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The Tui and the Boar (*L'allodola e il cinghiale*) by Nico Orengo

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The Tui and the Boar is a New Zealand English translation of Nico Orengo's short novel *L'allodola e il cinghiale*, published by Einaudi in 2001. The excerpt presented here represents approximately the first half of the narrative. The original purpose of this translation project was to examine the controversial methodological approach of full-domestication through the practical application of my own translation. Domestication as an approach, while favoured historically, is often marginalised in contemporary translation studies due to a perceived potential to trivialise or negate original cultures. While there are certainly cases where this is true, I believe that the methodology still offers the modern translator and his or her audience unique benefits, aiding a possibly improved reception of a text, reconstructing a familiarity that corresponds with the original; a contextual fidelity. Thus, in this translation there has been a complete resetting of the story; originally set in Piedmont, Italy, it has now been transferred to New Zealand's King Country. My intention throughout this project was to create a version of Orengo's story that felt entirely authentic. I wanted New Zealand to appear as the original setting to an ignorant reader, while at the same time avoiding being excessively obvious or clichéd.

In any translation there is always an interpretive aspect, this being particularly true in a full-domestication. However, even this as an approach is not necessarily, or even possibly, absolute, and certainly there are still elements in this domestication that have been influenced by the original setting, highlighting how even more extreme translation practices cannot be so cleanly defined. While specific alterations can be discerned from the text itself, here are a few general notes on my own domesticating manoeuvres in the translation:

Setting

L'allodola e il cinghiale (AC) was set in Orengo's native Piedmont, in Northwest Italy. This is never made explicitly clear in the narrative, but can soon be discerned by identifying the small collection of place names provided by Orengo in the source text. However even then, the villages are rather insignificant, tucked away in the extreme northwest of the country, thus it would be surprising if they would be familiar even to an Italian reader. Immediately I wanted to achieve the same result: a semi-ambiguous setting. However to fit with the original plot the new setting had to also meet other criteria. Most notably, it had to:

- Have a population of wild boar
- Be a small farming community
- Have native bush near farmland
- Have pine plantations
- Be next to the sea
- Be fairly isolated

After scouring New Zealand, I ultimately found the ideal location in the small communities that fringe the bays surround the Raglan harbour in the King Country.

Time

There are also very limited temporal clues in AC. It is never made clear in which era the story is set, and only through fleeting and minimal references to such things as mobile phones does it

become apparent that it was set more or less contemporaneously to the time in which it was written: 2001. The season, however, is made obvious. It is soon revealed that it is approaching Christmas, placing it in the Northern Italian winter, this supported by constant references towards the cold. This was problematic. The idea of the approaching first Christmas without the mother was paramount to the tone and emotion of the story. However, this instantly conflicts with the allusions to the cold weather, as in New Zealand December is one of the warmest months. Nevertheless, the enduring theme of the cold and all it represented; the boy's discomfort outside with his father and conversely the comfort he experiences in the warmth of his bed and uncle's house, had a metaphorical significance that I did not want to dismiss. I remedied this issue by pushing the timeframe in *The Tui and the Boar* (TB) slightly back, setting it in the New Zealand spring, which is still appropriately close to Christmas and when the temperatures remain sufficiently low, especially in the early morning and evening when much of the novel is set. However, several more concrete changes were necessary; for example, all references to snow had to be removed.

Perhaps the most significant change was the issue surrounding the Christmas tree. In AC Marco spots a little fir tree that he wants to carry down with him on the way back to make into their Christmas tree. Obviously this contrasts with the new season in TB, as chopping down a Christmas tree in spring is not a plausible action. Instead I digressed slightly from the original to make Sam want to tag a little pine tree as his own, with the intention of returning to get it just before Christmas, a common practice that still allows the preservation of the constantly revisited tree motif in the story.

Flora and Fauna

Flora and fauna are instantly defined by their setting. Piedmont as presented by Orengo in AC is characterised by farmland bordered by great forests of chestnuts, oaks and firs. Conversely, the areas of native forest surrounding the small communities amongst the bays of the Raglan harbour are defined by a combination of low and high canopy forests, exhibiting such endemic plant species as *tōtara*, *manuka* and the Northern hard beech. These areas of native bush are interspersed with cleared farmland and pine plantations (pine also being the equivalent of the silver fir as the classic New Zealand Christmas tree). There are also references to introduced species of plants, especially agricultural flora, which have been adjusted accordingly to match the change of climate and season.

The most important references to fauna in the novel are undoubtedly the two title characters: *L'allodola* and *il cinghiale*. *Il cinghiale* remains in the translation as a boar; however I have chosen to change *L'allodola* (lark) to the native tui. This choice was twofold. Firstly, in colloquial English, the word lark can allude to an amusing incident, folic or spree, which lends to a possible misinterpretation of the title. Secondly, though there are larks in New Zealand, they are far from commonplace or universally known, so I decided to use the iconic and well-known tui in its place.

Language

Orengo wrote AC in a fairly standard Italian, mixed with a few regionalisms and dialectal influences, notably from Ligurian and Piedmontese. I have translated into a New Zealand English appropriate for the King Country setting and subject matter. Features I have employed include:

- The standard spelling and grammatical conventions of New Zealand English
- Features of colloquial New Zealand English, especially in the dialogue. (e.g. *Yeah*, truncated questions, frequent elisions and abbreviations)
- The use of Māori place names and proper nouns for flora and fauna (e.g. *Ruakiwi*, *tōtara*, *manuka*, *kiwi*)
- The use of specific words from a typical rural/hunting jargon (e.g. *bush*, *rock bivvy*)
- The alteration of names to fit into an expected New Zealand English (e.g. *Sam*, *Gary*)

Cultural References

Any literary work necessarily contains countless explicit and implicit references towards the culture from which it comes. In dealing with such references in this translation project, I chose to only replace them with equivalents in the target culture if they appeared awkward in the new domestic context. Thus, while some references were changed, others remained in their original form. Examples include:

- Equivalence: There are two references to wine in AC which have been translated with two different equivalents in each instance in TB to merge with the new setting (the hunter takes wine in his pack in AC, but bourbon in TB/the uncle offers the young boy wine in AC, but coffee in TB).
- Retention: The reference to the *presepe* (nativity scene) has been retained as, even though it is perhaps more expected in the Italian setting, it can still exist in the new setting, making using an equivalent not obligatory.

