Strategic Decisions:

Having read through Il Giardino, the translation itself appears to be pretty straightforward, but my main concern is the cultural transposition and the use of poetic language. While it is true that this short story is fiction, it is also somewhat of a personal narrative. This is a story that may easily resonate with migrants who leave home in search of something more, a better life, but don’t always realize the effects it may have on their family back home. The problem then lies in making sure this concept is understood in diverse cultures. This presents a significant task due to the fact that some English-speaking audiences, such as Americans, are somewhat ignorant to the status of migrants in Europe, in part because it does not affect them personally, and thus they are removed from the issue. There is also a universal message within this story that can resonate with most readers, no matter their cultural background. The universal message is that of leaving a place and realizing that you may have changed from new experiences, but the people you left behind may not have changed at all, or in different ways. This story and the fiction aspect reminds me a bit of the concept of realismo magico, something that is impossible, but seems almost realistic. This story resonates with readers and is it easy to relate to this story and the key message and although it is unbelievable and impossible, there is something about it that makes it seem quite plausible. The largest linguistic challenge is the very beautiful and poetic language that De Caldas Brito uses. There is an emphasis placed on imagery and creating the image of this garden in the mind of the reader and I want to be sure that this imagery is still comes across right away in the English translation. I also am unsure who my target audience, but assume since it has this universal message, it is a more broad audience. It is important to note that De Caldas Brito chose to write this short story in Italian, not in Portuguese and I think that says a lot about who
she wants her audience to be and the linguistic expertise she is portraying in a foreign language.

As I worked on this piece more and more, seemingly simple phrases became more and more complicated as I tried to clearly express them, with the same poetic flare, in English.

**Notes:**
- For uno stadio di calcio translated directly to football stadium, it has a different meaning in American English, but it works because a football field or stadium is used as a system of measurement in America. I think it also works for a British audience because a football stadium for them would be the same as it is for Italians, a soccer stadium, but they use the term football.
- One of the biggest challenges is how to deal with the Portuguese lullaby that is written in Portuguese and thus presents a problem in translating. Obviously an English-speaking audience wouldn’t understand a word of it, and although they are both romance languages, an Italian still wouldn’t understand it either. I do however think the Italian audience would understand the concept better, and know that the author is not Italian, but I don’t think this comes across as clearly in English. I asked Simone Gugliotta to provide some context to this lullaby and she was able to give me some background information and a translation and have since decided to add a note of some sorts (either a footnote or in-text), not giving a translation, but providing contextual background information to clarify this piece to the English-speaking audience. There is an element of exoticism in the original and thus I am choosing to maintain this exoticism in the TT.
- The filo d’oro that surrounds the garden is a bit of a confusing concept and I want to be sure the translated text provides the same image of this golden thread and of the garden it protects. This is one of the many examples of imagery, in which I want to be 100% positive that the target audience is going to get the same beautiful imagery through reading the translated text. I think the best way to ensure the successful creation of imagery is careful word choice and finding a balance between not straying too far from the original text, but avoiding a literal translation in which the concept and imagery would not be portrayed.
- In terms of language register, the language is not too complex. It is a short story and the personal narrative of the main character, that includes a fair amount of dialogue and therefore the author uses a fair amount of informal language. However, there is the use of some complex phrases that are difficult to translate, such as *profumare un'inutile attesa.*
Something I was very aware of through this translation was the use of contractions and trying to figure out when it is appropriate to use them and when the full form should be left. I realized it is somewhat of a personal choice, but it relies heavily on context and what sounds more natural. This short story is an informal narrative and thus I think it is appropriate to use the contractions most of the time, because it is more natural and colloquial, but at times the full, non-contracted form may sound better. It’s a small detail, but one that can have a significant impact. I think the best way to decide is to read it aloud a few times and make the decision based on which fits better in that particular sentence.

For sirocco, I decided to provide some context by adding a note, because although the word exists in English, I do not think the majority of an English-speaking audience knows what the word means and it is important because it provides some geographic context as to where the story takes places, that would be totally lost without an explanation or prior knowledge of the Mediterranean wind.

