Women beyond borders.
Translation as a process of women's emancipation during Fascism

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Cesare Pavese famously defined the 1930s as "the decade of translations", perfectly grasping the spirit of his times. What is less known is that the protagonists of this massive cultural mediation were predominantly women. Available sources, in fact, clearly show that women dominated the translation business. Their job entailed a flexible task, which was easily carried out (and hidden) in the privacy of the home, and mostly supplementary to the author's work. Interestingly, though, for a great number of women this "appropriate" job meant getting involved in the public sphere and acquiring a certain degree of emancipation and freedom. This is what happened, for example, when they selected books to translate and proposed them to publishers. When, in 1938, Ada Gobetti translated one of the benchmarks of American black feminism, Z.N. Hurston's *Their eyes were watching God*, it was certainly not just a literary project. Who were the women who bravely engaged in the "decade of translations"? Did this process of cultural exchange and mediation affect their practices, lifestyles and mentalities? This article examines the private archive of translator Alessandra Scalero, an emblematic case study of the 'gender transformations' that affected the translation industry between the two world wars.
Key words: Women, Work, Translations, Fascism, Gender transformations, Alessandra Scalero

Translating: a women's job

In the twenty-year interwar period, during which Europe was marked by crises and divided between nationalisms and protectionism, fascist Italy became one of the world's most important consumers of translations.[1] Foreign writers literally invaded the peninsula, thus embarrassing the regime and its aims to achieve autarky, hegemony and cultural imperialism. Cesare Pavese managed

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[1] Christopher Rundle, *Publishing translations in Fascist Italy*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2010, now also available in Italian: *Il vizio dell'esterofilia. Editoria e traduzioni nell'Italia fascista*, Rome, Carocci, 2019.

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to grasp the spirit of the time when he famously defined the 1930s the "decade of translations".[2] Less known, however, are the men behind this massive operation of cultural mediation — or, perhaps better, the women. Indeed, many women chose the translation profession because it was flexible, 'hidden' work that could be conducted at home and was supplementary to the writer's profession, hence justifiable and acceptable for a society that relegated women to the private sphere. In other words, it was considered an 'appropriate' job for women. In reality, many women used it to cut out a space of their own in public life — a space of independence and liberty, which they also applied in their selection of texts to translate and propose to the publishers. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Italian women intellectuals made their entry into the world of publishing and culture through translation work; as a result, the Italian publishing scene evolved to such an extent as to adopt the features of a highly female space, already in the interwar period.[3]

In his *Misery and splendour of translation*, José Ortega y Gasset dubbed the translator "a shy character [who] because of his humility has chosen this occupation".[4] In reality, though, these 'shy' characters weren't so cowardly after all if we think of the — not just cultural but even political — importance of the very act of translating, especially during Fascism, when it served as a tool of contesting hegemonic culture. When, in 1938, Ada Gobetti translated one of the key texts of American black feminism, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their eyes were watching God*,[5] this by no means reflected a purely literary operation.[6] The same could be said for the hazardous translation of a group of German authors, whose texts had been burnt during the Nazi book burnings of May 1933, which an unknown Alessandra Scalero had attempted to propose to the peninsula's main publishers.

Who were, then, the female intellectuals that guided the liberation of Italian culture from the snares of provincialism and autarky? And did this process of cultural mediation, of encounters with others, influence the practices, life styles and mentalities of the women translators themselves? Finally, did this voluntary cultural opening up also translate itself in social liberation, perhaps not entirely consciously? The private archive of Alessandra Scalero and her two sisters — Liliana and Maria Teresa — will allow me to circumscribe an exemplary case

[2] Cesare Pavese, *L'influsso degli eventi*, in C. Pavese, *La letteratura americana e altri saggi*, Turin, Einaudi, 1962, p. 241.

[3] Maria Pia Casalena, *Nascita di una capitale transnazionale. Le traduzioni nella Milano dell'Ottocento*, in Anna Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce. Le traduzioni durante il fascismo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2019, p. 51.

[4] José Ortega y Gasset, *Miseria e splendore della traduzione*, Genoa, Il Melangolo, 2001, p. 30.

[5] Zora Neale Hurston, *I loro occhi guardavano Dio*, transl. Ada Prospero Gobetti, Turin, Frassinelli, 1938.

[6] On the political implications of the Italian translation I have written elsewhere: *Cacciatori di libri. Gli agenti letterari durante il fascismo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2019, pp. 120-125.

study of those 'gender transformations' that marked the translation industry in the interwar period.

In the wake of the suggestions advanced in Translation Studies,[7] and following the emergence of the interpretative category of 'transfert culturel' that Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner have developed,[8] translations and translators have become an object of study and a heuristic tool even for the historian.[9] In fact, the dynamics of cultural mediation have gained a new centrality in view of the tendency to rethink history and literature from a universal point of view. In order to understand the fact that the theme is highly topical, one need only think of two recent book series that go precisely in this multidisciplinary direction: *Letteratura tradotta in Italia* [Translated literature in Italy] edited by Quodlibet and the *New Routledge Research Series on Translation and Interpreting History* published by Routledge. Still, much has yet to be uncovered if we are to shed light on the biographical and intellectual profiles of the male and female translators that were active halfway the two centuries.[10] This delay is partially due to the very characteristics of this 'invisible' profession.[11] Additionally, archival sources often ignore the latter aspect.

[7] Among the many studies I could mention André Lefevere, *Translation, rewriting, and the manipulation of literary fame*, London/New York, Routledge, 1992; Lawrence Venuti, *The scandals of translations: towards an ethic of difference*, London/New York, Routledge, 1998; Cinzia Bianchi, Cristina Demaria, Siri Nergaard (eds.), *Spettri del potere. Ideologia identità traduzione negli studi culturali*, Rome, Meltemi editore, 2002; Sonia Cunico, Jeremy Munday (eds.), *Translation and ideology: encounters and clashes*, "The translator: studies in intercultural communication", 2007, Special issue vol. 13, n. 2.

[8] Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner, *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand*, Paris, Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988. The importance of cultural mediators for history of culture has been explained, among others, by Robert Darnton, *What is the history of the books? Revisited*, "Modern Intellectual History", 2007, 4 (3), pp. 498-500.

[9] See, for example, the two collections of essays edited by Luisa Finocchi and Ada Gigli Marchetti, *Stampa e piccola editoria tra le due guerre*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1997, and *Editori e lettori. La produzione libraria in Italia nella prima metà del Novecento*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2000; Alberto Cadioli, Enrico Decleva, Vittorio Spinazzola (eds.), *La mediazione editoriale*, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1999; Virna Brigatti et al. (eds.), *Archivi editoriali. Tra storia del testo e storia del libro*, Milan, Unicopli, 2018.

[10] This gap has also been spotted by Giorgio Mangini, *Lavinia Mazzucchetti, Emma Sola, Irene Riboni. Note sulla formazione culturale di tre traduttrici italiane*, in Luisa Finocchi, Ada Gigli Marchetti (eds.), *Editori e lettori*, p. 185. On translations and translators see (in addition to the essays cited thus far): Jean Delisle (sous la direction de), *Portraits de traductrices*, Arras-Ottawa, Artois Presses de l'Université - Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2002; Carla Gubert (ed.), *Frammenti d'Europa. Riviste e traduttori del Novecento*, Fossombrone, Metauro Edizioni, 2003; Edoardo Esposito (ed.), *Le letterature straniere nell'Italia dell'entre-deux-guerres*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia Editore, 2004; Edoardo Esposito, *Con altra voce. La traduzione letteraria fra le due guerre*, Rome, Donzelli, 2018.

[11] Gabriele Turi has emphasised the scarce professional dignity translators have received and the distorted effects of a similar denial in terms of the production and reception of knowledge. See Gabriele Turi, *Tradurre, un mestiere difficile*, "La Fabbrica del Libro. Bollettino di Storia dell'editoria in Italia", 2/2011, anno XVII, pp. 2-4.

In reality, as has been highlighted on two different occasions, letters written by translators exist but have not sufficiently been valorised or studied, despite their inherent potential.[12]

While individual person descriptions do not lack, there seems to be a substantial 'prejudice' when it comes to choosing translator profiles that merit being remembered. According to Valerio Ferme, the special attention being reserved to certain great translators

> is partially due to the value of the contributions and comments that accompany their translations, in part due to the process of canonisation that, in the years following the Second World War, concerned certain American authors rather than others and, accordingly, their translators.[13]

Nevertheless, a simple look at the publishers' catalogues reveals that the protagonists of the "decade of translations" weren't only authors like Cesare Pavese or Elio Vittorini. On the contrary, numerous — known and lesser known — intellectuals, often resisting the predominant conformism of the editorial boards of newspapers and universities, decided to dedicate themselves to translations, thus becoming 'hidden' mediators of 'other' messages than those conveyed by the hegemonic culture. Maria Pia Casalena has already highlighted the fact that these intellectuals contained many women, in a rich essay published in "Genesis" in 2007 and dedicated to the Germanist Lavinia Mazzucchetti, by now undoubtedly the most studied female translator from a historical perspective given her cultural and militant background, capable of investing her literary mediation with strong political connotations.[14] Moreover, the "Germanised Milanese" is an exemplary case: for her, publishing and translating became the only possibility to work, since in 1929 she not only wasn't allowed to continue her collaboration with newspapers,[15] but she was also denied a "teaching position in German Language and Literature at the Faculty of Literature of the R. University of Milan", for having signed "the so-called 'Croce manifest'".[16]

[12] See Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli and Serenella Zanotti, *Investigating translators' archives*, workshop *Diasporic literary archives*, Università degli Studi di Pavia, 28 February - 1st March 2013; Sara Sullam, *Traduzione*, in V. Brigatti et al. (eds.), *Archivi editoriali*, p. 133.

[13] Valerio Ferme, *Tradurre è tradire. La traduzione come sovversione culturale sotto il fascismo*, Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2002, p. 21.

[14] See Maria Pia Casalena, *Contrabbandiera di cultura. Lavinia Mazzucchetti e la letteratura tedesca fra le due guerre*, "Genesis", *Esercizi di stile*, 1/2007, pp. 91-115.