I believe domestication as an approach to translation offers a translator a unique opportunity to not only examine and dissect an original text, rooted in a foreign culture, but to also to scrutinise his own. Significant elements of the original have been altered to increase familiarity to the new audience, but nevertheless *L'allodola e il cinghiale* and *The Tui and the Boar* remain the same story; the characters, plot and theme remain the same, simply seen through different eyes.

L'allodola e il cinghiale

-...l'ora di andare. Alzati.

Il padre lo strattonò sul gomito che sporgeva dalle lenzuola. Era presto, molto presto. Marco guardò verso le persiane: la luce sulla piazza era ancora accesa.

- Vestiti pesante. Fa Freddo... – gli disse il padre, mentre usciva dalla stanza.

Marco sbadigliò, il letto era caldo. Gli spiaceva alzarsi e lasciare lí i suoi sogni. Anche quelli tristi. Ma la giornata sarebbe stata lunga. E piú lunga ancora se avesse fin da subito contribuito a peggiorare l'umore del padre.

S'infilò le calze, i pantaloni, il maglione e andò in cucina. Il padre stava riempiendo una borsa con pane, salame, una bottiglia di vino e una d'acqua.

Macro guardò i fuochi. Erano spenti.

Guardò la sua tazza piena di latte. Disse: - È freddo -, poi si morse la lingua, girando le spalle al padre.

- Mettici dello zucchero, ti riscaldereà. Non perder tempo.

Marco bevve il latte in piedi guardando oltre il bordo della tazza, verso l'angolo della cucina dove c'erano il fucile e la cartucciera.

The Tui and the Boar

“...Time to go. Get up.”

His father tugged on the elbow poking out of the sheet. It was early, very early. Sam looked through the shutters; the light was still on outside.

“Dress warm. It's cold...” his father said, leaving the room.

Sam yawned. His bed was warm. He didn't want to get up and abandon his dreams, even the sad ones. But the day would be long, and longer still if he did anything to worsen his father's mood.

He put on some socks, pants and a jersey and went into the kitchen. His father was filling a bag with some sandwiches, chocolate, a bottle of water and a hipflask of bourbon.

Sam looked at the fire. It wasn't lit.

He looked at his cup, full of milk. “It's cold” he said, immediately biting his tongue and turning his back to his father.

“Put some sugar in it. It'll warm you up. Don't mess around.”

Sam drank the milk on his feet, peering over the rim of the cup towards the corner of the kitchen where the rifle and cartridge belt stood.

Non gli piacevano i fucili. Non gli piaceva la caccia. Lui aveva paura dei cinghiali. E non gli importava niente che i cinghiali entrassero per le fasce a mangiare patate o ranuncoli.

Al padre la caccia piaceva. E odiava quei cinghiali che gli entravano nei coltivi e nell'orto.

- Non perdiamo tempo. Hai finito di bere? Prendi la giacca.

Marco raccolse lo zucchero sul fondo della tazza con il dito e andò a staccare la giacca di cuoio dal chiodo.

Uscirono, padre e figlio, in un'aria di cartavetro. Il padre si tirò su il bavero e il figlio si chiuse i bottoni. Era notte, era un buio spesso di blu. Cominciarono a salire verso Ciabauda, il padre portava lo zaino in spalla e teneva il fucile sotto l'ascella. Marco gli camminava dietro, cercando di allontanare il torpore che ancora l'avvolgeva e trattenere il tepore del letto intorno allo stomaco, dove gli si era fermata, come un grumo, la scodella di latte.

L'alba sul mare tardava. Era inverno, mancava poco a Natale.

Pensando a Natale Marco ebbe un brivido. Il primo Natale loro due da soli, senza la madre. Chissà se poteva fare ugualmente il presepe in cucina e il pino in sala. Chissà se il padre gliel'avrebbe permesso. Magari avrebbe voluto che fosse un giorno come un altro, simile a quelle domeniche in cui non salivano più alla messa e lui se ne andava a lavorare come nei giorni qualsiasi.

- Allunga un po' il passo, dài...

Marco s'affrettò, cercando di non inspirare troppa aria, sapeva ancora tanto di notte e terra umida. Per non pensare al cinghiale si sforzò di ricordare dove fosse la scatola del presepe.

Era la madre a custodirla. Ogni anno era lei a riporre nel cotone il bambino, il bue e l'asinello, ad avvolgere nella paglia i pastori e i re magi, a proteggere le piccole palle di vetro per l'albero e il puntale con la stella.

He didn't like guns. He didn't like hunting. In fact he was scared of the boars. And in any case, it made no difference to him if they came into the gardens to dig up the potatoes or turnips.

His father, however, loved hunting and he hated the boars that came into the vegetable plots and garden.

"Don't mess around. You done? Get your jacket."

Sam scooped up the sugar from the bottom of the cup with his finger, then went to get his jacket off the hook.

They left, father and son, into the bitter air. His father pulled up his collar as Sam zipped up his jacket. It was still night, a blue darkness. They began climbing up towards Rangipu. His father carried the pack and kept the gun beneath his arm. Sam was walking behind, trying to shake off the drowsiness still hanging over him and to keep the warmth of his bed in his stomach where the mug of milk had settled like a lump.

The sunrise was late on the sea; it was a brisk spring morning, a few months from Christmas.

Thinking of Christmas made Sam shudder. The first Christmas with just the two of them. Without his mother. Who knew whether they would still set up the nativity in the kitchen, or the tree in the lounge? Who knew if his father would even allow it? Maybe he would want it to be a day just like any other, just like the Sundays when they didn't go to church anymore and he simply went out to work like every other day.

