me as a translator and as a scholar of translation. The novel, in fact, because of its non-linear features, which are thoroughly described in Chapter 2, enables me to put theories and methods to the test against a highly challenging text and provide a critical reflection on these theories and methods.

The translator's task is never an easy one, having to be faithful both to the meaning and the style of a work of literature. This is especially true of non-linear textual features such as those we can find in Elizabeth Jolley, as well as in other Australian writers like Tim Winton, Peter Carey or David Malouf, for instance. McFarlane's word of caution that some things in translation are "necessarily beyond the control of the translator",<sup>28</sup> needs to be kept in mind when reflecting on translators' choices *a posteriori*. Some national publishing systems wittingly or unwittingly demand *bello scrivere*, fine writing. Kundera describes a tendency that many translators

language together with all of the translations from other languages and cultures. See Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem", *Poetics Today*, vol 11, no 1 (1990), 21-27.

<sup>26</sup> Tim Parks, *Translating Style. The English Modernists and their Italian Translations* (London; Washington: Cassell, 1998), vii.

<sup>27</sup> Mr Scobie's Riddle formal properties have been introduced in 1.1 *The Outlook of the Migrant: Elizabeth Jolley's Experience and its Impact on Mr Scobie's Riddle* and will be further discussed in this section.

<sup>28</sup> John McFarlane, "Modes of Translation", *The Durham University Journal*, vol 45, no 3 (1953), 77-93.

have to “obey the conventional version of good French (or good German, good English, etc.), namely the French (the German, etc.) we learn in school”,<sup>29</sup> rather than the author’s personal style. *Bello scrivere* is hence often prioritised over an author’s stylistic features. Cavagnoli too discusses how, in the Italian publishing system, there is a tendency for translations from English to have plain, fluent language in Italian, no matter the features of the original work in English. Syntax, in particular, is often deformed and rearranged.<sup>30</sup> Rearranging and deforming syntax is the error, according to Kundera, who claims that: “every author of some value transgresses against good style, and in that transgression lies the originality (and hence the *raison d’être*) of his art. The translator’s primary effort should be to understand that transgression.”<sup>31</sup>

If we take the Italian translations of Tim Winton’s *Cloudstreet* and *The Riders*,<sup>32</sup> we can observe that the Italian translators successfully mirrored the mixture of informality and almost photographic lyricism typical of Winton’s narrative. However, they channelled little effort into keeping the sharpness of the brisk sentences both novels are studded with, which they often rendered instead with longer sentences. Although longer sentences better suit both the nature of the Italian written language and what is recognized as *bello scrivere* within the Italian publishing system, they also cause repercussions on the rhythm, which is completely altered in the two translations.

The research I conducted on Winton’s translations is backed by Formica’s extensive work on the Australian contemporary fiction in Italian translation<sup>33</sup>, who also studied Italian translations of another Australian contemporary author whose writing technique failed to be faithfully represented: Peter Carey.

In the Italian translation of Carey’s *True History of the Kelly Gang*<sup>34</sup> I, like Formica, acknowledge the translator’s effort to maintain Ned’s flawed

<sup>29</sup> Milan Kundera and Linda Asher, *Testaments Betrayed*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), 110.

<sup>30</sup> See Franca Cavagnoli, *Il proprio e l’estraneo nella traduzione letteraria di lingua inglese*, (Monza: Polimetrica, 2010), 14-25.

<sup>31</sup> Milan Kundera and Linda Asher, *Testaments Betrayed*, 110.

<sup>32</sup> Tim Winton, Maurizio Bartocci trans., *Cloudstreet*. (Roma: Fazi editore, 2003). Tim Winton, Isabella Ciapetti trans., *I cavalieri*. (Roma: Fazi editore, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> See Denise Formica, *Translating Australia: The Case of Australian Contemporary Fiction in Italian Translation*. (Ph.D. diss., Monash University, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Peter Carey, Mario Biondi trans., *La ballata di Ned Kelly*, (Milano: Frassinelli, 2002).

unorthodox voice, which is characterized by orality and local detail. At the same time, though, I noticed that the language spoken by Italian Ned is somewhat artificial. This is due to the fact that within the Italian publishing system there is a misconception of what flawed unorthodox Italian should sound like. The kind of grammar errors Italian Ned makes are just not the ones a poor speaker of Italian would make. On top of that, Italian Ned's vocabulary ranges from extremely low to extremely high register, something we cannot find on the original page. Perhaps this was part of a compensation strategy for some syntactic adjustments which inadvertently elevated the character's range of lexicon. Another hypothesis revolves around changes which occurred after translation, when the target text was reviewed by a publishing house, well-known in Italy for their target-oriented tendencies, as we have seen above. Once again it could be the target system, which is the national publishing system in which the translation has been published, which affected the translation of a foreign work of literature.

