

Using and Abusing Gender in Translation. The Case of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* Translated into Italian¹

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Abstract

This paper is part of a corpus-based research on gender in translation aimed at showing how gender is used and/or abused in the translation of literary texts from English into Italian. Drawing upon feminist theories of language and translation and feminist practices in translation, it is our intention to show how gender is manipulated in translation in an attempt to define feminist translation strategies. Translating a feminist text does not necessarily imply that the translator working on that text is a *feminist*. In Italy, moreover, it is very hard to find cases of declared feminist translators as compared to other countries, such as Canada or Spain for instance. Our interest, therefore, lies in the possibility to frame specific strategies as feminist and to see if in the corpus of texts we are analyzing they are carried out or not. The second part of the essay focuses on the first example of our study: Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and three of the translations that have been published in the Italian context.

Keywords: feminist translation; translators' choices; paratextual elements; gender issues; *A Room of One's Own*.

Resum

Aquest article és part d'una recerca basada en corpus sobre el gènere en traducció, adreçada a la recerca sobre l'ús i l'abús del gènere en la traducció literària entre l'anglès i l'italià. Partint de

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les teories feministes de la llengua i la traducció i les pràctiques feministes en la traducció, la nostra intenció és mostrar la manipulació del gènere en traducció amb l'objectiu de definir estratègies de traducció feministes. Traduir un text feminista no implica necessàriament que la persona que tradueix sigui *feminista*. D'altra banda, a Itàlia, en comparació a d'altres països com el Canadà o Espanya, és molt difícil de trobar casos de traductors feministes declarats. Ens interessa, per tant, classificar determinades estratègies com a feministes i observar si tenen lloc en el corpus de textos que analitzem. La segona part de l'article se centra en el primer exemple del nostre estudi: *A Room of One's Own*, de Virginia Woolf, i tres de les traduccions que se n'han publicat en el context italià.

Paraules clau: traducció feminista; tries traductives; elements paratextuals; qüestions de gènere; *A Room of One's Own*.

Summary

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1. Introduction

Gender issues in the field of *Translation Studies* have become a solid and established discipline on its own which is nowadays referred to as *Feminist Translation Studies*. The aim of *Feminist Translation Studies* is to consciously reverse the role traditionally played by both women and translations in society by challenging the patriarchal and sexist language which has dominated the world for years. The issue of language is a particularly sensitive issue which legitimates conscious manipulation by feminist translators. Manipulation can be carried out at different levels of the language, although for the sake of our project we are particularly interested in the translation of the grammatical gender. This is mainly due to the fact that whereas English is characterised by natural gender Italian is a gender-marked language where all nouns are either feminine or masculine. This means that when translating from English into Italian translators need to opt for a masculine or a feminine gender and this is where the feminist controversy lies. More and more feminist translators claim the right to manipulate the grammatical gender rules in order to avoid sexism and/or to make women more visible in the text itself. The question is, in cases where the sex of a person, animal or thing is perfectly clear in the source text (ST), is it correct and acceptable to change it deliberately in the target text (TT)? Are these translators using and/or abusing feminist strategies in translation? Why? What are the outcomes and perceptions of these choices?

There exists a prolific literature on feminist translation theory although it seems that more work and research should be carried out on feminist translation practice. In an attempt to fill this gap between theory and practice, our project

will show, in practical terms, how particular translation strategies can be framed or resemble feminist practice.

2. Aim of our project

This study is part of an ongoing research on feminist translation strategies aimed at filling the gap between feminist translation theory and practice. Our research corpus includes a variety of literary texts in English (source texts) and Italian (target texts). Since most of the gender approaches found in Translation Studies have traditionally dealt with more theoretical than practical issues, the aim of this project is to focus on more practical aspects of feminist translation strategies through the creation of glossaries, terminology databases and dictionaries.

One of the major assumptions of this paper is that translating a feminist text does not necessarily imply that the translator working on that text is a *feminist*. In Italy, moreover, it is very hard to find cases of declared feminist translators as compared to other countries, such as Canada or Spain for instance. Therefore, one of the biggest difficulties is probably to establish clear principles which allow us to define a translation as *feminist* (taking into account acknowledged feminist strategies such as supplementing, prefacing, footnoting and hijacking). Since it was not possible to identify Italian translators as *feminist*, our attempt was to classify their translation strategies as *feminist* or *non feminist*. Our interest, therefore, lies in the possibility to frame specific strategies as feminist on the basis of clear criteria which will be provided in this paper and applied in our analyses. A selection of text analyses will be included in order to show in practical terms how gender is manipulated in translation. More precisely, it is our intention to:

- 1) question the grammatical gender;
- 2) deal with neuter in translation;
- 3) break away from an androcentric view inscribed in language.