"Pick up the pace a bit. Come on."

Sam sped up, trying not to breathe in too much air. He was already well aware of the ways of the night and damp earth. Trying not to think about the boars he instead tried to remember where the box was that they kept the nativity set in.

It used to be his mother's domain. It was her every year that would put the baby Jesus back in the cotton, the cow and the donkey. It was her that would wrap up the shepherds and the three kings in straw, her that

Era lei che a metà dicembre portava la scatola in cucina a ripuliva le piastrelle vicino al piano del putagè che avrebbe ospitato la piccola processione di pastori e pecorelle verso la capanna di legno.

Quest'anno no. Non sarebbe piú stato cosí, Marco provò a pensare come sarebbe stato.

- Fai attenzione a dove metti i piedi.

Marco aveva inciampato in una radice di pino che attraversava il sentiero. Pensò che era meglio provare a tener dietro al passo del padre, senza andarsi a cercare quel che non c'era piú. Ma già non era facile dirlo, pensarlo poi...

Con la coda dell'occhio Marco vide chiaro sul mare. L'alba arrivò preceduta dal fischio di un'allodola. Il ragazzo girò lo sguardo verso sinistra e colse una piccola macchia arancione all'orizzonte. Improvvisa l'aria se fece meno tagliente.

- Ancora mezz'ora e ti faccio prender fiato da Guido, - disse il padre senza voltarsi.

Arrivarono in Ciabauda con il sole alle gambe. Sotto il pergolato, ad aspettarli c'era Guido con una bottiglia in mano.

- Per il figliolo, latte o vino? – chiese.

- Il latte l'ha preso. Dagliene un dito, che non mi si addormenti per strada.

- Il latte era freddo, - disse Marco senza guardare il padre.

- Ce n'è un bricco sul putagè. Il fuoco è acceso. Ti aggiusti? – chiese Guido.

- Ormai deve imparare, - disse il padre.

Marco entrò in casa e fu avvolto dal tepore della stufa a legna, che gli ricordava quello del letto. Andò in cucina, dove il profumo di ulivo che bruciava era piú intenso. Spostò il bricco del latte sul fuoco e andò alla madia a cercare un pezzo di pane, poi verso la credenza a prendere una tazza. Spezzò il pane nella tazza e andò a sorvegliare la curva del latte nel bricco.

protected the little glass balls and the star for the tree. It was her that in the middle of December would bring the box into the kitchen and polish the tiles by the top of the stove that would hold the little procession of sheep and shepherds towards the wooden stable.

But not this year. It would never be like that again. He tried to imagine what it *would* be like.

“Watch your step.”

He had tripped on a pine root that crossed the path. He reckoned that it would be better to try and follow his father's steps, instead of searching for something that wasn't there anymore. It wasn't easy to talk about it, let alone believe it.

Sam noticed a shimmer on the water with the corner of his eye. Dawn had arrived, marked by the call of a tui. Sam turned towards the left and caught a flicker of green on the horizon. All of a sudden the air became less cutting.

“Another half hour and I'll let you catch your breath at Gary's” said his father without turning.

They reached Rangipu with the sun on their legs. Uncle Gary was on the porch waiting for them, mug in hand.

“What about the kid? Milk or coffee?” he asked.

“He's already had some milk. Give him a bit more. I don't want him falling asleep on me.”

“It was cold” Sam said without looking at his father.

“There's some in a jug on the stove. It's on. You'll manage?” asked Gary.

“It's time he learnt” his father said.

Sam went into the house and was instantly smothered by the heat of the wood-burner, reminding him of his bed. He went into the kitchen where the smell of the burning pine was even more intense. He shifted the jug of milk onto the heat and went into the pantry to find a piece of bread, then to the sideboard to get a mug. He broke the bread up into the mug and then went back to the stove to keep an eye on the milk.

Non gli piaceva la pelle del latte, la madre lo sapeva e spegneva il fuoco prima che bollisse. Afferrò il bricco e si scottò le dita, si morse le labbra per non gridare e d'istinto aprì il rubinetto dell'acqua.

Poi si ricordò che una volta la madre gli aveva detto che l'acqua fredda su una bruciatura era peggio e non toglieva il dolore. Soffiò forte sulle dita, mentre asciugava le lacrime; con uno straccio riprese il bricco del latte e lo versò sul pane. Avrebbe voluto sedersi al tavolo a mangiare, ma sapeva che il padre non avrebbe gradito. Così uscì fuori e andò a sedersi fra i due uomini.

Guido stava raccontando che la notte prima i cinghiali gli avevano rivoltato due fasce di calendola e una di patate.

- Bisogna sterminarli, - disse il padre, - prima che scendano a mangiarci in casa. Prima che ci costringano ad andare a comprare verdura e sementi. Tu il tuo io il mio. Un pallettone nel collo, dritto al cuore.

- Ci vuole altro. Deve intervenire la Provincia, la Regione, devono dare più permessi e meno immissioni. Si riproducono come conigli.

- Non bisogna dargli tregua.

Marco guardò il padre. Era diventata un'ossessione. Due, tre volte la settimana saliva per il Gran Mondo o per il bosco di castagni a cercare il suo cinghiale, quello che gli visitava le fasce di patate e di ranuncoli, che gli aveva mezzo distrutto le piante di pomidori.

Adesso che non c'era più la madre, ci portava anche lui. Prima Marco poteva dire di no: ora non più.

Quella del cinghiale era diventata una fissazione. Come se fra Belenda, Gran Mondo, Sette Camini ci fosse un unico, enorme cinghiale che lui doveva abbattere per salvare la sua terra.

Il padre si era alzato, bevendo l'ultimo sorso in piedi, poi si era caricato lo zaino in spalla e aveva preso il fucile sotto l'ascella.

- Non me lo stancare troppo, - aveva detto

He didn't like it when a skin formed on the milk; his mother knew this and she would always take it off the heat before it boiled. He grabbed the jug and burnt his finger. He bit his lip to stop himself crying out and instinctively turned on the tap.