Personally, I have aimed for my translation not to be "target-oriented", hence not to be negatively influenced by these trends, but rather to be "source-oriented", and therefore to mirror both the meaning *and* the style of a work of literature in another language. I have attempted to follow the example set by Italian translations of David Malouf. In *Fly away Peter*<sup>35</sup> and *Remembering Babylon*,<sup>36</sup> for instance, Malouf's expressive intensity is represented, amongst other stylistic devices, through the repetition of key words that are fundamental both as far as their meaning and, most importantly, their sound. Should a translator prioritize the fine writing tendency to use synonyms rather than repeat the key words,<sup>37</sup> in a target-oriented manner, the expressive intensity of Malouf's text would be utterly diminished. The originality of my project lies in my aim to translate *Mr Scobie's Riddle* without diminishing the stylistic beauty of the original. I aimed to translate this novel without bending to the above described existing trends of the Italian publishing system, without altering Elizabeth Jolley's "markedness".

Markedness is a concept which originated within the Prague Linguistics Circle in the 1930s. It was theorized by the Russian-born scholar Roman

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<sup>35</sup> David Malouf, *Fly Away Peter*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982).

<sup>36</sup> David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon*, (North Sydney, N.S.W.: Vintage Classics, 1993).

<sup>37</sup> Kundera writes about "a synonymizing reflex - a reflex of nearly all translators" as a need to use a great stock of synonyms instead of more simple, more obvious translating choices even when repetition has a "semantic meaning". Milan Kundera and Linda Asher, *Testaments Betrayed*, 108-113.



Jakobson and it describes “the asymmetrical and hierarchical relationship between the two poles of any opposition”.<sup>38</sup> When applied to Translation Studies, the term “markedness” refers to the “characteristic of a text that makes a part of this text stand out from the context or the co-text, differentiate itself from the utterance in a way we could easily expect. It may be lexical (for example a shift of register), syntactical (dislocations, cleft sentences), graphic etc.”.<sup>39</sup> The term “marked” can be applied to different levels and parts of a text: an author can mark the syntax, the lexis, the grammar, or the graphic layout of a text by deliberately going against the rules prescribed by what is considered conventional syntax, lexis, grammar or graphic layout in the “source literature”. A “marked” structure is a structure which does not follow the standard norms existing in a given culture and literature. For example, the author of an original novel written in English can choose to have a first person narrator whose grammar is incorrect in order to show a lower level of education. The narration will accordingly present what are usually perceived as grammar errors, but really represent the author’s choice to mark the narrator’s voice. The kind of grammar errors that show a lower level of education in the target language will need to find their place in the target text, if we wish for the original markedness to be mirrored in the target text.

Of course, there is no such thing as a binary opposition between marked and unmarked structures, but rather a whole range of nuances of markedness. When translating, I have tried to find the equivalent nuance of “markedness” in the target language. On the contrary, “unmarked” in translation comes to mean conventional, accepted as the standard, the norm in a particular language and culture. In other words, we can find unmarked structures (syntax, lexis, graphics, grammar) in a novel in those points where the syntax, lexis, graphics or grammar are perfectly correct according to the standard norms of the language in which the novel is written, or they reflect the conventions of the genre the novel belongs to. In this case, when translating, we would try and stick to the conventional syntax, lexis, graphic or grammar of the language we are translating into.

*Mr Scobie’s Riddle* is marked graphically, syntactically and lexically. The numerous different narrative frames which appear in the novel are

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<sup>38</sup> Linda Waugh, “Marked and Unmarked - a Choice between Unequals in Semiotic Structure”, *Semiotica* vol 38 num 3/4, (1982), 299.

<sup>39</sup> Bruno Osimo, *Traduzione e qualità. La valutazione in ambito accademico e professionale*, (Milano: Hoepli, 2004), 153. [Caratteristica che fa sì che una parte del testo risalti in confronto al contesto o al co-testo, si differenzi dall’enunciato nella forma in cui ce lo si potrebbe facilmente aspettare. Può essere lessicale, (per esempio un salto di registro), sintattica (dislocazioni, frasi scisse), grafica ecc.]

exemplified by the graphic markedness of the text. The continuous shift from a private to a public dimension and vice versa (from direct speech to thoughts, flights of the mind and memories expressed through a third-person narrator and through free indirect speech) results in a marked syntax. Finally, we have lexical markedness stemming from the various linguistic registers belonging to different characters appearing in the novel.