[15] See M.P. Casalena, *Contrabbandiera di cultura*, p. 103.

[16] L. Mazzucchetti to Giovanni Gentile, 1 June 1929, cit. in Giorgio Mangini, *In nome del passato. Lavinia Mazzucchetti tra Arcangelo Ghisleri, Ernesto Rossi e Ferruccio Parri*, in Anna Antonello, Michele Sisto (eds.), *Lavinia Mazzucchetti. Impegno civile e mediazione culturale nell'Europa del Novecento*, Rome, Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, 2017, p. 34. On Mazzucchetti see also Anna Antonello (ed.), *"Come il cavaliere sul lago di Costanza". Lavinia*

Lavinia Mazzucchetti's biographical itinerary needs to be framed in the context of literary, translation and historical studies of the last years if we are to understand whether she was an exception or if she truly and fully represents a transformation that affected the female, educated or averagely educated, universe in the interwar period, when publishing and — in particular — translation activities acted as a stimulus to gain public and social self-awareness for the female protagonists of the "decade of translations". In what follows I will seek to shed light on this hidden 'iceberg', of which Mazzucchetti represents only the best known and visible tip. Due to plain methodological obstacles, the extent of quantitative data is difficult to assess in detail, but we can get an idea of women's presence by looking closely at examples of women who translated some of the main book series dedicated to international literature during the interwar era. By contrast, qualitative data will focus on the translators' cultural mediation: if it is true that the women translators often made selections from foreign texts, which texts did they choose? What mediation strategy did they adopt with regard to the dominant culture?

Gender transformations: the *ventennio* of translations and female translators

The transition from modernity to the contemporary age marked the beginning of a process that saw some middle-class women gradually make their entry into professional activities.[17] Middle-class women disrupted the dominant perspective on female professional education that considered marriage its end objective, turning the course of their studies into the foundation of an independent existence, even with regard to the management of their own sexuality.[18] In Italy, too, especially in the wake of the Great War, young middle-class women started to enact a "silent revolution": a differentiation of women's working conditions due to education and schooling and supported by the expansion of the tertiary sector.[19] The gender challenge in the public sphere thus changed location and protagonists: from the places 'of physical efforts' to those of 'intellectual efforts'; from the lower-class women working on the land

Mazzucchetti e la cultura tedesca in Italia, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2015.

[17] For a broad critical analysis of women workers in the contemporary age see the recent overview by Alessandra Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, Rome, Viella, 2019.

[18] Alessandra Pescarolo, *Il lavoro e le risorse delle donne in età contemporanea*, in Angela Groppi (ed.), *Il lavoro delle donne*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1996, pp. 336-337.

[19] Barbara Curli, *Dalla Grande guerra alla Grande crisi: i lavori delle donne*, in Stefano Musso (ed.), *Il Novecento (1896-1945). Il lavoro nell'età industriale*, Rome, Castelvecchi, 2015, p. 204.

and in factories to middle-class women, who started making their entry into hospitals, law firms, schools and universities, public administration, newsrooms and publishing houses. This change was by no means linear and evenly spread across the country, and it strongly accelerated during the two world wars, but suffered a political setback in Italy during the fascist period. In this context, the translations of foreign works that invaded the Italian market in those interwar years allow us to assess not the end but the decline of the emancipatory process, and to identify — within that underground river running below the surface of 'italianness and fascist virility' — the signs of a continuous presence of female intellectual work during, and despite, the fascist regime itself.[20]

> What about intellectual women? [thus Anna Kuliscioff raised the issue at the famous conference held in 1890 at the Milan Philological Circle] In order to face up to man's monopoly, it is necessary for them to at least disguise themselves as men as much as they can and sell their goods, even if of excellent quality, using a male pseudonym.[21]

Many women translators of the first half of the twentieth century did not translate using a pseudonym, and a great deal of their names can in fact be traced back in publishers' catalogues. In other words, there was no embarrassment in revealing the translator's gender. After all, only the most acute readers 'would have noticed' that the translator was female. Moreover, the latter only played a subordinate and hierarchically inferior role as opposed to the original author, whose name counted most and visually occupied the book cover. Further still, were women translators really intellectuals? Then as now there was a common perception that "it takes nothing to translate": all you need is some knowledge of a foreign language, a dictionary at hand and time.[22] In sum, no specific talent was deemed necessary.

Nonetheless, just as the fascist regime made public work a male reserve, limiting access for women even in the private sector,[23] middle-class women attempted to enter the intellectual field precisely through this most hidden — yet most productive and influential, in those years — sector of the publishing world. This was a challenge in the full sense of the world, if we consider that still in 1919 the most prolific translators were all men: Giulio Albera,

[20] During the first post-war period, in all so-called Western countries the new social figure of the *travailleuse intellectuelle* emerged, accompanied by attempts to regulate her access to the public administration and to the liberal professions. B. Curli, *Dalla Grande Guerra alla Grande crisi*, p. 225.

[21] Anna Kuliscioff, *Il monopolio dell'uomo*, now accessible online, edited by the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli of Milan: www.fondazionefeltrinelli.it/dm_0/FF/FeltrinelliPubblicazioni/allegati/testoritrovato/0012.pdf, p. 58.

[22] Roberta Scarabelli, *Quanto costa tradurre*, in Vittorio Spinazzola (ed.), *Un mondo da tradurre*, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, *Tirature '16*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 2016, p. 20.

[23] Victoria de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, Venice, Marsilio, 1993, pp. 229, 232, 248.

Federico Verdinois, Gino Valori, Nicola Festa, Ettore Lo Gatto, Virginio Bondois, Mario Nesi, Alessandro Chiavolini, Antonio Crisi, Giovanni Papini and Diego Angeli.[24] In the next decade, however, the number of female translators active in the editorial boards of magazines and publishing houses grew progressively, up to the point that they came to represent nearly the totality of external collaborators, as becomes evident from the case of Salani (as we will see further ahead). Even when they were a numerical minority, like the editors called to write reading opinions in the efficient Mondadori hub of translated literature (24 men against five women), the most productive translators were three women: Lavinia Mazzucchetti, Alessandra Scalero and Giuliana Pozzo.[25] For these experts in foreign languages, the nascent translation industry of the 1930s represented an expanding job market, since the internal production — especially of consumption literature — wasn't enough to satisfy the readers' demand and publishers had to rely on translated foreign novels. One should also note that imported literature offered the further advantage of allowing publishers to count on works with a certified success in the countries of origin, whose copyright was less expensive than that of Italian authors.[26]

The rise of this translation industry evoked many hostile reactions.[27] Although the totalitarian book censorship project had been going on for a longer time, starting in 1927-1928,[28] the first real measure aimed at obstructing translated foreign books wasn't announced until January 1937. The census of translators that had been imposed — though without ever having been fully enacted — on all publishing houses in 1936 fell under this regulation, which sought to place a fixed quota on imported literature.[29] If we add to this the

[24] These data have been drawn from Jakob Blakesley, *Le traduzioni e l'editoria italiana: uno studio dell'anno 1919*, "Rendiconti dell'Accademia dei Lincei", anno 2016, serie IX, volume XXVII, fasc. 3-4, p. 337.

[25] See *Indice delle firme ai pareri di lettura* in Pietro Albonetti (ed.), *Non c'è tutto nei romanzi. Leggere romanzi stranieri in una casa editrice negli anni Trenta*, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1994, pp. 595-596. Felice F. has been excluded as he was not a collaborator of the Mondadori publishing house, but a reader working for the Ministry of Press and Propaganda.

[26] Gianfranco Pedullà, *Gli anni del fascismo: imprenditoria privata e intervento statale*, in Gabriele Turi (ed.), *Storia dell'editoria nell'Italia contemporanea*, Florence, Giunti, 1997, p. 361.

[27] Christopher Rundle, *La campagna contro le traduzioni negli anni Trenta*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, pp. 52-68.

[28] Giorgio Fabre, *Il censore e l'editore. Mussolini, i libri, Mondadori*, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2018, pp. 85-86. For a broad theoretical reflection on censorship and translations see Francesca Billiani (ed.), *Assessing boundaries – Censorship and translations. An introduction*, in *Modes of censorship and translation. National context and diverse media*, New York, Routledge, 2014. In the same volume see also the case study on fascist censorship of translations by Giorgio Fabre, in the chapter titled *Fascism, censorship and translation*, pp. 27-59.

[29] Carlo Marrubini, circular of 20 May 1936, cit. in Angelo Fortunato Formiggini, *Elenco dei traduttori*, "L'Italia che scrive", August-September 1936, anno XIX, n. 8-9, p. 203.

provisions of the decree-law of 5 September 1938, which imposed a cap of 10% on female employees in public and private offices, excluding them altogether in companies with less than ten employees,[30] it is even more surprising to find that, by 1940, 16 out of 30 revisers of foreign books that were regularly employed by the Ministry of Popular Culture's Book Division were women.[31] In order to reduce the flow of foreign works that had been proposed by many female intellectuals, the regime had to rely on the female employees it wanted to marginalise. Moreover, these were highly specialised employees, who had often developed their translation skills by working for those same publishers the regime now wanted to control more closely.

The translation boom of the end of the 1920s was rooted in a much longer trajectory dating back to the Risorgimento, when Milan had already shown early signs of the future transnational book capital — a dynamic city where, from the nineteenth century onwards, a new cohort of translators had developed. Books written by women were mostly translated books, possibly entering the Italian peninsula for the first time in this format, like Mary Edgeworth's collection of stories, which Bianca Milesi Mojon converted into Italian in 1829.[32] There is undoubtedly still much work to do to gather and analyse the biographies of women translators' from the long nineteenth century; in the last decades, top publishers such as Treves and Sonzogno assigned translation jobs to various women in virtue of their linguistic skills as also for economic reasons.[33]

[30] V. de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, p. 248.