But then he remembered that his mother had once told him that putting cold water on a burn only made it worse, and didn't do anything to relieve the pain. He blew hard on his finger, wiping away the tears. With a cloth he picked up the jug again and poured the milk over the bread. He would have preferred to sit and eat at the table, but he knew that his father wouldn't approve, so he went outside and sat between the two men.

Uncle Gary was saying that the night before the boars had turned up two of his beds of cabbages and another of potatoes.

"They need to be exterminated" said his father "before they come into our houses and eat us too. Before they force us to go and buy our vegetables and more seeds. You yours, and me mine. A bullet. Right in the neck. Straight to the heart."

"It'll take more than that. The village has to step up, the whole region even. They need to give out more permits and less restrictions. They breed like rabbits."

"We can't go easy on them."

Sam looked at his father. It had become an obsession. Two or three times a week now he would head out towards Ruakiwi or to the valley to find *his* boar. The one that visited his plots of potatoes and turnips, the one that had destroyed half his tomato plants.

Now that his mother wasn't around, he took Sam too. Before he could have said no. Not anymore. The whole mess about the boar had become a fixation. As if between Ohautira, Ruakiwi and Te Akau there was a single, enormous boar that he could kill to save his land.

His father had got up, drinking the last mouthful on his feet. He already had the pack on his back and the gun under his arm.

"Don't wear my boy out too much" Gary

Guido passando una mano sulla testa di Marco.

- Con un po' di fatica cresce.

Marco era arrossito. Era da tanto che nessuno lo accarezzava piú, come se il mondo si fosse dimenticato di lui.

Marco ringraziò per il latte e il padre alzò il braccio in segno di saluto.

- Andiamo che la strada è lunga. E in salita.

Il sole batteva alla schiena e l'aria si era intiepidita. Guardando in alto c'era il Gran Mondo: pietrame, rocce e radi pini. Verso destra il bosco di castagni e di lecci. Marco avrebbe preferito prendere per il Gran Mondo, camminare nella luce e nell'aria azzurra. Si sentiva di buon umore e attraversando l'ultima uliveto si era messo a fischiare, imitando l'allodola.

- Risparmia il fiato. Ne avrai bisogno. Nell'ubago del bosco si cammina male. Ma sento che è lí, di giorno s'intanano. E lí andremo a prenderlo.

Marco aveva smesso di fischiare.

Uscirono dall'uliveto e piegarono verso il bosco di castagni e lecci. Tra l'uliveto e il grande bosco incontrarono una piccola macchia di abeti bianchi. Marco si fermò a guardarli. Erano già come coperti di neve o di batuffoli di cotone. Gli sarebbe piaciuto tagliarne uno, il piú piccolo, e portarselo giú, al ritorno.

- Cosa fai? – chiese il padre, - non cammini?

Marco avrebbe voluto dirgli che si avvicinava Natale e loro erano ancora senza albero, invece disse:

- Perché non abbiamo un cane? Sarebbe bello avere un cane, - e aggiunse, per compiacere il padre, - un cane da caccia...

Il padre lo guardò perplesso, poi, scrollando le spalle e riprendendo a camminare, gli rispose:

- Se vai a cinghiali duran poco.

Marco cercò la mira fra una roccia e un

said, tousling Sam's hair.

“Hard work builds character.”

Sam went red. It had been so long since someone had touched him; it had been as if the world had forgotten about him.

Sam thanked him for the milk and his father raised his hand in a wave.

“Let's get going. It's a long walk. Uphill.”

The sun was beating on their backs now the air had warmed up a little. Looking down there was the river: a small valley of stones, rocks and the odd pine tree. Towards the right was the bush of tōtara and beech. Sam would've preferred to take the route following the river, to walk in the sun and the blue air. Even so, he was in high spirits. Crossing the last creek he started to whistle, mimicking the tui.

“Save your breath. You'll need it. It's tough walking in the thick of the bush. But I know he's there. During the day they hide in their burrows. And we're going in there to get him.”

He stopped whistling.

They came out of the valley and curved towards the bush. Leaving the river, they came across a small cluster of stray pine trees. Sam stopped to look at them.

In the morning light it already looked like they were glistening with lights. He would've liked to mark one, the smallest one with a perfect shape, and come back to find it just before Christmas.

“What's going on?” asked his father “Why have you stopped?”

Sam wanted to tell him that Christmas was coming, and that they would soon need a tree, but instead said:

“Why don't we get a dog? That would be so cool.” And then added to please his father, “a hunting dog...”

His father looked at him, baffled. Then shrugged his shoulders and setting off again said:

“If it's boars you're after, dogs don't last.”

Sam looked at the tree one last time,

ulivo. Sii disse che, tornando indietro, se l'umore del padre fosse stato migliore, avrebbe saputo come ritrovare il suo abete bianco.

- Adesso entriamo, - disse il padre.

Marco guardò il bosco. Era una macchia buia. Spinse lo sguardo al cielo azzurro. Cercò di afferrare il canto dell'allodola che veniva ormai in lontananza dall'uliveto, in basso. Nel bosco avrebbe ritrovato il buio e l'umido della notte, un buio più immobile, un'umidità più densa. Dovevano passare ore e ore fermi, sepolti sotto foglie di castagno in attesa di veder arrivare il branco o qualche capo isolato.

Guardò il padre spiare il cielo, ascoltare il vento e la sua direzione perché il cinghiale ha il naso fine, poi lo sentì ripetere: - Entriamo.

Marco lo seguì in punta di piedi.

Ora avanzavano su un sentiero, nel buio, attenti a non spezzare i rami, a non far frusciare una foglia. Dovevano raggiungere la postazione, una buca al riparo di un masso che sbarrava il loro odore.

Camminarono per oltre un'ora, forse due, piano, curvi, senza dire una parola, mimetizzandosi nel silenzio dei grandi castagni immobili. Andavano senza sentire un fruscio che fosse di serpe o lepre. I cinghiale distruggevano i nidi di tordo o di fagiano selvatico, confinando il bosco al silenzio.