In my academic translation I endeavour to adopt a source-oriented method precisely in order to maintain the graphic, syntactical and lexical markedness of the original. This method stems from the adequacy/acceptability dichotomy theorized by Itamar Even-Zohar and further broadened by Gideon Toury<sup>40</sup>, which aims to realize “in the target language the textual relationships of a source text with no breach of its own [basic] linguistic system”.<sup>41</sup>

According to Gideon Toury, when translating a novel a translator makes a fundamental initial choice to “subject him-/herself either to the original text, with the norms it has realized, or to the norms active in the target culture”.<sup>42</sup> In other words, they either adhere closely to the source-text or they prioritise the rules active in the target publishing system. In the first case, adherence to source norms determines a translation’s adequacy, its source-orientedness. In the second case, subscription to norms originating in the target culture determines a translation’s acceptability, its target-orientedness. The initial choice, however, should not be overinterpreted: first of all, there is no such thing as a strict binary opposition between source- and target-orientedness, but rather a whole range of nuances lies in between; and secondly even if an overall choice towards one pole or the other has been made, it is not necessary, and not necessarily true, that every single lower-level decision be made in full accord with it.

My initial choice was to adhere closely to the source text. Therefore, I translated advocating for my text to “subscribe to the norms of the source text, and through them also to the norms of the source language and culture”. I made sure that the features of Jolley’s writing technique (mentioned briefly above and discussed in detail in Chapter 2) are rendered in my Italian translation, and that they are not standardized in the name of acceptability in the target language. This does not mean that the

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<sup>40</sup> Itamar Even-Zohar, “Decisions in Translating Poetry”, 32-45. See Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> Itamar Even-Zohar, “Decisions in Translating Poetry”, 56.

<sup>42</sup> Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, 56.

Italian of my translation does not make sense, but rather that wherever there is a marked structure in the source text, where the author pushes out the boundaries of the English language, there is a marked structure in the target text, and not an unmarked standard one. On the contrary, a target-oriented or acceptable approach has its focus on the production of a text which follows the literary norms of the target system, reads fluently and does not always reflect the stylistic peculiarities of the original.

### *Il pozzo*

*Il pozzo*<sup>43</sup>, the Italian translation of *The Well*,<sup>44</sup> is the only Jolley novel available to Italian readers.<sup>45</sup> Much like *Mr Scobie's Riddle*, *The Well* is not divided into chapters. Jolley uses double spacing to divide the novel into sections. The novel presents shifts from public to private dimension, is set on a farm in an isolated Western Australian country town and permeated by strong themes of loneliness and isolation. Many elements specific to the Australian culture appear on the page, together with some gourmet dishes the two main characters, Miss Hester Harper and Katherine, prepare together on Hester's farm. The language dimension is rich: there are some intertexts in German, some religious references, and the sociolects of some characters present features of orality and informality. Finally, as it occurs in *Mr Scobie's Riddle*, Noise, Sound and Music acquire a vitality which makes them fundamental in the narration and often difficult to maintain in translation.

An analysis of *Il pozzo* found a mostly target-oriented or acceptable approach, in which the text is compatible with the dominant norms of the receiving culture, with the current taste of the target system rather than adhere closely to those of the source text<sup>46</sup>. *Il pozzo*, in fact, presents a tendency to opt for translating choices that either domesticate or generalize the *realia* of the source text, which are the 'real things', words and expressions proper to a given culture, in this case the source culture. For instance, the shift from private to public dimension and vice versa is, though present, less direct, less sudden than the one in the original. The

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<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Il pozzo*, trans. Sara Caraffini (Milan: Marcos y Marcos, 1995).

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *The Well*, (Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1987).

<sup>45</sup> *Il Pozzo* was the only novel available to Italian readers as I was writing my doctoral thesis. As previously mentioned there currently is an Italian translation of *Mr Scobie's Riddle: L'enigma di Mr Scobie* (Rome: Lit edizioni, 2014, trans. Franca Pece)

<sup>46</sup> See Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, "Decisions in Translating Poetry", 56-57.

reason for this is the use of longer and more explanatory sentences, possibly in order to wittingly or unwittingly clarify the source text and make it easier for the Italian reader to comprehend. *Realia* in *Il pozzo* move away from the source culture from which they come from and either come closer to the target cultural system (domestication) or to a western common knowledge (standardization). Examples are: “roo bar”<sup>47</sup> which becomes a more general “griglia”,<sup>48</sup> even though the term is now commonly used even in Italian as a linguistic loan; “roo”<sup>49</sup> which is translated as “kangaroo”<sup>50</sup> in Italian, the title “Miss”, always rendered with “signorina”<sup>51</sup> or “sherry trifle”<sup>52</sup>, which becomes an unspecified “dolce allo sherry”<sup>53</sup> (sherry sweet) in Italian. It is not clear whether the target-oriented choices have been made by the translator or by the publisher. As we will see in “2.4 Language and Languages in Mr Scobie’s Riddle”, within the publication of Australian literature translated into Italian there is a tendency to “often forcibly domesticate the text without consulting the translator”<sup>54</sup>.

