

The Challenge of “Terroni” in English

L.A. (October 25, 2011)



A meeting with the young translator of "Terroni" authored by Pino Aprile. A book that is hard to convey in English, so we asked her how she approached this challenge.

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Talking about a book starting from its translation? Yes we can, especially in the case of “Terroni” by Pino Aprile, a huge editorial event back in Italy. For a while now, the essay, a reconstruction of the wrongs suffered in southern Italy, can be found in American bookstores, edited by [Bordighera Press](#) [3] and translated thanks to the [ILICA foundation](#).

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We have met with Ilaria Marra Rosiglioni the author of its “not-so-easy” English translation. This

young Italian American lives both in the United States and in Italy and works as a translator for the ILICA foundation.

I can say that I am an Italian-American 100%! I have studied in the United States and I have an American mindset. However, I have always wanted to go back to Italy: after all I majored in Italian language and culture and art history. In Rome I feel happy just taking a walk or riding the bus day after day.

What did you think when they asked you to translate “Terroni?”

When I read the back cover and the book’s description I was immediately intrigued. Just like many others before me, I had asked myself questions about the South, especially after having seen Naples and Palermo. As I have roots in southern Italy, I am Neapolitan on one side and Apulian on the other, I felt that I was owed some answers.

What were the difficulties in translating it?

The book had a peculiarly sarcastic tone. Trying to capture this was a real challenge. Translating words is much easier than translating an emotion.

Translating is not always enough, sometimes you have to rewrite to explain...

Way too often when I watch an American TV show with Italian subtitles I ask myself “Who translated that sentence? They have totally missed the meaning of what was said!” Indeed that is the hardest challenge: I have to read and re-read the text to be sure I have understood what has been said. Then I have to write in a way that the reader can understand: this is where a native speaker has a significant advantage. You need to convey the original concept but also mold it so that it is comprehensible and therefore closer to the reader. The translator establishes a connection between the author and the reader: a real bridge.

You have Italian and American friends in the USA. Did you ask them to read the book? How do you think they will react?

The book is now being released in the United States. I definitely recommend it to anyone who has southern roots. I hope it will become a driving force that prompts people to seek further information on the matter.

Which book/writer you would really like to translate?

As far as books are concerned, I have no preference: each author has something to teach me and I welcome every challenge. Maybe I would enjoy translating for a TV show or a movie: there are some crazy gaps that need to be filled. I think I could help out!

Will ILICA take care of this in the near future?

ILICA’s mission is to promote Italian language and culture. Translating is indeed important and we have to do it while looking towards the future.

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