Quando arrivarono accanto alla postazione il padre aprì lo zaino e prese il sacchetto di ciliegie. Sempre tenendo il fucile sotto l'ascella andò a spargerle all'inizio dei sentieri che si biforcavano ai piedi del masso: un mucchietto qui, uno là, qualcuna sparsa su un breve spiazzo. Poi tornò indietro e fece cenno col capo a Marco di seguirlo.

Andarono a sistemarsi nella buca al riparo del masso. Il padre sistemò lo zaino fra sé e Marco, si slacciò la cartucciera allungandola sullo zaino e coprì di foglie la canna del fucile, puntandolo verso il basso.

between a rock and a small fern. He told himself that on the way back if his father's mood had improved, he'd know exactly where to find his little pine, and would mark it somehow as his own.

"Now we go in" said his father.

Sam looked at the bush. It was a dark blur. He looked up at the blue sky, trying to hold onto the song of the tui that now came from the valley below. In the bush he would again encounter the darkness and dampness of the night. A stiller darkness, a thicker dampness. They would spend hours upon hours still, buried under the beech leaves, waiting for the arrival of the drove or some isolated leader.

He watched his father observe the sky and listen to the wind and its direction; the boar had a keen nose. Then he repeated:

"Now we go in."

Sam cautiously followed.

They followed a path in the darkness, careful not to break a branch or rustle any leaves. They had to reach the rock bivvy, a sheltered hollow in a rock that blocked their smell.

They walked for over an hour, two even, cautiously winding without a word, camouflaged in the silence of the great looming tōtara. They went on without hearing so much as a rustle from a bird or lizard. The boars had long ago destroyed the nests and burrows of the once native kiwi and kakapo, condemning the forest to silence.

When they reached their station, his father opened the pack and took out a packet of cherries. Keeping the gun under his arm, he went and scattered them at the beginning of the path that forked out at the foot of the rock. A little pile here, another there, some more spread out in a small clearing. Then he came back and nodded at Sam to follow.

They went and hid in the shelter of the hollow. His father put the pack between them and undid the cartridge belt, laying it over the pack, and covered the barrel of the gun with some leaves, pointing it downwards.

Ora cominciava l'attesa.

Marco si rincantucciò tra le foglie, cercando la protezione dello zaino, tentando di dimenticare l'umido della terra e delle foglie che trapassava i vestiti. Provava a concentrarsi sul tepore del latte che sentiva ancora nello stomaco. Non doveva addormentarsi, il padre non gliel'avrebbe permesso. Doveva essere vigile, ascoltare il bosco, sentire se l'animale, abbandonata la tana, avesse colto nell'aria immobile il profumo delle ciliegie.

Solo dopo un po' Marco cominciò a distinguere, in quel buio così fitto, i tronchi dei castagni e dei lecci, i profili dei rami, quello delle foglie seghettate, i tanti toni di verde, da quelli scuri vicino a terra a quelli più chiari verso la cima degli alberi, oltre la quale l'azzurro del cielo rimaneva bianco, un bianco sporco.

Marco ebbe un brivido, perché ora che ci vedeva di più, sentiva anche di più.

Sentiva la terra fredda risucchiarlo, come in certi sogni che faceva la notte, quando d'improvviso si trovava disteso non più nel suo letto ma nella terra e la terra si apriva e lui sprofondava e soffocava perché la terra gli entrava nelle orecchie, nella bocca.

Allora si svegliava con il cuore in gola e gridava «mamma!» Poi girava la faccia sul cuscino e si placava piangendo in silenzio, come stava facendo ora, lacrime calde.

Il padre gli diede una gomitata, un colpo secco e veloce. Marco temette che l'avesse scoperto nel suo pianto silenzioso; ma il padre voleva solo richiamare la sua attenzione. Si era battuto l'indice contro l'orecchio, guardando davanti a sé. Marco si sollevò un poco sui gomiti, cercò di infilare lo sguardo fra le rocce. Non vedeva nulla, non sentiva nulla se non il denso silenzio del bosco.

Si massaggiò entrambe le orecchie, strizzò gli occhi per liberarli dalle lacrime ancora appese. E gli venne da pensare, con un sorriso, che avrebbe preferito avere un padre pescatore ed essere in barca, anche soffrendo, come soffriva un po', il mal di mare. Avrebbe preferito starsene in mezzo all'acqua, sotto il cielo, e guardare la costa e

So began the wait.

Sam hid away in the corner amongst the leaves, yearning for the protection of the pack. He tried to forget the dampness of the earth and the leaves getting into his clothes, instead trying to focus on the warmth of the milk he still felt in his stomach. He couldn't fall asleep; not that his father would have let him anyway. He had to stay alert, to listen to the bush, to hear if any animal, lair abandoned, caught the smell of the cherries in the stagnant air.

After a while Sam began to be able to distinguish through the thick darkness the beech trunks from the manuka, the outlines of the branches, those with jagged leaves and the countless shades of green; the darker greens near the ground right up to lighter tones of the canopy. Above the sky remained white, a dirty white.

Sam shuddered. Now that he could see more, he could feel more too.

He felt the cold earth sucking him in, just like in the dreams he had where he found himself lying not in his bed, but on the earth which began to open and consume him, suffocating him as it got into his ears and mouth. He would wake in a cold sweat and cry out "Mum!" Then, turning on his pillow he would comfort himself by crying silently. Cold tears, just as they were now.

His father gave him a nudge, a quick sharp jolt. Sam was worried that he had spotted his silent tears, but he had only wanted to get his attention. He tapped his finger against his ear, looking around. Sam propped himself up a little on his elbows, trying to peer between the rocks. He couldn't see anything. He couldn't hear anything except the dense silence of the bush.