3. The role of text type identification

The identification of text types is a fundamental aspect to take into account in any text analysis approach to translation. If text types are clearly identified, then translators are, to a certain extent, facilitated in their task because it is easier to find the most suitable translation strategies. One of the most influential translation scholars in this respect, Reiss (1971), devoted a great deal of her work in providing translators with specific translation strategies based upon the identification of text types. In Reiss's opinion, therefore, the identification of text types will inevitably exert a strong influence on the translation strategies to be adopted by the translator. Thanks to her approach, a link was established between *Translation Studies* and text linguistics. Her theory, however, was questioned by several linguists, such as Fawcett, for instance, who believes that there is not a «necessary link between text function and translation strategy» (FAWCETT 1997: 107).

This means that the identification of a specific text type does not necessarily mean that translators are forced to follow specific choices. For the sake of this work, however, there is a need to work out a definition of a feminist text in order to select and compare possible translation strategies which normally apply in this respect.

Since it is quite hard to provide an exact definition of feminist texts, we would like to share Eagleton's (1996: 33) interesting, yet debatable, points of views on the issue of feminist work. In her opinion it is the reader himself or herself who assesses whether a text is feminist or not. Although the definition of feminist text can be subjective and debatable in most contexts, for the sake of this work our working definition is developed out of an analysis of Eagleton's points. First of all, Eagleton claims that feminist texts are written primarily by women. This is not totally correct since the word *feminist* does not imply the word *female*. Back in 1989 Moi carried out an interesting study where differences were made in the use of three specific words, namely *feminist*, *female* and *feminine*. In her study, she claims that even men can be viewed as feminist if they adopt a «feminist attitude», that is, if they fight for women's rights, against patriarchy and sexism. Moi also asserts that a clear-cut difference is made by feminists between the word *feminine* used to refer to «social constructs» and *female* used to refer to «biological aspects of sexual difference» (ibid.: 122). Therefore, a feminist text can also be written by male authors. Secondly, she claims that feminist texts have a female audience in mind. In our opinion, however, this is not necessarily the case because feminist texts are usually «aimed at showing women's subordinate position in society, promoting solidarity amongst women, and finally, challenging and fighting against traditional patriarchal values» (LEONARDI 2007: 109). This means that these texts could even address (consciously or unconsciously) a male audience with the aim to make them aware of women's critical positioning in society or in a kind of direct attack to men themselves. Thirdly, Eagleton suggests that feminist texts discuss sympathetically the situation of women and this is correct as also mentioned above. Fourthly, she asserts that the texts published by women's publishing companies are feminist. It is felt that a distinction should be made between women's and feminist publishing companies. Whereas the former could be run and/or financed by women, the latter deal exclusively with feminist issues. Therefore, if a book is published by a woman's publishing house does not necessarily imply the fact that the text is feminist. Fifthly, Eagleton claims that the attitude of the author determines whether or not a text is feminist. This is a very interesting point and one of the most important ones for our work to define the ST as a feminist text. Every author expresses his or her own ideology, opinions and feelings through a text and the way these aspects are translated into the TT deserves a great deal of attention. Whereas authors can be overtly feminists or non-feminists through their work, translators should be faithful to the original text. The point is, however, that feminist translators do not feel the same. In other words, feminist translators feel that they have the right to manipulate or subvert the meaning of an original text if they view it as a patriarchal or sexist text. If this occurs, then it is legitimate to define a translation as a feminist trans-

lation. Finally, Eagleton claims that the response of the reader determines whether or not a text is feminist. This point leads to an important discussion on the interpretation of a text which is generally subjective and not universal. This means that several people can read the same text and yet they might come up with different interpretations of it.

Based upon these considerations and aware of the fact that feminist translators in Italy do not manipulate the text they work on, our working definition of a feminist text is that of a text whose content displays arguments in favour of women's independence and struggle to patriarchy and sexism in society written by an author (male or female) whose attitude is feminist.

Our study will therefore pose some interesting questions whose answer will be found through a careful text analysis of translations of specifically chosen feminist texts. These questions include the following:

- 1) Do translators address gender?
- 2) Do they subvert gender constructs?
- 3) How do they deal with gender issues?
- 4) What is the translators' position in the text?
- 5) Are translators visible in the text? How?
- 6) Who are the translators (identity, education, background, nationality)?
- 7) How does their identity shape their interpretation of the text?
- 8) What context do they work in?
- 9) Can we define them as «gender aware» translators instead of feminists or feminist translators?
- 10) Do their strategies resemble traditionally feminist strategies? How?
- 11) Is it possible to retrace the translator's self-reflection process in the translated texts?
- 12) Can we find an ideological approach to the use of language in form subordinated to content?
- 13) Are dominant values in language challenged?