I did some research about Christiana de Caldas Brito before starting my translation to hopefully understand her better and to learn what’s important to her. She says that emotion plays an important role in her stories and that some of her ideas for stories come from dreams she’s had. This is heavily portrayed in Il Giardino and really gave me insight in how to go about translating this piece, making sure that emotion comes through and that this story is able to impact readers.¹

In Mammina the -ina has a connotation of youth, which is relevant because the mother did not age and still looks young, but there is not really an easy way to translate this. This is an example of translation loss, however compensation is not really needed, because how young her mother looks is then described, but there is a definite unavoidable loss due to the lack of these modifiers in English such as –ino, issimo, etc.

¹ [http://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/centre-study-contemporary-womens-writing-ccww/languages/italian/christiana-de-caldas-brito](http://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/centre-study-contemporary-womens-writing-ccww/languages/italian/christiana-de-caldas-brito)
The Garden

Christiana de Caldas Brito

I still wonder at what point the golden thread began to wear out. Perhaps when I expressed the desire to know a garden more vast, more exciting and dangerous, different than that peaceful and quiet garden of our home, frozen in time.

At our house there is no television, no phone, everyone lingers in the garden, away from the world. The fragile golden thread quivered in the wind and kept us motionless, unified, without hurry, without wanting to go elsewhere, all while the scent of jasmine filled the air of our futile wait.

I don’t understand how I was able to live for so many years away from the garden, how I managed to leave you alone in those warm evenings of sirocco\(^2\), mom seated on the wicker chair, you who spoke to the stars, lying on the hammock.

Gustavo was always the first to get tired. I would get up from the wooden bench to put him to bed. As soon as we reached the bedroom, he would ask me to sing *boi da cara preta*\(^3\) and when I sang *pega esse menino que tem medo de careta*, his little hand squeezed mine and the world was all there, in that touch.

Right on that wooden bench, I told you my decision. You, from the hammock, said to the stars: “She’s not coming back.” You were referring to me as if I had already left, like I didn’t belong to the garden anymore. My useless refusal: “What is dad saying, I won’t be gone for long!” Mom didn’t say anything, but her chair creaked.

\(^2\) A Mediterranean wind that carries dust from the Sahara through Northern Africa and reaches as far as Southern Europe.

\(^3\) A Brazilian folkloristic lullaby, of Portuguese origin.
Always towards the stars you repeated “She won’t come back, I know it. Maira will not come back.” You were wrong, dad. Much more time has passed than I envisioned, but I’m coming home. For you, for mom, for Silvia, Rodolfo and Gustavo.

I haven’t been able to keep in touch with you during these years, but together we will rediscover the evenings of my childhood, those evenings spent in the garden, unaware of the hours that passed, and without thinking that you were crazy because you talked to the stars. Fulfilled by the garden, no one dared to leave or to ask more of life. No one, except me.

I’m not coming back because I didn’t like it there. It was cold in Europe, but it’s easier to study and work in the cold. I didn’t have an issue with the rushed efficacy of Europeans. I too learned to do things in a rush. I’m returning to regain the rhythm of our evenings in the garden, a rhythm built on dreams rather than actions.

When Silvia said she wanted to be a ballerina, and Rodolfo expressed that one day he would be the master of a circus as big as a football stadium, we knew that those dreams would never come true, but we also knew that dreams exist not necessarily to come true, but rather to savor life to its fullest.

Then, one evening, you asked: “And you, Maira, what is your dream?” It was your question that helped me realize my dream, dad. I didn’t think I had one. Months later, I gave you my answer: “I want to travel, dad, my dream is to leave.”

From that moment on you did nothing else but to prepare me to leave. The day I left, you took me aside: “Know that neither your mother nor I agree.”

You did not write me.
Silvia was also angry: “You can’t leave us like this!” Without kissing me goodbye, she had moved aside, hiding her face in her red apron. “Silvia”, I told her, “soon you will get married and you too will leave!”

Not even she wrote me.

In the ten years that I was in Europe, Rodolfo was the only one to send me updates, albeit terse and generic.

I wrote home once or twice a week. I tried to hide the bad things, I exaggerated the pleasant events, in the hope that you would reach the point of accepting that the horizon is a line that protects some, while encourages others to leave. How many nights make up 10 years? How long did I leave Gustavo without songs? I wonder if the lack of lullabies had transformed my brother into a skeptical and rebellious teenager.