He rubbed his ears and blinked to expel any lingering tears. He thought, smiling to himself, how he would rather a fisherman for a father, and to be in a boat right now, even though he would often get seasick. He would rather stay in the middle of the ocean, beneath the sky, watching the coast and inhaling the breeze.

respirare la brezza.

Già, ma nessun pesce veniva a devastare gli orti, a mangiare l'uva e le pesche, a scalfare cespugli di margherita e ranuncoli. I pesci se ne stavano sott'acqua a pensare ai fatti loro. E poi, si chiedeva Marco, abbattere un cinghiale cosa avrebbe cambiato? Il bosco ne era pieno, un altro sarebbe sceso a rovistare tra le fasce. Non sarebbe stato meglio proteggerle con la rete, come già facevano tanti padri dei suoi amici? E poi, se proprio lo si doveva fare, non era più sensato andare alla battuta in gruppo? I cacciatori si mettevano in dieci, anche venti, avevano i telefonini, circondavano il bosco, non lasciavano varchi aperti. «Ci deve pensare la Provincia», «ci deve pensare la Regione», aveva detto lo zio Guido.

Marco non aveva capito cosa volesse dire: forse il problema dei cinghiali che attaccavano i coltivi non poteva essere risolto dai singoli cacciatori e dalla capacità della loro mira, ma doveva essere affidato, ne aveva accennato una volta la maestra in classe, a una competenza superiore. Era così?

Suo padre non avrebbe mai accettato quella soluzione, lo sapeva. Come avvertiva, senza saperselo spiegare, che un rancore profondo lo spingeva alla caccia del cinghiale. Era qualcosa che andava ben oltre i danni lasciati sulla terra, Marco lo sentiva distintamente. Era un odio cieco, scoppiato dopo la morte della madre.

Una volta il padre aveva detto, riferendosi al cinghiale: «quello è u cancro».

- Sta venendo avanti, lo senti?

Marco tese l'orecchio, strinse gli occhi. Sentiva il battito del cuore, si posò una mano sul petto e spinse per farlo tacere. C'era solo quel bum-bum sordo e null'altro.

- È nella macchia, a sinistra. Ha sentito le ciliegie. Arriva.

Marco voltò lo sguardo a sinistra, in basso, dove le foglie erano nere e marroni. Sentì come un grattare sulla terra, come un'unghia che scorticava muschio e sterpi.

Il padre aveva abbassato il fucile verso il mucchietto di ciliegie, a una ventina di metri

Yes, that would be much better. Fish didn't come and dig up the gardens, they didn't eat potatoes or turnips, and couldn't trample plants or flowers. They just stayed underwater, minding their own business. Then Sam wondered, what could killing the boar possibly achieve? The bush was full of them; another would soon come and wreak havoc amongst the plots. Wouldn't it better to put up a fence, like his friends' fathers already had? And if it were really necessary, wouldn't it be better to do so in a group? Hunters would get together in groups of three, even six. They all had cell phones and would surround the entire area, leaving no means of escape. "The village has to step up, the whole region even" his uncle had said.

Sam hadn't understood it at the time. Maybe it was just that the problem, the fact that they ravaged the gardens, couldn't be solved by a single hunter and the skill of his aim, but instead it needed to be entrusted to a higher authority, like his teacher had once said at school. Was that it?

His father would never accept that as a solution, he knew it. He sensed, without knowing how to explain it, that a deep resentment pushed him to hunt the boar. It was something that far surpassed the damage they left on the earth, Sam clearly felt it. It was a blind hatred that had exploded after the death of his mother.

Once his father said, referring to the boar: "That thing is a *cancer*."

"He's coming up ahead. You hear him?"

Sam strained his ears and squinted his eyes. He could hear his heart beating. He pushed his hand into his chest to silence it.

"He's in the scrub to the left, he's smelt the cherries. He's coming."

Sam looked down towards the black and brown leaves towards the left. He heard a sort of grating on the earth, like a claw shredding through the moss and ferns.

His father lowered the gun towards the pile of cherries, a good twenty metres away.

da loro. Marco concentrò lo sguardo sui frutti rossi luccicanti. A guardarli gli mettevano fame. Non erano ciliegie nostrane, chissà da quale lontano paese venivano. Il padre le aveva comprate al supermercato e le aveva messe in alto, nel frigo. Erano per i cinghiali, ma gliene aveva fatte assaggiare un grappolo. Erano dure e asprigne ma succose, facevano venire in mente la primavera e quei begli alberi che loro avevano sulle fasce, accanto alla vigna.

Marco era perso in quella fantasia quando all'improvviso vide il cinghiale avventarsi fuori dalla macchia, con il muso a terra, la coda ritta. Caricò la montagnetta di ciliegie, mentre il colpo di fucile del padre si scaricava, frustando l'aria. Il cinghiale rimase immobile un attimo, come sorpreso, poi con agilità sorprendente sparì nella macchia.

- L'ho ferito, - disse il padre con disappunto. Voleva dire che l'aveva scalfito, che il proiettile non si era conficcato nella spalla per scendere verso il cuore, il fegato, la milza e inchiodarlo, magari dopo una corsa disperata di due-trecento metri, chissà dove, a terra.

No, l'animale era stato ferito superficialmente. Marco guardò il padre. Era preoccupato perché sapeva che di averlo reso più incattivito e diffidente. Lo vide indeciso.

- Cosa fai? - chiese Marco.

Era una domanda importuna, forse offensiva. Se ne rese conto.

- Ha avuto uno scarto. Ci ha sentiti.

- Tornerà?

- Ci sono ancora un po' di ciliegie... è un bastardo goloso. Tornerà.

Il padre ricaricò la doppietta e si acquattò nel terreno. Anche Marco si lasciò scivolare fra le foglie. Non se l'era presa per le sue parole. Una paura gli era passata, adesso rimaneva con l'altro, quella di veder tornare il cinghiale.

- Centocinquanta chili, - disse il padre. E aggiunse: - In poco più di un metro.