[31] Amendola Eva (English, German, Polish); Alessandrini Alessandro (Hungarian, Romanian); Alterocca Anna (French); Bellonci Maria (French); Brelich Dall'Asta Mario (Hungarian); Caprile Enrico (English); Carpi Giorgio (English and French); Cortese Mario (Spanish, Portuguese, Hungarian); Caroncini Amalia (Swedish, Danish, Norvegian, German, English, French); Checchi Leopoldo (English, French); De Sanna Maria (French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese); Dolghin Eva (English, French, Russian); Fianamore Amedeo (Polish); Ficher Costantino (French, Turkish, Spanish, Portuguese); Gallo Pietro (English); Guzzi Francesca ved. Agostinone (English); Geremia Luigi (French, German); Gelosi Andreina (French, Spanish, English); Jacucci Giuliana (English, French, German); Marano Franco (German); Nasti Emma (French); Porcario Elena (French); Pardo Diego (Serbo-Croatian); Pirone Raffaele (Russian); Randi Oscar (German); Santoro Elena (English); Saccà Concetta (Bulgarian); Simonelli Clara (French, German); Tangari Battistina (English); Toddi Rivetta Pietro Silvio (Japanese); Vucetich Nelly (Hungarian); Zuccolini Console Bruno (German, English, Spanish, Portuguese). G. Casini to the prefect Luciano Chief of Staff of H.E. the minister, 19 January 1940, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Minculpop, Gabinetto, b. 56, ministero della Stampa e della Propaganda, 1936-1937. Primary archival analyses lead us to believe that even if we examined the translators and employees of the Ministry for Popular Culture's Foreign Press office, the emerging picture would tell us that the female presence — neglected until present — was, in reality, quite strong.

[32] M.P. Casalena, *Nascita di una capitale transnazionale*, pp. 33; 40-42; 47-48.

[33] If current research seems to confirm that many women translators — albeit not professionals — already worked in the publishing industry of the nineteenth century, the perspective I offer here has thus far only been adopted for women authors, such as Diane Long Hoeveler,

In fact, it was precisely when the publishing business — triggered by the industrial revolution — started to cut loose from its artisan dimension that knowledge of foreign languages became ever more urgent for a young state keen on presenting itself as an integral part of the European forum, in step with the times and with an eye to modernity. For this reason the Lombard intelligentsia decided to found a Milanese Philological Circle on the example of Turin,[34] as announced in an institutional memo of 21 March 1872.[35] The oldest cultural association of Milan was thus born: an institution that — although deeply anchored in the local community — was also open to national and, especially, European culture. The document was signed by men only, and in subsequent decades the Society's summit was composed of all male figures, from the first president — Count Emilio Borromeo — to Eugenio Torelli-Viollier, founder of the Philological Circle's library and of the "Corriere della Sera",[36] as is widely known. From 1876 onwards, the daily published translated foreign literature in an appendix that served as a strategy to increase sales figures.

At the above-mentioned 1890 conference on the "Monopoly of Man", Anna Kuliscioff became one of the first female protagonists of the Milan Philological Circle. Here the study of classical and modern languages was complemented by a dense programme of literary readings and lecture series on foreign literature. Particularly popular were several lectures held in 1926 by Tat'jana Suchotina-Tolstaja, who — like Kuliscioff — had migrated from Russia to Italy. Second child of Lev Tolstoj, Suchotina-Tolstaja was a memoirist and author who apparently came to Italy as her father's 'informal agent'. In the 1930s she collaborated with Mondadori on various editorial projects, which were completed in the next decade.[37] Halfway the 1920s, another woman — and a great friend of Kuliscioff — was slaving over Tolstoj's masterpiece *War and Peace*: Augusta Osimo Muggia. When Barion republished the classic a few years later, the following line was published on the cover: "fully integral translation and compliant with the original text by A. Osimo Muggia".[38]

Gothic feminism. The professionalization of gender. From Charlotte Smith to the Brontes, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1998. I am grateful to Elisa Marazzi for this useful comparison.

[34] For information on the Philological Society of Turin see Enrico Miletto, Marco Novarino, *"... Senza distinzione politica e religiosa": repertorio bibliografico e archivistico sull'associazionismo laico a Torino e Provincia, 1848-1925*, Turin, Centro Studi Piero Calamandrei, 2011, p. 168.

[35] Cit. in Alberto Vandelli, Roberto Bianchi, Gino Cappelletti, *Un modello di lungimiranza: il Circolo Filologico Milanese*, in *L'alchimia del lavoro. I generosi che primi in Milano fecondarono le arti e le scienze*, Milan, Comune di Milano, 2008, p. 54.

[36] A. Vandelli, R. Bianchi, G. Cappelletti, *Un modello di lungimiranza*, pp. 55-58.

[37] Sara Mazzucchelli (ed.), *Percorsi russi a Milano. La mediazione editoriale per la diffusione della letteratura russa*, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2013.

[38] L. Tolstoj, *Guerra e Pace*, Milan, La Universale Barion, 1949.

This specific editorial choice, which the publisher began using in the 1930s, responded to the growing desire of readers, critics and editors to read complete and original translations. Piero Gobetti had supported this idea ever since the 1910s, speaking of "an unfortunate and shameless mystification" with regard to the translations of the *Biblioteca amena* by Treves, because "he translates Russian books from French".[39] Antonio Gramsci showed the same sensitivity in 1929 when — referring to Russian authors — he asked his sister-in-law Tat´jana Apollonovna Šucht, herself an ardent translator, not to send him "any translation that isn't by Slavia, even if it is presented with authority".[40] A "society that published foreign authors in integral versions", Slavia went precisely in this new direction. It was founded in Turin a month before Piero Gobetti passed away in Paris, and managed to appreciate his innovative editorial project, which was an inherent part of his brief but fertile intellectual life. Piero's young wife Ada Prospero collaborated with the society for some time, offering her Russianist skills, which she had developed through hard study and translations conducted together with her husband in previous years.[41]

Slavia is the first important testing ground for the 'gender transformations' I mentioned earlier on, starting with its protagonists. The pool of translators that contributed to the success of the Turin publishing house contained many women: Ada Gobetti, Barbara Allason, the sisters Cristina and Clotilde Garosci — to whom we owe the groundbreaking discovery of Polish literature,[42] as for example Zeromski's books, translated for the *Genio slavo* [Slavic genius] series — and Enrichetta Carafa Capecelatro, Duchess of Andria, who translated many of Tolstoj's works. The latter were included in the *Genio russo* [Russian genius], the first and richest of all series published by Slavia, which benefitted from the contribution of many Russian, Polish and Czechoslovakian women who had migrated to Italy in the wake of Kuliscioff and Tolstoj's daughter: Raissa Olkienizkaja-Naldi, Valentina Dolghin-Badoglio, Anna Ruska and Maria Karklina.[43]

The *Genio russo* series was inaugurated with the publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated into Italian by Slavia's founder, Alfredo Polledro — one of the most prolific translators within the publishing house.

[39] Piero Gobetti, *La cultura e gli editori*, "Energie Nove", 1919, II, 1, now in Paolo Spriano (ed.), P. Gobetti, *Opere complete*, vol. II, *Scritti storici, letterari, filosofici*, Turin, Einaudi, 1969, p. 465.

[40] Antonio Gramsci to T.A. Šucht, 2 June 1929, in Sergio Caprioglio, Elsa Fubini (eds.), A. Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*, Turin, Einaudi, 1965, p. 279.

[41] Laurent Béghin, *Introduzione*, in Laurent Béghin and Francesca Rocci (eds.), *Slavia. Catalogo storico*, Turin, Centro studi piemontesi, 2009, p. 41.

[42] Maria Bersano Begey, *Cristina Agosti Garosci (1881-1966)*, "Ricerche slavistiche", XIV (1966), pp. 308-310. Cristina's son is Giorgio Agosti, who participated with his cousin Aldo Garosci in the Giustizia e Libertà movement.

[43] L. Béghin, *Introduzione*, pp. 40-41.

In reality it was Polledro's wife Rachele Gutman who had launched the ambitious idea of importing the great Russian narrators of the nineteenth century: Dostoevsky, Tolstoj, Turgenev, Gogol', Cechov. Gutman was a Russian Jew who had migrated to Turin at the end of 1904 in order to complete her degree in medicine, which had become impossible in her home country, probably due to the limited number of Jews that were allowed into imperial universities.[44] Gutman gave private Russian lessons in order to earn her living, and Alfredo Polledro was among her first students, along with the Gobettis. Moreover, Gutman and the many aforementioned women translators launched a real methodological revolution,[45] which soon became Slavia's hallmark: that of drawing the Italian versions exclusively from the original Russian text, as I have already mentioned. The other qualitative 'transformation' was that of making "Dostoevsky […] a great author",[46] that is, of canonising and legitimising as great literature the works of the Russian nineteenth-century authors, previously considered consumption literature in Italy.

Slavia's programme, editorial board and method served as a prototype for those — especially Milanese — publishing houses who, over the next decade, shifted their attention to the translated foreign book. Similarly, other publishers launched their own series, including Modernissima's *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* [Writers from all over the world]; *Narratori nordici* [Nordic narrators] and *Pandora* by Sperling & Kupfer; *Medusa*, *I romanzi della Palma* [The palm tree novels] and *Omnibus* by Mondadori; Bompiani's *Letteraria* [Literary]; Frassinelli's *Biblioteca europea* [European library]; and, finally, the *Biblioteca delle signorine* [Young ladies' library], *Romanzi della Rosa* [Rose novels] and *Biblioteca dei miei ragazzi* [My boys' library], all published by the Florentine publisher Salani.

Active ever since the nineteenth century, Salani managed to fully exploit the benefits of combining translated novels with print publications, purchasing the copyrights of foreign works probably already published in newspaper appendices. It is at this point that Salani's success in children's and adolescent literature and in the so-called romance novels began, which became its hallmark precisely during the fascist period.[47] By recognising that female readers were a highly receptive target audience, Adriano and — subsequently — Mario

[44] On Rachele Gutman see the concise profile in the PRIN project *Russi in Italia*: www.russinitalia.it.