Will he still wrap his arms around my neck like he did every night when I said to him “ready for bed? It’s late”.

By now Silvia must be a housewife, maybe she’s also become plump. My God, how difficult it is to imagine her like that, but in any hemisphere ten years is enough time for a woman to gain weight, whether she is a ballerina or a housewife.

Unnoticed Rodolfo will have become a man, no longer the boy with the long arms that scratched the air and the voice that changed from falsetto to bass. And you, dad, do you still talk to the stars? I imagine you bald, with hunched shoulders. I think I will find mom with white hair, her eyes more sad than before.

The years are playing cards equally distributed amongst all players. Ten to you, then ten to me as well… What will you think of me?

***
You made me a handwritten sign. You came to the airport to pick-up your daughter and her dream. Leaving the baggage check, I threw myself into your arms. “You came back”, said the same voice that spoke to the stars. Ten years had failed at hunching your shoulders or making you bald. “Well done!” I said, “you are the same dad that I left.” And you: “I am, I am.” You pulled away a bit to look at me: “Ten, huh? It feels like yesterday…” Perhaps you wanted to ignore the wrinkles that had gathered on my face?

One of the many ways to defend yourself from the cruel signs that time leaves on the old, right, dad? I leaned against your arm. “You’ll be home soon”, you said, “they’re all there waiting for you.” I closed my eyes, not at all regretful of having abandoned the privileges that I had gained in Europe.

I still didn’t suspect anything. I had to arrive home to understand. I had to reach the garden. It was Silvia who opened the gate for me. We looked at each other for an instant, only to immediately grasp and hold each other. The kiss my sister had denied me on the day I left had multiplied in many more. Mom got up from the wicker chair and took my hands. Her eyes weren’t sad, rather, despite the tears, they emitted a cheerful summer glow? “Mama”, I said to her, “you look great!” A teenager, tall and thin, insisted on his turn:

“Now, it’s my turn!” I was stunned: “Gustavo, look how you’ve grown! You are as big as Rodolfo!” The teenager began to laugh: “I’m Rodolfo, Maira, don’t you recognize me?” It was then that a little boy put his arms around my neck. I got up. I looked at Silvia: had she somehow become a mother without having told me anything? The little boy took my hand. Confused by that touch, I whispered: “Gustavo?”

I sat down on the wooden bench, my place in the garden. Silvia came to sit beside me. She was wearing the same apron she had on the day that I left. Her hair was styled in the same way it was
when I left. “Silvia”, I asked in a quiet voice, “the little boy… is… Gustavo?” She nodded her head. “How is that possible, Silvia, how on earth?” She didn’t answer me. You, dad, were lying down on the hammock, fixated on the stars. The golden thread created a faint circle around the garden. The jasmine emitted the identical scent from many years ago.

“Silvia”, I said to my sister, “your husband, where is he?” She adjusted her apron with her hands, as if to apologize: “I still haven’t gotten married.”

Rodolfo lightly touched my hand:

“Do you not understand?”

“Explain to me, Rodolfo, tell me how instead of finding a man, I am in front of the same boy from the photo I brought with me.” A stifling silence preceded the words of Rodolfo: “It wasn’t easy”. “What, Rodolfo, what wasn’t easy?” Not even he gave me an answer.

Gustavo pulled me towards him: Will you sing to me tonight? Will you sing *boi da cara preta*?

It was the voice of a six-year-old little boy, yes, but who ought to have been sixteen.

I embraced the garden with a long look. The golden thread swung on the flowers and plants, the same flowers and the same plants from ten years ago. Above the doily on the wicker table, the ceramic blue vase held six white camellias. Deeply distraught, I got up: “Mom, the camellias…”

My mother smiled: “Yes, darling, the ones you gave me before leaving.”

The joy of my return, that which my imagination had dreamt up down to the smallest detail, was turning into something else, something I still couldn’t define, something that filled me with terror. “My God, you…” Dad, trying to calm me down: “I already told you, Maira. For us, you left yesterday. We stayed here, in the garden.” “To do what, Dad?” “To wait for you” he said in a calm voice.