Marco capì che il padre era ammirato, oltre ad essere preoccupato. Lui aveva solo paura

Sam fixed his gaze on the red, glistening fruit. Looking at them made him hungry. They weren't from around there, who knew which far away country they had come from. His father had bought them at the store and put them up high in the fridge. They were for the boars, but he had let him try a few. They were hard and a little sour, but still juicy. They reminded him of summer, and the trees they had at the back of the farm.

Sam had lost himself in his thoughts when all of a sudden he saw the boar burst out of the brush with its nose on the ground and its tail erect. It was scoffing the little mountain of cherries when the gunshot fired, whipping the air. It remained frozen for a moment, stunned, then with surprising agility disappeared back into the undergrowth.

"It wounded him" said his father, disappointed. He had meant that the bullet had only grazed him, that it hadn't stuck into its back to then make its way down to the heart, liver or spleen and then finish him after a desperate flight of two, maybe three hundred metres somewhere on the ground.

But no, the animal was only wounded superficially. Sam looked at his father. He was worried because he knew that now he had only made the animal more vengeful and wary. He saw him torn.

"What now?" Sam asked.

It was an annoying question, offensive even, he knew it.

"He had a close scrape. He heard us."

"Will he come back?"

"There are still a few cherries...he's a greedy bastard. He'll be back."

His father reloaded the gun and crouched down on the ground. Sam let himself slide amongst the leaves. His father's words hadn't upset him. But now, even though one fear had passed, he was left with another, the boar's imminent return.

"A hundred and fifty kilos" his father said, "in just over a metre."

Sam understood that he was saying it out of admiration rather than fear.

che tornasse e che il tempo non passasse piú. Da quanto erano lí in quella buca? Quanto tempo era passato da quando erano entrati nel bosco, da quando si erano intanati e da quando il cinghiale era sbucato dall macchia sotto i castagni...

Il ragazzo provò a contare il tempo, ma non sapeva come dividerlo, cercò di ricordare quando aveva smesso di sentir caldo allo stomaco, a cosa aveva pensato subito prima che il muso nero arrivasse a macchiare il rosso delle ciliegie. E poi il rumore dello sparo che gli aveva chiuso l'orecchio destro, il gran silenzio in cui il bosco aveva continuato a esistere: non si era alzato nessun uccello, nessun altro rumore aveva accompagnato lo sparo e la fuga del cinghiale.

Ma era passato del tempo, perché aveva fame.

Il padre non si muoveva, forse rimuginava sul tiro fallito. Forse stava misurando la distanza fra la propria imprecisione e il destino che aveva allontanato il bersaglio, imprimendogli uno scarto improvviso.

Ma restava fiducioso, sapeva che se quello era il «suo» cinghiale, il cancro che, sera dopo sera, gli aveva divorato le fasce, sarebbe tornato. E per invitarlo a tornare lui ci avrebbe puntato altre ciliegie.

Marco vide il padre prendere lo zaino e scendere verso la biforcazione dei sentieri. Aveva lasciato il fucile a terra, vicino a Marco.

- Papà, dove vai?

- Ha bisogno di altre ciliegie, - disse il padre da sotto il masso.

- Il fucile... – sussurrò Marco.

Il padre alzò le spalle e camminando carponi s'avvicinò al terreno, dove era rimasta una poltiglia rossa, come una macchia di sangue, di ciliegie calpestate dagli zoccoli dell'animale. Allontanandosi dalla canna del fucile, Marco guardò il padre ricostruire la piccola montagnola di frutti rossi. Non gli piaceva stare lí solo, tutto diventava piú freddo, come quella canna di fucile.

Poi vide il padre alzarsi e tornare indietro,

But he himself feared the boar's return and that time would stop again. How long had they been there? How many hours had it been since they had entered the forest? Since they had been hiding there in that little lair of their own? Since the boar had come out of the scrub beneath the tōtara?

Sam tried to count the time, but he didn't know how to divide it. He tried to remember when that warm feeling had left his stomach, what he was thinking just before the black snout appeared, staining the red cherries. After that came the sound of the shot that had blocked his right ear. In the enduring silence, no birds had been roused; no other noise accompanied the shot and the boar's flight.

But he knew time had passed. He was hungry.

His father didn't move. Maybe he was brooding over the botched shot. Or maybe he was measuring the distance between his own imprecision and fate which had moved his target, granting it a sudden swerve.

Still, he remained confident. He knew that if it had been *his* boar, that cancer that night after night devoured his crops, he would be back. He went and added some more cherries to the pile to encourage him. Sam watched his father as he got the pack and went down to the fork in the path. He had left the gun on the ground, near Sam.

“Dad...where are you going?”

“He needs some more cherries” said his father from beneath the rock.

“But the gun...” Sam whispered.

His father shrugged. Crawling on all fours he went down to the ground where a red mush of fruit, like a bloodstain, remained, trampled by the animal's hooves. Moving away from the gun, Sam watched his father rebuild the little mountain of red fruit. He didn't like being up there by himself. Everything was getting colder, like the barrel of the gun.

Then he saw his father get up and head

era già sotto il masso quando incespì e cadde a terra con un tonfo e un grido.

- Cos'hai fatto? – urlò Marco.

- Non gridare, cristo, non gridare, - disse il padre con rabbia, - sono inciampato in una radice, cristo.

Marco si sporse, il padre era piegato a terra, non accennava ad alzarsi.

- Vieni su, - lo implorava Marco.

- Sí, sí... ma stai zitto. Devo essermi slogato una caviglia...

Marco vedeva i tentativi che il padre faceva per mettersi in piedi senza riuscirci, e il dolore che provava nel trascinarsi sul terreno.

- Scendo a darti una mano, - disse.

- Stai lí fermo. Adesso prendo fiato e il dolore passerà...

Marco tuffò la faccia tra le foglie. Pregò perché il padre si rimettesse in piedi e tornasse lí, vicino al suo fucile. Lasciò che passassero un po' di minuti poi tornò ad affacciarsi oltre il masso. Il sacco era abbandonato in mezzo al sentiero, mentre il padre era riuscito a trascinarsi sotto di lui.