[45] Obviously in addition to far more famous collaborators of value, such as Ettore Lo Gatto, Leone Ginzburg and Rinaldo Küfferle.

[46] Anonymous editorial published in the first issue, in "Solaria", 1926, I, 1, p. 3. Cit. in Michele Sisto, *I "tedeschi"di Bompiani. Sul posizionamento delle collane di narrativa straniera nel campo editoriale intorno al 1930*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 217.

[47] Ada Gigli Marchetti, *Libri buoni e a buon prezzo. Le edizioni Salani (1862-1986)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011.

Salani gave proof of a capacity to stay up to pace with time; indeed, the very high print run of women's news magazines such as "Novella" and "Lei",[48] filled with foreign feuilletons, revealed the presence — also in the popular publishing industry — of a very broad audience of eager middle-class female readers of romance novels.[49] Their preference went to imported novels: Delly sold more than Carolina Invernizio, as did many other foreign authors the majority of whom wrote in German. If we look at Salani's catalogue between 1922 and 1945,[50] focusing on translated foreign works whose translator can be identified, we may conclude that the Florentine publisher mostly employed women for his many translation jobs: 54 out of 77 foreign books were translated by women. In sum, nearly all of Salani's collaborators were women. These were often intellectuals who — while completely unknown to us today — reveal the strong female presence in this hidden sector of the publishing industry: Miriam Papa, Maria Ferdinanda Giachetti, Margherita Mancini Taddei, Matilde Boni, Luisa Mazzolani, Giuliana Strazzil, Sonja Jensen in Mirabelli, Gabriella Brenzini Berson, Eugenia Costanzi Masi, Flora Ferrero and Adriana Tedeschi, to mention only a few.

Many romance novels published by Salani were purchased through the International Literary Agency (Agenzia Letteraria Internazionale, hereafter ALI). Founded in Turin in 1898, ALI was the first Italian agency to play a central role in the purchase of copyright for translated foreign works, be they literary texts or scientific essays,[51] and in their sale on the national market, thus contributing to the translation boom. ALI exclusively bought the translation rights for books by contemporary authors, making these its trademark until the end of the Second World War. It is noteworthy that founder Augusto Foà's literary advisor was a woman, Alessandra Scalero, a prolific translator who worked for the main Italian publishers. Based on my reconstruction, I have found that, among the *carnet* of works ALI selected between 1930 and 1945, a large number of women were employed for the translation of these works.[52] Between 1937 and 1939, that is, in the years of the "bonifica libraria"

[48] See Silvia Salvatici, *Il rotocalco femminile: una presenza nuova negli anni del fascismo*, in Silvia Franchini, Simonetta Soldani (eds.), *Donne e giornalismo. Percorsi e presenze di una storia di genere*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2004, pp. 110-126; Fabio Guidali, *Tradurre in "roto". Periodici popolari e letteratura straniera (1933-1936)*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, pp. 87-103.

[49] On the romance genre see Silvana Ghiazza, *Così donna mi piaci. La letteratura rosa negli anni Venti-Quaranta*, in Gigliola De Donato, Vanna Gazzola Stacchini (eds.), *I best seller del Ventennio. Il regime e il libro di massa*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1991, pp. 129-151.

[50] A reconstruction of Salani's entire catalogue, on which my information is based, can be found in A. Gigli Marchetti, *Libri buoni e a buon prezzo.*

[51] On the importance of translated essays, which has thus far received little scholarly attention, see Irene Piazzoni, *Orizzonti internazionali e traduzioni: gli orientamenti della Bompiani*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, pp. 104-122.

[52] On the history of ALI see A. Ferrando, *Cacciatori di libri*. A list of works ALI negotiated is included in the appendix.

(increased book censorship measures) launched by the Commission that was created ad hoc in 1938 and by the aforementioned decree-law that affected women workers in that same year, 36 out of 57 works whose translator I was able to identify were translated by women. Obviously, these names also appear in the catalogues of the editors to whom ALI had sold the foreign books: Irma Valeria Zorzi and Cecilia Mozzoni Marocco for Mondadori; Susanna Guidet Comi for Corbaccio; Antonietta Maria Banti for Salani.

The qualitative transformation of the editorial proposal carried forward by the duo Foà-Scalero — which entirely focused on contemporary works — affected the Italian publishing panorama of the fascist period. Indeed, Scalero worked for Mondadori's prestigious foreign literature series, the *Medusa*, which contributed most to the dissemination of the contemporary English novel.[53] If we only consider the Italian versions of the 33 English-language books, no less than a dozen was signed by women: Doletta (together with her husband Giulio) Caprin, Barbara Tosatti, Irma Vittoria Zorzi and Scalero herself, who alone translated eight books. These included Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and *Flush*, which marked Woolf's debut in Italy; *All Passion Spent* by Victoria Mary Sackville-West; and Richard Aldington's *Women Must Work*.[54] These are significant works in that they were the forerunners of modernist literature, which in Italy only gained full recognition after the Second World War. The presence of women translators is also important for the other foreign literary works that were published in the *Medusa* series. Thus, seven among the first 20 published books were translated by women,[55] including Jakob Wassermann's *Laudin und die Seinen* and Herman Hesse's *Narziß und Goldmund*, translated by Barbara Allason and Cristina Baseggio respectively, or Carola Prosperi's translation of Colette's *La Vagabonde* in 1933.

Similarly, the collection *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* that Modernissima launched in 1929, just as the so-called translation boom was gaining momentum, then revealed in 1931 by Enrico Dall'Oglio, presents analogous transformations in terms of both the publisher's offer and the chosen collaborators. Here, too, we may witness a feminisation of the translation job; of the first 20 books published in the series, which was edited by the dynamic translator and editor Gian Dauli, half was translated by women, predominantly by Bice Giachetti Sorteni and Alessandra Scalero. Like Alfredo Polledro and Rachele Gutman for Slavia, the director of *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* had also hoped to surround himself with experts in foreign languages and literatures, and therefore needed to address a large number of women, for the aim was to

[53] Sara Sullam, *I romanzi inglesi nelle collane editoriali degli anni Trenta. Classici, moderni, modernisti, contemporanei*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 270.

[54] S. Sullam, *I romanzi inglesi nelle collane editoriali degli anni Trenta*, pp. 270-271.

[55] I gathered these from the rich appendix edited by M. Sisto, *I "tedeschi" di Bompiani*, pp. 239-244.

publish only authors that "are *ours*, that *we* discovered, taken from their home nation, that is, who don't reach us second-hand".[56] These women translators introduced Italian readers to the latest publications in German and American modern literature, destined to become a part of the great literary canon: from Thomas Mann's *Zauerberg*, translated by Giachetti Sorteni, to John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* or Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt*, translated in Italian by Alessandra and Liliana Scalero.

If we take a closer look, all above-mentioned series present analogous "transformative" traits. Suffice to think of the important collection of Sperling & Kupfer, *Narratori nordici*, which hosted prestigious names that had been almost unknown in Italy until then, such as Franz Werfel, Thomas Mann, Arthur Schnitzler, Hermann Hesse, Ricarda Huch, Leonhard Frank, Hans Carossa and Stefan Zweig. To achieve such an ambitious project, the publisher used highly qualified collaborators, among whom Lavinia Mazzucchetti (together with Giacomo Prampolini), the real director of the series who selected the — both male and female — translators: Barbara Allason, Berta Burgio Ahrens, Maria Sofia Borgese Cederna, Cristina Baseggio, Lucia Paparella, Paola Faggioli (for translations from Finnish), Kirsten Montanari Guldbrandsen (for translations from Danish) and, finally, the 'usual' Alessandra Scalero.[57]

Alessandra Scalero, faithful translator of restless souls and herself an errant soul

Alessandra Scalero's name repeatedly emerges from these first examples: a significant presence in the female universe of women translators and also an exemplary protagonist — even if today mostly unknown — of those 'gender transformations' that this universe was both a cause and a consequence of. Scalero also boasted of being a pioneer, one of the first Italian intellectuals to have ventured beyond the European publishing market out into the overseas market, looking for new literary talents.[58] She translated nearly fifty books

[56] Donn Byrne, *Raftery il cieco e sua moglie Hilaria*, Modernissima, Milan, 1930, pp. XX-XXI, cit. in Elisa Marazzi, *Dalle carte di un mediatore. Gian Dauli e l'editoria milanese*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 123.

[57] On Sperling & Kupfer see the recent essay by Natascia Barrale, *La letteratura tedesca dei* Narratori nordici *(Sperling & Kupfer)*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, pp. 167-183. Thanks to Barrale we have gained important knowledge of the manipulations or 'betrayals' of the Italian versions of German novels, especially those of the so-called New Subjectivity movement. See Natascia Barrale, *Le traduzioni di narrativa tedesca durante il fascismo*, Rome, Carocci, 2012.

[58] I have reconstructed Scalero's biographical and intellectual profile drawing on materials from the private archive of the three Scalero sisters (other than Alessandra: Liliana, also a translator as well as writer and journalist, and the youngest sister, Maria Teresa), held at the Civic

from English and German,[59] which were real revelations for the Italian readership. In fact, they soon entered the canon of foreign literature, so much so that, when they were recently republished, these were still "Alessandra Scalero's translations, which we feel are unparalleled", Adriana Motti wrote. An even more authoritative judgement was that of Fernanda Pivano in 2002, when she called the republication of *Manhattan Transfer* in the "Corriere della Sera" the "splendid classic translation by Alessandra Scalero".[60] John Dos Passos, "a brilliant and humane writer […] behind his avant-garde crust",[61] was one of the first American authors Scalero had proposed in 1930. However, "due to the laziness of a savage publisher" he long remained trapped in Gian Dauli's drawers,[62] until Enrico Dall'Oglio picked it up again along with other books in the *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* series.