“I’m tired” yawned Gustavo. “Put him to bed, Maira” said mom.
Put Gustavo to bed and sing him *boi da cara preta*, as if I had never left? Should I return to the garden alongside my family that had lived a long day, a day that lasted for ten years? Or cut the golden thread forever?

I picked up Gustavo, his hands wrapped around my neck. I looked at you, dad, and I heard you saying to stars from the hammock: “She won’t come back, I know it. Maira will not come back.”

**Il giardino**

*Christiana de Caldas Brito*

Ancora mi domando in quale momento il filo dorato iniziò a consumarsi. Forse quando ho manifestato la voglia di conoscere un giardino più vasto, più eccitante e pericoloso, diverso da quel calmo e silenzioso giardino di casa nostra, fermo nel tempo.

Da noi, niente televisione, niente telefono, tutti in giardino, fuori dal mondo. Il tenue filo d'oro tremolava al vento e ci teneva immobili, uniti, senza fretta, senza voler andare da un'altra parte, il gelsomino a profumare un'inutile attesa.

Non capisco come sia riuscita a vivere tanti anni lontana dal giardino, come abbia fatto a lasciarvi soli in quelle calde serate di scirocco, mamma sulla sedia di vimini, tu che parlavi alle stelle, sdraiato sull'amaca. Gustavo era sempre il primo ad avere sonno. Mi alzavo dalla panchina di legno per portarlo a letto. In camera, mi chiedeva di cantargli *boi da cara preta* e quando dicevo *pega esse menino que tem medo de careta*, la sua piccola mano stringeva la mia e il mondo era tutto li, in quel contatto.

Proprio sulla panchina di legno, vi ho comunicato la mia decisione. Tu, dall'amaca, dicesti alle stelle: "Non torna più." Ti eri riferito a me come se io fossi già andata via, come se io non appartenessi più al giardino. Inutili i miei rifiuti: "Cosa dici, papà, non sarò fuori per molto
tempo!". Mamma non fece alcun commento, ma la sua sedia scricchiolò. Sempre alle stelle ripetesti: "Non torna più, lo sento. Maira non torna più."

Ti sei sbagliato, papà. È passato molto più tempo di quanto io abbia previsto, ma sto tornando a casa. Per te, per mamma, per Silvia, Rodolfo e Gustavo. Non vi ho potuto seguire durante questi anni, ma insieme ritroveremo le serate della mia adolescenza, quelle serate in giardino, inconsapevoli delle ore che passavano, e senza che ti credessimo pazzo perché parlavi alle stelle.

Appagati dal giardino, nessuno osava uscirne o chiedere di più alla vita. Nessuno, tranne me. Non torno perché mi sono trovata male. In Europa faceva freddo, ma nel freddo si studia e si lavora meglio. Non ho avuto conflitti con l’efficacia frettolosa degli europei. Ho imparato anch’io a fare le cose in fretta. Torno per riacquistare il ritmo delle nostre serate in giardino, un ritmo fatto più di cose sognate che realizzate. Quando Silvia diceva di voler essere una ballerina, e Rodolfo affermava che un giorno sarebbe stato il padrone di un circo grande quanto uno stadio di calcio, noi sapevamo che quei sogni non si sarebbero mai avverati, ma sapevamo anche che i sogni esistono non necessariamente per trasformarsi in realtà, ma per mantenere integro il sapore della vita.

Poi, una sera, domandasti: "E tu, Maira, qual è il tuo sogno?" Fu la tua domanda a svegliare il sogno, papà. Non pensavo di averne uno. Mesi dopo, ti diedi la risposta: "Voglio viaggiare, papà, il mio sogno è partire."

Da allora non feci altro che prepararmi.

Il giorno della partenza, mi prendesti da parte: "Sappi che né io né tua madre siamo d'accordo."

Non mi avete scritto.
Silvia era pure arrabbiata: "Non puoi lasciarci così!" Senza baciarmi, si era allontanata, nascondendo il viso nel grembiule rosso. "Silvia", le avevo detto, “presto ti sposerai e andrai via pure tu!”

Neanche lei mi scrisse.