- Sali? – gli chiese timidamente.

- Adesso non ce la faccio, devo avere proprio qualcosa di rotto.

- Scendo a darti una mano, - disse Marco.

- Stai su, è pericoloso qui... quel cancro potrebbe tornare...

- Ti sporgo il fucile, vuoi?

- Lascialo scivolare giù, fai attenzione...

Marco aprì il fucile, tolse le due cartucce e lo lasciò cadere vicino al padre, poi infilò le due cartucce nella cartucciera e la fece scivolare lunga la parete rocciosa.

- Hai preso? – chiese.

Avrebbe voluto andare a raccogliere il sacco, aveva anche sete ora e lí dentro, oltre al pane e al pezzo di salame, c'era la bottiglia dell'acqua. Ma il padre gli aveva

back. He was already under the rock when he stumbled and fell to the ground with a thud and a shout.

“What happened?” cried Sam.

“Don't shout. Christ. Don't shout” said his father viciously. “I tripped on a root. Christ.”

Sam leant out. His father was bent over on the ground, showing no sign of getting up.

“Come back up” Sam pleaded.

“Yes, yes. But keep quiet. I must've sprained my ankle.”

Sam watched his father's failed attempts to stand, feeling his pain as he dragged himself along the ground.

“I'm coming down to give you a hand” he said.

“Stay right where you are! I just need to catch my breath, then the pain will go...”

Sam plunged his face into the leaves. He prayed that his father would get back up on his feet and come back up near the gun. He waited a few minutes, then went back to peer over the rock. The pack had been abandoned in the middle of the path. His father had managed to drag himself under the overhanging rock.

“Are you coming up?” he asked nervously.

“I can't just now. I must've broken something.”

“I'll come down and give you a hand.”

“Stay up there. It's dangerous down here...that cancer could come back.”

“I'll lower you down the gun. Do you want it?”

“Slide it down. Be careful...”

Sam opened the gun, took out the cartridges and let it fall down near his father. Then he slipped the cartridges into the belt and slid it down the face of the rock.

“Have you got it?” he asked.

He wanted to go down and get the pack. He was thirsty now and besides the sandwiches and chocolate there was a bottle of water. But his father had told him to stay put. But

detto di stare fermo. Per quanto? Sporgendosi vide che si era appoggiato il fucile lungo le gambe distese e si era buttato la cartucciera sulle spalle. Si tanto in tanto si lamentava.

Quanto tempo sarebbero dovuti rimanere così?

- Ho sete, - disse Marco, debolmente.

- Succhia una radice. Lecca una foglia.

Marco strappò una radice. Era amara ma sugosa e le labbra si sciolsero un poco. Si guardò intorno, le foglie erano immobili. Guardò in alto, dove tempo prima aveva intuito delle macchie di bianco. Non c'erano più. Forse era già pomeriggio. A sentire i crampi della fame, dovevano essere passate molte ore da quando erano entrati nel bosco.

Tornò a sporgersi dal masso:

- Mi senti?

Dal basso non venne nessuna risposta.

- Papà... - insistette Marco.

Forse il padre si era addormentato. Stava sdraiato, immobile. Marco provò a lanciare un sassolino. Inutilmente. Allora si chiese se avrebbe fatto bene a scendere. Voleva sapere come stava il padre, e avrebbe potuto recuperare lo zaino. Ma non voleva disobbedire e aveva paura. La stessa paura che gli era venuta la prima notte che aveva saputo che la madre non sarebbe più tornato a casa. Come adesso era rimasto paralizzato, incapace di muoversi, di avere un sentimento. Allora era in casa, protetto dalla sua stanza, con i suoi giochi, i suoi libri, il suo stereo. Adesso, forse, provò a dirsi, era meno peggio.

- Sei lí?

La voce del padre gli arrivò come da lontano, come fuori da un sogno che non voleva fare.

- Sí, - disse, - e tu?

- Dove vuoi che sia, qua, che non riesco a muovermi. Devo cercare di stecarmi la cavaglia. Guarda se intorno a te vedi qualche ramo. Ma non strappare nulla, non far rumore.

for how long? Leaning out he saw that he had laid the gun on his stretched out legs and thrown the cartridge belt over his shoulder.

Every now and then he groaned. How long would they have to stay there?

"I'm thirsty" Sam said faintly.

"Suck on a root. Lick a leaf."

Sam snapped off a root. It was bitter, but juicy, moistening his lips a little. He looked around; the leaves were still. He looked up to where a little while before he had glimpsed some shimmers of white; they weren't there anymore. Maybe it was afternoon already. He heard his stomach rumble. It must have been several hours since they had entered the bush.

He went back to lean over the rock:

"Can you hear me?"

No response came from below.

"Dad..." Sam insisted.

Maybe he had fallen asleep. He was lying down, still. Sam tried to throw a stone. Useless. He wondered if it was best to go down; he wanted to know if his father was alright, and also he'd be able to get the pack. But he didn't want to disobey him, and he was scared. It was the same fear he'd had that first night when he knew his mother was never coming back. He was left paralysed, just as he was now, unable to move or feel anything. But then he was at home, protected by his room, his games, his books and stereo. Then again, this time wasn't nearly as bad, or so he told himself.

"You there?"

It was as if his father's voice was coming from a great distance, like in an unwanted dream.

"Yeah," he said, "and you?"

"I'm just where you want me. Right here. I can't move, can I? I need something to splint my ankle with. Look around to see if there are any branches near you. Don't break anything though. Don't make any noise."

- Quelle ciliegie, - aggiunse, - continuano a profumare.

Marco si guardò intorno, vide dei pezzi di ramo, erano secchi, si sbriciolavano fra le dita. Lo disse al padre.

- Fa niente, aspettiamo.

“The smell of cherries,” he added, “is still in the air.”

Sam looked around. He saw some broken branches but they were brittle and crumbled between his fingers. He told his father.

“Ok. Don’t do anything. We’ll just wait.”