Scalero's translation qualities were soon noticed by Arnoldo Mondadori's right-hand man, Luigi Rusca, who was very careful to assign her the "more literary jobs that best suit Your artistic personality",[63] to the extent that Scalero "helped Vittorini put together Mondadori's *Medusa*",[64] the most sophisticated foreign literature series that the Milanese publisher offered its readership. Of course, even when there weren't any "jobs that merit your quality [more than others]",[65] Lorenzo Montano — editor of the successful crime novel series *Libri gialli* [Yellow books] — had no choice but to appeal to Scalero's competencies, claiming he was "very satisfied to see that she has given the same attention to the translation of *Fer-de-lance* as to more important things: she has done an extremely good job".[66] Accuracy, rigour and seriousness earned her a progressive involvement in all activities of the leading editor during the decade of translations: for example, the selection of potential collaborators and

Library Mondino di Mazzé (Turin). I have revealed the existence of this archive — the Fondo Alessandra Scalero (hereafter FAS) — and described its contents in a short article titled *Fonti inedite: l'archivio delle due traduttrici Liliana e Alessandra Scalero*, in "La Fabbrica del Libro. Bollettino di storia dell'editoria in Italia", 1/2013, anno XIX, pp. 43-47.

[59] See the reconstruction by Elisa Bolchi: https://rivistatradurre.it/2018/05/traduzioni-di-alessandra-scalero.

[60] In 1986, Motti revised Scalero's translation of Karen Blixen's *Seven gothic tales* for Adelphi. Fernanda Pivano, *Dos Passos a Manhattan: la nascita del sogno antiamericano. Ritorna una nuova edizione del romanzo che nel '25 diede la gloria all'autore del "42° parallelo". Ritratto di New York da parte di un militante di sinistra*, "Corriere della Sera", 6 April 2002, p. 31.

[61] A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 15 February 1931, in FAS.

[62] A. Scalero to Mario Praz, 13 July 1933, in FAS. Cit. also in Elisa Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa. Alessandra Scalero nel carteggio con la sorella Liliana*, in rivistatradurre.it, 2018/05, p. 14.

[63] L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 26 February 1937, in FAS.

[64] Liliana Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre. Memorie*, 1973, inedito, p. 57, in FAS.

[65] L. Montano to A. Scalero, 11 April 1936, in FAS.

[66] L. Montano to A. Scalero, 16 July 1936, in FAS.

translators,[67] but also offering advice to the Longanesi magazine *Omnibus*, for which the Mondadori employee Emilio Ceretti had been appointed to select editorial material.[68]

But who was Alessandra Scalero? In particular, what professional course had gained her the reputation of "one of the most active collaborators of the *Medusa* series"?[69] First of all, her life trajectory had prevented her — paradoxically — from completing a normal study course, while at the same time allowing her to learn English, French and German in an almost natural manner as well as to develop a cosmopolitan awareness. Born in Turin in 1893,[70] from an early age she had lived with her bohemian family in London, Lyon, Vienna, Rome, New York and Philadelphia, following the professional career of her father Rosario Scalero,[71] a violinist and composer attempting to make his breakthrough. This didn't occur in Europe, despite his being hired by the Breitkopf und Härtel publishing house, but in the United States, when he was invited to come teach in the most important American conservatory: the Curtis Institute of Philadelphia. Among the nearly two hundred students he taught during his 40-year stay in the US were some of the most influential composers in the history of twentieth-century music: Gian Carlo Menotti, Nino Rota and Samuel Barber, who often spent their summer holidays in the Montestrutto Castle, which Scalero had bought with the generous profits made from the composition for *carillon* commissioned by the Curtis Institute's director.[72] In the 1930s, Alessandra Scalero used the Canavese dwelling as her favourite intellectual retreat — a perfect salon where she could receive authors, translators and publishers on the example of her uncle Piero Delgrosso's Roman house, which was attended by the capital's cultural and political intelligentsia. After having completed her elementary education between Lyon and Vienna, she continued her studies at the Liceo Tasso of Rome, before abandoning these at the outbreak of the Great War and signing up for the nursery school of the Policlinico Umberto I. It is probably thanks to this discontinued and non-institutionalised education — yet filled with encounters, new discoveries and challenges — that she became a curious explorer of "lands and countries books and

[67] L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 17 July 1936, in FAS.

[68] L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 12 March 1937, in FAS.

[69] L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 12 March 1937, in FAS.

[70] For the first reconstruction of Alessandra Scalero's profile see Fabrizio Dassano, *Alessandra Scalero, una traduttrice. Materiali per una biografia*, "L'Escalina. Rivista semestrale di cultura letteraria, storica, artistica, scientifica", Associazione Culturale "I Luoghi e la Storia", Ivrea, October 2012, a. I, n. 2, pp. 285-335.

[71] For a biography of Rosario Scalero (1870-1954) see Flavia Ingrosso, Chiara Marola, *Il carteggio Sinigaglia-Scalero (1899-1913): due musicisti piemontesi a Vienna*, in Alberto Basso (ed.), *Miscellanea di studi*, Turin, Centro studi piemontesi - Istituto per i beni musicali in Piemonte, 2006, pp. 259-313.

[72] Liliana Scalero, notes for a paper on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the *Istituto Curtis di Filadelfia* (May 1975?), in FAS.

friends, a faithful translator of restless souls […] and herself an errant soul", as her sisters Liliana and Maria Teresa remembered her a few months after her death in a hospital in Ivrea, in July 1944.

The foreign spirits that the Piedmont translator wanted to bring to Italy were, therefore, "restless" souls. These were, for example, the female authors Scalero had translated and proposed in the difficult years of 'fascist machismo': from the internal and rebellious agonies of *Mrs Dalloway* to the pages of Ricarda Huch, divorced twice and instantly critical of the newborn National Socialist regime.[73] Not just the authors, but the very protagonists of their literary fictions represented a feminine model that was by no means congruous with the model promoted by Fascism. Scalero was a woman who selected and translated women who were "out of place".[74] "Out of place" in that they overstepped the gender boundaries within which the regime wanted to confine them, in the fictitious and translated page, but most of all in reality. This is the case of a friend of the Piedmont translator, the Alsatian Adrienne Thomas, author of the bestseller *Catherine Soldat*: like Remarque's *Im Westen Nicht Neues* and other books included in the series *I romanzi della guerra* [War novels], forced down in 1931, Thomas conveyed pacifist ideas and, what is more, using a young female voice.

Scalero used to meet Thomas in Ascona,[75] a small free harbour on the Swiss side of Lake Maggiore, where she also regularly met with a number of German exiled authors. This is when the idea unfolded to 'import' into Italy those German-language authors who had been "forced to matter elsewhere".[76] The project foundered in spite of the ALI's support,[77] since it had become necessary to "avoid literature of political nature".[78] It is precisely in Ascona that one of these authors, Ernst Erich Noth, hoped to become acquainted with his potential Italian translator, to whom he declared, in 1935, that

> the Italian copyright of "Mietskaserne" is free again. It means a lot to me being able to present myself to the Italian audience with my first book, and I believe that You could help me with this. Would another publisher that I can trust be interested?[79]

Yet, no publisher took on the risk of publishing this novel, like the Frankfurter Zeitung had done; it was burnt in the Nazi book burnings, and for Noth Scalero remained no more than a potential translator. *Die Mietskaserne* wasn't a great

[73] E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 16.

[74] *Women out of place* is the title of a chapter in Guido Bonsaver's book on *Mussolini censore. Storie di letteratura, dissenso e ipocrisia*, Bari, Laterza, 2013.

[75] See the brief correspondence between A. Thomas and A. Scalero held in FAS.

[76] A. Scalero to A. Foà, 4 May 1933, in FAS.

[77] On this project see A. Ferrando, *Cacciatori di libri*, pp. 143-146.

[78] L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 6 February 1941, in FAS.

[79] E. Noth to A. Scalero, 7 January 1935, in FAS.

deal in literary terms; it rather wanted to offer an eyewitness account of the turbulent years that preceded Hitler's rise to power, when the author sympathised with students groups of the extreme Left and had been forced to flee because of his stubborn anti-Nazism. All his subsequent works — written, interestingly, in French and English so as to emphasise his choice to distance himself from his fatherland — focused on the "spiritual precursors of Hitler's madness".[80] He therefore had even less chance of being published in Italy, which was ever more caught in the grips of cultural autarky and closer as ever to the German dictator. With time, Noth was forgotten, even if the German publishing industry recently rediscovered him and has started republishing his works.[81] With hindsight, then, we could say that Scalero had good intuition.

Both this intuition and her connections with foreign authors and publishers allowed the Piedmont translator to sign her first contracts with Modernissima and Corbaccio, before entering the Mondadori publishing house. "Everyone says that it took a lot of courage on my behalf to impose books that were considered 'boring'" — Alessandra wrote to her sister Liliana, in reference to her proposal to Modernissima to translate Jakob Wassermann, Alfred Döblin and Thomas Mann — "but that's what I always say: you need to be brave and insist, and then the book takes off".[82] These weren't just ordinary 'boring' books, though. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* eventually became one of the Weimarian references for young Italian authors such as Ugo Dettore, whose *Quartiere Vittoria* [Victoria District] recalls Döblin's novel even in the title,[83] in search of a "style with an elementary analytical form, drywalled using short sentences, without images, all momentary sensation, all completed".[84] The Berlin myth of the New Subjectivity movement influenced the Italian cultural landscape even before the American myth did, which it undoubtedly made reference to.[85]

[80] E. Noth to A. Scalero, 22 March 1935, in FAS.

[81] These include: *Die Tragödie der deutschen Jugend*, Frankfurt am Main, glotzi Verlag, 2002; *Die Mietskaserne. Roman junger Menschen*, Frankfurt am Main, glotzi Verlag, 2003; *Deutsche Schriftsteller im Exil 1933-1979 – Einführung in die Exilliteratur*, Frankfurt am Main, glotzi Verlag, 2012.

[82] Cit. in E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 15.

[83] Julius Evola criticised the Italian translation (by Alberto Spaini) of this novel. On 10 September 1932, Evola made the following observation to Alessandra: "the whole problem is the doctrine of the Jew Marx, in an attempt to force it down using the 'novel' as an excuse". Alessandra's reply — which cannot be found in any existing letter — was probably the translation of another one of Döblin's novels, *Pardon wird nicht gegeben*, this time under her name: *Senza quartiere*, published in 1937 for Mondadori. Although the philosopher associated with Fascism undoubtedly knew the three sisters, in the Scalero archive only four other letters remain that were written by Evola between October 1931 and January 1933.