Nei dieci anni che sono stata in Europa, Rodolfo è stato l'unico a mandarmi notizie, laconiche e generiche.

Io vi scrivevo una o due lettere la settimana. Cercavo di nascondere le cose brutte, enfatizzavo gli eventi gradevoli, nella speranza che voi arrivaste ad accettare che l'orizzonte è una linea che protegge alcuni, altri, invece, li invita a partire.

Quante notti contengono dieci anni? Per quanto tempo ho lasciato Gustavo senza canzoni?

Chissà se la mancanza delle ninnananne avrà trasformato mio fratello in un adolescente scettico e ribelle. Mi metterà ancora le braccia intorno al collo come faceva ogni sera quando gli dicevo "dormi che è tardi"?

Silvia adesso sarà una casalinga, forse anche grassa. Mio Dio, com'è difficile immaginarla grassa, ma in qualunque emisfero dieci anni sono sufficienti per aggiungere dei chili a una donna, ballerina o casalinga che sia.

Rodolfo alla chetichella si sarà trasformato in un uomo, non più il ragazzo dalle lunghe braccia che graffiavano l'aria e dalla voce che passava dal falsetto al basso. E tu, papà, parlerai ancora alle stelle? Ti immagino calvo, le spalle piegate. Penso che troverò mamma con i capelli bianchi, gli occhi più tristi di prima.

Gli anni sono carte da gioco equamente distribuite tra tutti i giocatori. Dieci a voi, allora dieci anche a me... Come mi troverete?

* * *

Mi sedetti sulla panchina di legno, il mio posto al giardino. Silvia venne a sedersi accanto a me. Portava il grembiule rosso del giorno della mia partenza. I suoi capelli avevano lo stesso taglio...
del periodo in cui ero andata via. “Silvia”, le domandai a voce bassa, “il bambino piccolo... è... Gustavo?” Lei fece di sì con la testa. "Come mai, Silvia, come mai?” Non mi rispose.

Tu, papà, eri sdraiato sull'amaca. Fissavi le stelle. Un filo dorato creava un tenue cerchio intorno al giardino. Il gelsomino emanava l'identico profumo di tanti anni prima.

“Silvia”, dissi a mia sorella, “tuo marito, dov’è?” Lei aggiustò il grembiule con le mani, come a scusarsi: "Ancora non mi sono sposata."

Rodolfo toccò delicatamente la mia mano: "Non riesci a capire?"

"Spiegami, Rodolfo, spiegami perché invece di trovarti un uomo, sono davanti allo stesso ragazzo della foto che ho portato con me."

Un greve silenzio precedette le parole di Rodolfo: "Non è stato facile". "Cosa, Rodolfo, cosa non è stato facile?" Neanche lui mi diede una risposta.

Gustavo mi tirò verso di lui: "Mi canterai, questa sera? Mi canterai boi da cara preta?" Era la voce di un bambino di sei anni, sì, ma che doveva averne sedici.

Abbracciai il giardino con un lungo sguardo. Il filo d'oro oscillava su fiori e piante, gli stessi fiori e le stesse piante di dieci anni fa. Sopra il centrino del tavolo di vimini, il vaso di ceramica blu con sei camelie bianche. Profondamente turbata, mi alzai: "Mamma, le camelie..." Mia madre sorrisse: “Sì, tesoro, quelle che mi hai regalato prima di partire."

La gioia del mio ritorno, che con l'immaginazione era stata anticipata nei minimi dettagli, si stava trasformando in qualcosa altro che non sapevo ancora definire e che mi riempiva di terrore.

"Mio Dio, voi..."

"Ho sonno" sbadigliò Gustavo. "Portalo a letto, Maira" disse mamma.

Portare Gustavo a letto e cantargli *boi da cara preta*, come se io non mi fossi mai allontanata?

Rientrare a far parte del giardino insieme ai miei familiari che avevano vissuto un lungo giorno durato dieci anni? O spezzare per sempre il filo dorato?

Presi Gustavo in braccio, le sue mani intorno al mio collo. Ti guardai, papà, e dall'amaca ti sentii dire alle stelle: "Non torna più, lo sento. Maira non torna più."