The same tendency is applied to elements of orality in some of the characters’ sociolects. For example, on page 10 of the original and 17 of the Italian translation, Mrs Grossman’s voices her opinion on the recent opening of a business next door. Her sociolect presents a few elements of orality: the repeated “I axe you”; “Mr Grossman would rather sit hisself up in the back shed with his lunch in a bag nor have it looking at all that lot”.<sup>55</sup> Such elements have unfortunately been standardised in the Italian, where Mrs Grossman’s rant loses all the oral flavour it has in the original. “I axe you” has been rendered with “Vi ammazzerei”<sup>56</sup> (I would kill you) and some translantants are far more formal than the original (“Mi domando e dico!” (I wonder and say). The choice of the subjunctive “perche tutti possano vederlo” is not in accord with the rest of the oral and informal indignant talk Mrs Grossman is giving. Finally, the noise, sound and

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<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *The Well*, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Il pozzo*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *The Well*, 7.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Il pozzo*, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Examples can be found throughout the text. See Elizabeth Jolley, *The Well*, 5 and the corresponding Elizabeth Jolley, *Il pozzo*, 15, for instance, where the source text’s “Miss” is rendered with the target text’s “signorina” six times.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *The Well*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Il pozzo*, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Franca Cavagnoli, “Vola Gigino. Translating David Malouf’s novels into Italian”, *Southerly* (vol 63, no 1, 2003), 74.

<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *The Well*, 10.

<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth Jolley, *Il pozzo*, 17.

music dimension has been respected in the translation: at the very start of the novel, Katherine and Miss Harper come back from a party where the “pussycat freeze” has been playing (and Katherine is still singing it in the car).

The music dimension has been respected in the translation, with some minor normalization occurring: “weep-woop” translated as “oops”, a much more common noise in Italian, repeated twice in the following portion of text.

For my Italian translation of *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* I propose the title *L’indovinello di Mr Scobie*, which already includes an example of a source-oriented translation choice. Keeping the English title “Mr.” means acknowledging that the reader of the target text will know perfectly that they are facing a foreign text which has undergone the process of translation. It means recognizing and accepting the foreignness of the text. On the contrary, if I rendered “Mr.” with the Italian equivalent “Signor”, I would adopt a target-oriented approach. I would domesticate Scobie as an Italian character, possibly with the conscious or unconscious aim of facilitating the reading task for the Italian reader, and create some confusion as to where this hypothetical “Signor Scobie” really comes from, having an Italian title, but a foreign surname. In other words, in a target-oriented approach, the translator makes the text come closer to the reader, for instance by familiarizing all culture-specific elements; whereas in a source-oriented approach the effort of getting closer to the text is made by the reader, who “travels” towards the source-text and culture, and is enriched by reading this foreign novel.

# CHAPTER TWO

## NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Chapter 2 comprises a narratological analysis of the source text (original). This type of analysis was carried out *a priori*, before commencing translation, and solves the function of covering the main aspects of the novel, in order to reproduce them in translation. Due to the importance of the setting in the novel, the first section in Chapter 2 is dedicated to the Setting (“2.1 Setting”). Issues and arguments which stem from the setting of the novel, such as the affective dimension of the setting and the contrast between indoors and outdoors of the nursing home in which the novel is set are covered in “2.1 Setting”. 2.2 deals with free indirect discourse, narrator, voice, point of view and distance in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*. The section contains an in-depth analysis of such elements, which create in the novel a kaleidoscope of different perspectives which need to be maintained in translation. “2.3 Noise, Sound and Music in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*” comprises an analysis of one of the most important aspects of the original novel: the noise, sound and music dimension. This dimension, far from being mere background to the novel, is used to describe places, characters and even events narrated, which are often heard or overheard rather than being narrated by a more conventional third-person omniscient narrator. The final section, “2.4 Language and Languages in *Mr Scobie’s Riddle*” is a study of another pivotal dimension of the novel which regards the variety of sociolects and foreign languages included in the novel. The structure of the sections in this chapter will be mirrored by the structure of the sections in Chapter 3, which aims to analyse the elements described here from a translational point of view.

### 2.1 Setting

This section is dedicated to issues and arguments which stem from the setting of *Mr Scobie’s Riddle* and have repercussions on the methodology I make use of when translating the novel. Rather than exploring the mere physicality of the novel, a more affective dimension of setting will be analyzed here: we shall briefly refer to the contrast between the indoors