[84] Silvio Benco, *Ludwig Renn: La guerra*, "Pegaso", November 1929, a. I, n. 5, pp. 765-766. Cit. in Mario Rubino, *L'influsso della narrativa tedesca contemporanea sul romanzo italiano degli anni Trenta*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 184.

[85] M. Rubino, *L'influsso della narrativa tedesca contemporanea sul romanzo italiano degli anni Trenta*, p. 196.

Scalero thus became the mediator of an important 'transformation', which eventually influenced the pens of new generations of writers across the peninsula, distancing them from artistic prose.

Scalero's literary mediation was therefore characterised by contemporaneity, the quest for new talents and messengers of a novel vision of literature in its relation with the world. Thus the Piedmont translator wrote to Richard Aldington, another author who perfectly fitted into this canon: "I have been the translator of John Dos Passos and Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence; and from the German *(sic)*, of Jakob Wassermann, Franz Werfel, Ernst Weiss, etc.".[86] The biting satire of the Portsmouth author raised many a debate within Italian literary circles, nurturing the competitiveness of publishers who were all too eager to get hold of the copyright for his works. Mondadori eventually won the battle, but censorship ruined the initial enthusiasm, and not all of Aldington's works could be translated instantly. Nevertheless, Scalero knew that one always had to be ready to act, for sometimes a ladder in the tights allowed translators to evade state control. She thus translated *Women Must Work* — published in the *Medusa* series in 1936 — in record time. Through the eyes of the disrespectful protagonist Etta, this unambiguous and provocative title conveyed the 'forced and domestic parasitism' in which many women were trapped. Hence another "restless spirit" Scalero wished to give a voice.

Even if Aldington undoubtedly represented an easy bet, regardless of the censorship, given that he was already an acclaimed — albeit disputed and contested — author in his home country, the same could not be said for the young playwright Eugene O'Neill. Scalero had attempted to launch O'Neill — along with Dos Passos — some ten years earlier, during her stay in the United States. She had met him in New York, in that laboratory of nonconformist talents and emancipated women that was Greenwich Village in the 1920s,[87] and instantly spotted his prodigious talent even before he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936. It must be said that, when she followed her father to New York, she was no novice to theatre: for some years she had worked as a costume designer along with her sister Maria Teresa. Together they had worked at the renowned Greek Theatre of Syracuse, (Sicily), and subsequently for the Teatro Sperimentale degli Indipendenti [Independents' Experimental Theatre], founded in 1922 by Anton Giulio Bragaglia. This proved an essential experience as it opened up a world of contacts that eventually introduced her to the publishing universe.[88] A confirmation of her talent can be found in the letters Paolo Grassi wrote her in his role as editor of the theatre series of the Rosa and Ballo publishing house: "[…] I thank you, Miss Scalero, for your

[86] A. Scalero to R. Aldington, 13 July 1933, in FAS.

[87] Federico Doglio, *Teatro americano. Lo spettacolo di prosa negli Stati Uniti dal periodo coloniale a oggi*, Milan, Garzanti, 1990, p. 87.

[88] A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 2 February 1926, in FAS.

precious contribution to my THEATRE series with your two Wedekind. The list of works You have proposed is EXTREMELY INTERESTING".[89] Another authoritative recognition came at the end of her career, which was suddenly interrupted by endometrial cancer; shortly before entering the hospital she reassured Gian Dauli, writing that she would have continued working on the many projects she had in mind even from her hospital bed.[90]

An unmarried pioneer

The above-mentioned incident is yet another example of Scalero's character: determined, stubborn, ready to collaborate with whoever would allow her to launch a worthy author, even if this meant having to face up to Gian Dauli once more — the publisher she was often at loggerheads with when it came to payments: "The bad moments, the trouble, the ordeals I have suffered because of You" — Scalero wrote with bitterness and anger, though not submissive and confident that she was in the right — "never seem to cease, nor do I know when they ever will […] what deeply offends me is that I am treated like a beggar, like some annoying individual who doesn't even deserve a reply".[91]

For months, Scalero had been waiting to receive "just the usual 50 lire",[92] even if these hardly reflected the huge amount of work she was managing for Modernissima. Thus, in a letter to her father dated 7 April 1930, she confessed that "anything concerning Modernissima is in my hands, and Gian Dauli has no inkling of what needs to be done when I'm not around".[93] However, since she had moved to Milan on her own, far from her family, she found herself "having to accept anything".[94] The Piedmont translator was acting like a real entrepreneur of herself, to borrow a modern definition, one that nevertheless applies perfectly to the professional figure that was slowly emerging at the time: through her work method, Scalero embodied this figure excellently.

In the early 1930s, after she returned from the United States, Scalero decided to invest all her resources in the publishing business, taking advantage of the job opportunities that were opening up for people like her, with a good knowledge of foreign languages. She instantly sought to diversify her sources of income, conscious of the fact that publishers were looking for good translators, and at the time there weren't many around, especially for translations from English and German. "I am dealing with various publishers who

[89] Paolo Grassi to A. Scalero, 14 April 1944, in FAS.
[90] E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della "Medusa"*, p. 19.
[91] A. Scalero to G. U. Nalato, 5 July 1931, in FAS.
[92] A. Scalero to G. U. Nalato, 28 May 1931, in FAS.
[93] A. Scalero to R. Scalero, 7 April 1930, in FAS.
[94] A. Scalero to G. U. Nalato, 28 May 1931, in FAS.

are driving me mad", she wrote to Liliana in March 1931. "[T]hey all want updates, advice, and they go on and on, they never decide, they are unsure, and it takes a century, kilometres of energy before I even get anything done".[95]

This ranting reveals the — intellectual and physical — weight of Scalaro's mediation efforts, the many projects she conceived, proposed and perhaps even initiated, but which were never concluded due to the publishers' idleness and nerve-racking playing for time. We must also not forget that editorial translation is in itself an activity that requires time, reflection and rereading of an infinite number of drafts.[96] In other words, many unpaid efforts are necessary before a book can be translated, and still more time and letters after the job has been done to retrieve the rightly earned money. This also happened with major publishing houses like Carabba, to whom Scalero was forced to clarify her situation:

> By no means do I wish to doubt the correctness of Your established and acclaimed publishing house; I merely wish to bring to Your attention the fact that when one works not for pleasure but to make a living — the many translations that carry my name demonstrate that this is my profession, and not a pastime — one must earn one's living through work.[97]

In this letter — dated 28 July 1934 — as in the correspondence with her sisters, father and the authors she collaborated with in the 1930s, Scalero didn't shy away from calling herself a "professional translator".[98] In doing so she unveiled her new awareness of having become the protagonist of a public space that is defined on the basis of precise linguistic, cultural and editorial skills. Indeed, Scalero had all the characteristics of the "pure editorial translator", who depended for at least 75% on what she earned through her translations. She didn't expand her editorial work with any other kind of activity, which was rather uncommon, given that the fees — "per sheet", since royalties in Italy were (and still are) rarely established by contract — were too low to guarantee translators a decent life.[99]

Alessandra Scalero was, then, a pioneer of her profession, so much so that already at the end of 1933, barely a year after she had started working for the *Medusa* series, Mondadori employed her at its own "exclusive service as a translator, with a fixed and very good monthly salary"; as she explained to Liliana, "it wasn't even a flat rate job, for the translations would be paid

[95] A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 22 March 1931 in FAS. Cit. also in E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 15.

[96] Laura Cangemi, *Professione traduttore*, in *Un mondo da tradurre*, p. 16.

[97] A. Scalero to Carabba, 28 July 1934, in FAS.

[98] See, for example, the letter to Mario Praz of 13 July 1933, held in FAS. Cit. also by Elisa Bolchi, *Tutta una strada da costruire. Alessandra Scalero e il "mestiere di traduttore"*, in V. Brigatti et al. (ed.), *Archivi editoriali*, p. 166.

[99] L. Cangemi, *Professione traduttore*, pp. 15-16.

around 2000-2500 lire each".[100] Given the advantageous type of contract and the investment that the biggest Italian publisher was making, Rusca wanted to make it clear that, "given the made agreements, You must reserve all Your time for us".[101] Although it was without a doubt one of the greatest recognitions that she could have received, Scalero by now knew how things worked in the publishing industry, an unstable sector where "you sometimes work for months in a row without seeing a penny and then you need something to fall back on".[102] She thus had to develop strategies that would allow her not to loose old and new clients, as at the end of the 1930s, when she started translating for Corbaccio using the pseudonym Rosa Induno.[103]

She was right not to be too trustworthy: by the end of the decade, the political context became less and less favourable to cultural openings, and publishers were forced to gradually reduce the number of translated books within their catalogues, especially after the resurgence of book censorship in 1938 and Italy's entry into the Second World War. In fact, on 30 July 1941 Luigi Rusca had to renegotiate the initial agreements with the Piedmont translator, as it was becoming increasingly complicated to invest in translations. He therefore had to "reduce the number of publications and use the large amount of material that we had ready".[104]

Fortunately for her, Scalero never fully respected Mondadori's claim for exclusivity, guaranteeing other incomes for herself in those difficult years. In fact, she succeeded in being employed as a translator and advisor for both the Nuove Edizioni Ivrea — a publishing company the famous engineer Adriano Olivetti launched in 1941 — and the publishing house founded two years later by Achille Rosa and Ferdinando Ballo, which had an explicit liberal-socialist imprint. She signed numerous translation contracts with both publishers, which anticipated translations that comprised a biographical-critical presentation of each individual work, as for the translation of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*; Rosa and Ballo offered the Piedmont translator the bargain price of 6000 lire.[105]

As early as 1929, Liliana Scalero acknowledged the fact that her sister had outlined a path for herself without financially depending on her family, even during the fluctuating process of building her career, which was all the more difficult in the field of translations, by then still an underestimated and not yet recognised profession:

[100] A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 22 November 1933, in FAS.
[101] L. Rusca to A. Scalero, early February 1934, in FAS.
[102] A. Scalero to R. Scalero, 22 February 1924, in FAS.
[103] E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 15.
[104] L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 5 November 1940, in FAS.
[105] Translation contract of A. Scalero, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Fondo Rosa e Ballo, cartella 20, fasc. 18.

what pleasure I derive from your magnificent activity, from the magnificent results it has already brought and the even more important results it will bring in the future. Bravo! Truly well done, especially knowing that, of us all, you received the least financial support, plus you did everything yourself and — as you say — without any talents, though that isn't true. You had the best talent, to say the least: that of succeeding, which is a lot if you ask me.[106]

Alessandra Scalero not only succeeded in being appreciated and paid for her translations, but she even managed to buy herself "an apartment with a kitchen in Milan, and being the lady of the house she is very attentive to her expenses".[107] When she was younger, both during the Great War and in the 1920s, when she lived with her aunt and uncle in Rome, Scalero had already managed to support herself without her family's help, first as a nurse and later — as we have seen — as a costume designer. Even when she could count on her parents' financial aid, she used the money rationally and sparingly, with great gratitude but always with a desire for economic independence. In fact, although her mother, Clementina Delgrosso, came from an upper-middle-class Turinese family, the father was, instead, of modest provenance and often "penniless", at least until he began making his fortune in the United States at the start of the 1930s.[108] Hence, Rosario's overseas fortune eventually coincided with that of his daughter in Milan. In that same period, the latter gradually established herself as a translation expert in the publishing scene of the Lombard capital.

When her business took off, especially after she signed the Mondadori contract, Scalero had only just celebrated her fortieth birthday and was in the bloom of her career. She had reached this stage unmarried and childless.[109] In the early 1920s, she had been romantically involved with Giulio Cesare Silvagni, a scenographer, actor and novelist, but after that story ended badly she in fact threw herself into work, devoting all her time and her letters to her translations. From 1925 onwards, her correspondence with Liliana became filled with cultural discussions and working matters; by then, her private and public life entirely overlapped. This, too, is an important piece of information, as it implies that Scalero went against the renewed ideology of domesticity and maternal centrality that was gaining ground in fascist Italy. As Angela Groppi has highlighted, at the end of the day for many female pioneers of the new professions — and Scalero "boasted of also being a pioneer"[110] — the choice not to marry and have children was a forced condition. Spinsterhood and absent motherhood came to represent the price to be paid by all those

[106] L. Scalero to A. Scalero, 20 October 1929, in FAS.

[107] L. Scalero to R. Scalero, 12 December 1931, in FAS.

[108] L. Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre*, p. 24.

[109] The only sister that got married was the youngest one: Maria Teresa. Contrary to Liliana and Alessandra, Maria Teresa (1901-1990) didn't dedicate her life to translations, but worked as an actress, painter and — for many years — as a librarian at the American Library of Rome.

[110] Cit. in E. Bolchi, *Tutta una strada da costruire*, p. 159.

women who wanted to take on professional activities that were not yet fully formalised, or considered 'typically male' professions,[111] because they implied a nearly total investment of their energy in work, at the cost of housework and family care work.[112] All the more so, then, when it came to intellectual activities, where men defended their monopoly with even stronger determination, supported by the school policies that were pursued during the *ventennio*. After all, the Minister of Education Giovanni Gentile himself had sustained that women lacked "that daring originality of thought, as well as the healthy spiritual vigour that are the superior, intellectual and moral forces of mankind".[113]

The Scalero sisters held entirely different opinions. At the beginning of the 1930s, they even came up with the idea of launching their own magazine, together with the painter Roberto Lemmi — at the time an illustrator and editorial assistant for Modernissima:

> Let the many Emanuellis flatter his friends or tear them to pieces at will, let him talk about the Italian novel, and I can talk about the contemporary foreign novel, on which I have many ideas and I don't lack the expertise […]. Let us hope that the Emanuellis will leave me a space, and not oppress me with their masculine authority. You know that I have too much talent and culture to be considered a 'woman', which always comes in handy to men whenever they want to push you aside. It is through my clear and modern ideas that I challenge them all to a duel.[114]

Liliana's words fully convey the difficulty for young women to make their way in a world — the literary and publishing one — packed with men hiding behind the firm conviction of their own intellectual stature, in virtue of which they necessarily deserved to be considered the protagonists of this world. This makes it easier to understand Liliana's confident, proud and also bitter tone, a consequence of the angry desire to take on a reality that had always relegated women to a second place. This is demonstrated by the fact that Liliana — all the while rejecting male authority — remained unable to define a female authority, so much so that she claimed to have too much talent and culture to be considered a woman.

The reference, in the letter, to Enrico Emanuelli wasn't casual; Alessandra Scalero had met him a month earlier and was instantly struck by that "half

[111] It is widely known that, within the more structured professions, like the clerical ones (think of the banking sector), a dismissal because of marriage was a means of facilitating the turnover in the inferior ranks of women's jobs. See B. Curli, *Dalla Grande guerra alla Grande crisi*, p. 220.

[112] A. Groppi, *Introduzione*, in A. Groppi (ed.), *Il lavoro delle donne*, p. XIII.

[113] Giovanni Gentile, *Il problema scolastico del dopoguerra*, Naples, R. Ricciardi, 1919, p. 8, cit. in Paola Govoni, *Studiose e scrittrici di scienza tra l'età liberale e il fascismo. Il Caso Bottero e Magistrelli*, "Genesis", *Esercizi di stile*, 1/2007, p. 86.

[114] L. Scalero to A. Scalero, 5 May 1931, in FAS. Cit. also in E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 13.

swindler",[115] with whom she developed an intellectual understanding that would last all her life. Not only did she introduce him to Enrico Dall'Oglio, who would shortly thereafter commission a translation of Jakob Wassermann from Emanuelli, but she also helped him start a collaboration with the magazine *Die Sammlung*, edited by Klaus Mann. Nor did she hesitate to invite the author, journalist and translator from Novara to her literary salon at the Montestrutto Castle, where he became one of the most appreciated guests. Emanuelli was probably one of those "badly rewarded friendships" that Alessandra had — according to Liliana — "with authors and novelists whom she generously gave more than she got back from".[116]

Notwithstanding the "various Emanuellis", Liliana Scalero's portrait of her sister offers us — through these unpublished family memories — the image of an independent woman who "played tennis, skied and loved social life",[117] a free and confident woman who chose to live her life in defiance of prejudice and social conventions. She remained unmarried but without feeling the weight of this condition; instead, she enjoyed the liberty that this condition granted her and, being far from her family, opened the doors of the Montestrutto Castle to friends and intellectuals. Always eager to start new projects, to make new acquaintances and travel abroad, Alessandra Scalero completely devoted her time to her role as cultural mediator, one that she herself had helped shape and with which she fully identified herself. This professional awareness therefore had a bearing on the perception of her own subjectivity, also by others, up to the point that on her tomb she was recognized as an "unparalleled translator". Contrary to her mother, who died in 1939 and was remembered as "the sweetest wife and mother [who] lived offering generosity indulgence affect",[118] Alessandra left posterity a memory of her social and public role, in complete contrast with the traditional female image, which remained limited to the private and sentimental sphere.

[115] A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 17 April 1931, in FAS. On the relation between Emanuelli and Scalero I have written elsewhere: *Dal carteggio inedito con la traduttrice Alessandra Scalero. Enrico Emanuelli cosmopolita di vocazione*, "Nuova Antologia", aprile-giugno 2013, anno 148, pp. 307-326.

[116] L. Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre*, p. 57. The correspondence between Scalero and Emanuelli is interrupted for nearly ten years, and continues again in 1942 with only two last letters, written with a colder tone of voice, in stark contrast with the — at times even sweet — words they had written one another in 1933.

[117] L. Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre*, pp. 113-114.

[118] Text on Alessandra Scalero and Clementina Delgrosso's tomb at the Moncalieri cemetery near Turin.

Supplementary women?

Alessandra Scalero's biography certainly merits more attention, just as it would be necessary to examine more in depth the 'hidden iceberg' of all other women translators, using a broader quantitative and qualitative analysis in addition to the examples discussed in the second section of this essay. I have sought to trace a possible research trajectory for a long-term study of women, translation and emancipation through the editorial profession between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scalero's case is, in fact, exemplary of that 'gender transformation' that affected publishing houses in the period between the two world wars, as evidence of a feminisation of editorial work in a broad sense, and of translation work in a narrow sense. A process of regendering that must be placed in the context of more general qualitative dynamics (i.e. technological, organisational, productive), which modernised the world of labour in industrial societies, and in particular in the service sector. At the start of the 1930s, this process led to a slow but steady rise of women in liberal professions and arts (especially as teachers), the financial sector and insurance companies, and in the transport and communication sectors (where many worked as phone operators).[119]

In Italy, the 1930s marked the point of departure of this process, which continues in the present. It coincided with the so-called decade of translations, when — in full countertendency — office work underwent virilisation. In 1934, for example, in all branches of public administration actual quotas were introduced, though not to incentivise female occupation; they were rather meant to exclude it. The fascist regime thus glorified the image of the male intellectual and, as a counterweight and in a naturally supplementary position, the stereotype of the young secretary — the female icon par excellence of the contemporary age. In fact, discriminating legislation further impeded women's access to those professions that required long years of study and intellectual qualities.[120]

During the aforementioned conference on the "Monopoly of Man", Anna Kuliscioff had been among the first to have identified the intellectual jobs where women's entry represented the biggest threat to male monopoly: those liberal professions that weren't chosen because the woman had to support her family — as might be the case for female rural or factory workers from the lowest ranks of society — and that weren't the public representation of the maternal figure's protective and caring characteristics — like the female (school) teacher, doctor or nurse. In fact, the transition from the modern to the contemporary age implied a change of paradigms in the social construction of the female figure, that is, a transition from a "minority" to a new understanding

[119] B. Curli, *Dalla Grande Guerra alla Grande crisi*, pp. 202-203; 231.
[120] V. de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, pp. 262-264.

of gender based on the idea of "difference", primarily that of a biological kind.[121] If the idea of difference opened up new working opportunities for certain groups of women, such as doctors, teachers and nurses (in view also of the characteristics mentioned above), at the same time growing concerns about the risks for female reproductive health inherent in the various jobs became an excuse for the exclusion of many women from factory work, considered too risky and — following the laws of 1902 and 1907 — also expensive.[122]

Contrary to the figure of the Red Cross nurse,[123] that of the female doctor did not monopolise the image of a 'typically female' profession for very long; although it also reflected a care profession, it enjoyed greater economic and social status comparable to that of a lawyer, scientist or academic. For a long time, men had defended the liberal professions as 'strongholds of virility', appealing to "intellectual differences (at the expense of women) triviality and vanity, which prevent her from dedicating herself with perseverance and dedication to serious intellectual work". Further still, as Kuliscioff sarcastically remarked during the above-mentioned conference, "in the struggle for survival they all pull together to build a bulwark against the middle-class woman's intrusion in the intellectual field".[124] By 1935, a man of great cultural depth as was Franco Antonicelli still believed in these alleged intellectual differences. He thus told Anita Rho, translator of Mann's *Buddenbrook* and Musil's *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften*, during the second post-war period: "you are the only woman I would entrust with a job without hesitation, as if I did it myself". Antonicelli was referring to the preface of a collection of stories by Kafka, to be published in the *Biblioteca europea* of the Turinese publisher Frassinelli.[125]

Like Alessandra Scalero, Anita Rho also owed her perfect German language skills to her family history; born in Venice, her father Filippo ran the navy's health unit, precisely in that North-Eastern region of the peninsula where many had daily interactions with the German language. Moreover, for four years Anita Rho had lived among the educated middle classes of Budapest and Bratislava, which predominantly spoke German. Another example is Angela Zucconi, who — prior to the Nazi occupation — won a scholarship and moved to Copenhagen where she learnt Danish, thus specialising in a language that was almost unknown in Italy at the time. Thanks to her expertise, Adriano Olivetti's publishing house (Nuove Edizioni Ivrea) entrusted her with the trans-

[121] A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, pp. 163-167.

[122] A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro e le risorse delle donne in età contemporanea*, pp. 304-307.

[123] A figure transmitted in particular by literature with a high print run: think of Catherine Barkley in *A farewell to arms*, the skilful and courageous — yet docile, erotic and caring — nurse, a perfect icon of Hemingway's machismo.

[124] A. Kuliscioff, *Il monopolio dell'uomo*, p. 48.

[125] Gianfranco Petrillo, *Zia Barbara e Anita. Due grandi traduttrici dal tedesco: Barbara Allason e Anita Rho*, in rivistatradurre.it, 2012/01, p. 7.

lation of Kierkegaard after 1941.[126] In the case of mother tongue translation specialists, such as Rachele Gutman, Raissa Olkienizkaja-Naldi, Eva Kühn Amendola or Anna Ruska, the foreign language was, instead, the cultural patrimony that they brought with them to Italy, and which they managed to exploit also at an economic level: as did Gutman, who wasn't only a translator but also taught Russian and who founded — as we have seen — the publishing house Slavia along with her husband.

If in the nineteenth century the daughters of the elites had learnt foreign languages privately, in the first half of the twentieth century this informal and non-institutional way of learning remained the most common one. As is known, even at the dawn of the twentieth century the space reserved for studying foreign languages within educational circles was still very small. The classical high schools offered French but not English, and only very few hours were devoted to foreign language teaching generally, to the full advantage of Greek and Latin. Courses in modern languages, where pupils could learn two foreign languages and which allowed someone like Cesare Pavese to become acquainted with the English language, lasted less than a decade and were abolished by the Gentile reform of 1923. What was defined as 'the most fascist' of all reforms was part of "an abrupt return to order", which restructured education on the basis of rigid social and gender differences:[127] on one side, the traditional — virilised — Classical School regained a leading position; on the other side, the Female School — which was obviously in a secondary position — offered young women who wished to complete their high school education a chance to learn up to three foreign languages, almost as if the latter were a *diminutio.* This is why Elio Vittorini — who often read American and English novels in French translation — asked Lucia Rodocanachi to help him with his translations; although her knowledge of the English language was better than his, she regularly had to accept not seeing her name printed alongside that of the Sicilian author.[128]

Apart from the issue of wage inequality, which meant that female work was generally less expensive,[129] it is partially for the reasons mentioned above

[126] For a biographical profile of Zucconi see Vanessa Roghi, *Una vita nell'utopia. Prime note di ricerca su Angela Zucconi*, "Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica", 2003, n. 2, pp. 235-265.

[127] A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, pp. 221-223.

[128] Guido Bonsaver, *La fortuna del romanzo statunitense*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 280. On the relationship between Vittorini and Lucia Rodocanachi see Anna Chiara Cavallari, Edoardo Esposito (eds.), Elio Vittorini, *Si diverte tanto a tradurre? Lettere a Lucia Rodocanachi, 1933-1943*, Milan, Archinto, 2016; on Lucia Rodocanachi see Giuseppe Marcenaro, *Una amica di Montale. Vita di Lucia Rodocanachi*, Milan, Camunia, 1991, and Franco Contorbia (ed.), *Lucia Rodocanachi. Le carte, la vita*, Florence, Società editrice Fiorentina, 2006: see, in particular, the essay in the same collection by Andrea Aveto, *Traduzioni d'autore e no: Elio Vittorini e la "segreta" collaborazione con Lucia Rodocanachi*, pp. 153-192.

[129] A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, pp. 242-246.

that editorial work became feminised, especially from the 1930s onwards. The women who were employed by publishing houses as experts in foreign languages and literatures ended up actively participating in the selection of books to be translated for the Italian readership. Obviously, a similar role can by no means be called 'supplementary' if we think of the huge importance the translated book played in the interwar process of making Italy less provincialised. Indeed, this first 'gender transformation' coincided with a second one, namely a change in the Italian cultural field, which was ever more contaminated, influenced and altered by translations of contemporary, foreign literary works. Thus, if at the start of the 1920s texts were translated into Italian mostly from French (58%), Russian (13%) and English (10%),[130] in subsequent decades Paris was gradually surpassed by London, New York and Berlin. Similarly, contemporary literature substituted works of the late modern age and the nineteenth century, thus making the German New Subjectivity novel and the British modernist and experimental novel the hallmark of modern times.

If we put aside the qualitative and cultural implications, many women translated in order to earn a living. Due to the turning points of 1934 and 1938, which considerably reduced women's working opportunities both in the public and the private sphere, the translation profession — which was not very visible, paid at bargain prices and without contracts, hence precarious par excellence — could therefore be considered 'appropriate' for the female gender. Paradoxically, translations were even conducted in the public offices of the Ministry of Popular Culture, where many women were employed to review foreign books. It was there that Eva Kühn Amendola applied for a job some ten years after her husband Giovann's death, asking "to be employed by the present Ministry in the role of translator of foreign languages, having already done translations from German, English, Russian and French for the Ministry of Grace and Justice […]".[131] In those years, Amendola found herself "in sad economic conditions",[132] to such an extent that she repeatedly offered to work as an interpreter and translator of articles published in the foreign press. In reality, she had asked "to be employed by the present Ministry to disseminate our propaganda material" already in 1935, when she was still a reader in Italian at the University of Vilnius.[133]

[130] J. Blakesley, *Le traduzioni e l'editoria italiana: uno studio dell'anno 1919*, p. 330.

[131] Eva Amendola to ministero della Stampa e della Propaganda, 30 December 1936, in ACS, Reports, Direzione Generale per i Servizi della Propaganda, b. 27, fasc. Amendola Eva.

[132] Filippo Anfuso (Mae) to Andrea Celesia (Minculpop), 4 January 1939, in ACS, Reports, Direzione Generale per i Servizi della Propaganda, b. 27, fasc. Amendola Eva.

[133] Direzione Generale per i servizi della Propaganda, Appunto per il Signor Capo di Gabinetto, 22 March 1939, in ACS, Reports, Direzione Generale per i Servizi della Propaganda, b. 27, fasc. Amendola Eva. On Eva Amendola see the brief profile on www.russinitalia.it.; some information can also be found in Alfredo Capone, *Giovanni Amendola*, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 2013, pp. 46-47; Giorgio Amendola, *Lettere a Milano: ricordi e documenti. 1939-1945*, Rome,

The case study of Alessandra Scalero and the other women translators that I have mentioned seem to suggest that the decision to leave the study of foreign languages to women — as if this regarded a skill of little cultural and social relevance — eventually boomeranged during the decade of translations and also in the post-war period, as it gave them a means of surpassing not just geographical and literary boundaries, but also gender boundaries in everyday social and working life. In other words, a means women used in anything but a supplementary way.

Like Scalero, probably most of these female intellectuals — contrary to Ada Gobetti, Lavinia Mazzucchetti or Barbara Allason — did not engage in any militant, party or 'gender' activities.[134] Yet, in the everyday reality of their lives they were forced to overcome stereotypes, boundaries and ageless social models. In sum, it was the pure necessity of practical life — other than a natural inclination towards self-determination and personal accomplishment beyond the family unit and the private sphere — that pushed women like Scalero to travel, read, study, believe in their own talents and demand to be paid for their own intellectual work, choosing to live alone, renouncing marriage and motherhood. While not all may have been systematic in and conscious about their choices, theirs revealed to be nonconformist decisions. From that moment onwards, though, these translators and editorial mediators — while being a minority and, apparently, secondary group, yet strategically well positioned — ended up occupying a highly cultural public space, one that continues to be characterised by a strong female presence even today.

Editori Riuniti, 1973; Eva Kühn Amendola, *Vita con Giovanni Amendola*, Florence, Parenti, 1961.

[134] In the case of Scalero, for example, her substantial non-involvement in militant politics in a narrow sense seems to be confirmed by the absence of any files about her at the Political Police Unit of the DGPS.