4. Selection of texts

For the sake of this work, we have focused on some literary texts, mainly thinking about common feminist subjects and arguments as well as the author's asserted feminism. These texts include authors such as Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter, Michèle Roberts, Margaret Atwood, Jeannette Winterson and Sarah Waters among others. We started analyzing the translations of these authors' works into Italian taking into account all the translations carried out through time, thus following a chronological perspective, because in our opinion the socio-historical and political context of a translation can clearly influence the translator's choices.

The translations were carried out by female and male translators and the idea is to see what differences are present in the translated texts and if they can be assumed as part of feminist translation practice. Having asserted above that even

men can be feminists, we are interested in finding out similarities and differences between feminist and non-feminist translators regardless of the translator's sex.

4.1. Case study: Translating Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* into Italian

The choice of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* as the first case-study of our research is due to many reasons. First of all, it is a canonical text for feminism and a touchstone for feminist scholars in different disciplines. The translation of Woolf as a spoke-person for women's issues makes it a very interesting example in the Italian context. In Italy, in fact, many have been the studies on the modernist author but almost nothing has been written on the translations of her works.²

When analyzing the various translations into Italian of *A Room of One's Own* we must take into account:

1. The role of the theme: the essay is an emblem of Woolf's feminist engagement and her message should be translated as more accurately as possible. The text is the *translation* of two lectures given to a very specific audience, students of two female colleges in 1928.
2. The role of textual typology: *A Room of One's Own* can be considered as a critical writing, an essay, or even a pamphlet where feminist political and ideological issues are at stake.
3. The role of textual components: the text is composed of different speech styles, voices and registers the author utilizes in order to give a plural perspective on the issues through her personal and well-studied narrative rhythm.

A Room of One's Own is known to be a metaphor for women's independence and creativity; it is a canonical text in feminist studies still studied and analyzed after almost a century from its publication. In this essay Woolf demonstrates to be a forerunner of feminist literary critics of the Seventies like, for example, Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert (1979) who searched for a female literary tradition and discussed female *authorship* and *authoriality*. Woolf recognized that a discussion on *women* and *fiction* should start from the very definition of the two terms joint together and that the recovery from a lost literary past of women authors was necessary. She was also aware that the reader's perception on this subject was strongly determined by a masculine point of view which, instead of presenting women writers as intellectuals and thinkers, was focusing on their representation.

If we consider the textual typology and the textual components of this text we should also recognize that all Woolf's works have to bridge the gap between the perception of the author's feelings on the subject and the way they are word-

2. In 2010 a conference on Woolf's translations into Italian was organized in Naples by Oriana Palusci who really began the discussion on this issue.

ed, and this is the case also here. Even if this is not a novel still the author creates a unique texture where each single fabric contributes to the final patchwork, a complex weaving that the translator should try to reproduce. The rhythm, the specificity of Woolf's language is an important element to consider while translating *A Room of One's Own* into Italian because the stylistic features of the original are a real challenge to keep in the TT. These premises are recognizable also from a linguistic point of view, from the very title where the pronoun «one» is not only a mere grammatical category but has a semantic and stylistic purpose. This is one of the issues outlined in recent essays that have taken into account the translation into Spanish of Woolf's essay, especially the feminist translation by Milagros Rivera Garretas (BENGOENCHEA 2011, SANTAEMILIA 2011).

The Italian reader can choose among five publications of Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. The first, *Una stanza tutta per sé* was published in 1980 by Il Saggiatore and presents an introduction by Marisa Bulgheroni. The translators are Livio Bacchi Wilcock and Juan Rodolfo Wilcock (here referred as Text 1). The second one was published in 1993 by Newton Compton with an introduction by Armanda Guiducci and the translation by Maura del Serra (Text 2). The third one was published in 1995 by Guaraldi Ennesima and was translated and edited by Graziella Mistrulli.³ The fourth was published by Einaudi in 1995, translated and edited by Maria Antonietta Saracino (Text 3). The fifth was published by Mondadori in 1998, keeping Saracino's translation but with notes by Nadia Fusini.

After the analysis of feminist scholars in TS (Sherry Simon, Louise von Flotow, José Santaemilia, Carmen Africa Vidal and Pilar Godayol) we all know that paratextual elements are fundamental in feminist translations. The insertion of an explanatory introduction by the translator is a sign of her presence in the text and of her performative action. In Text 1 the introduction is not written by the translators but bears the name of a famous scholar in American studies and feminist thinker. As a matter of fact, Bulgheroni is famous in the Italian context for her translations of Emily Dickinson's poems; she has even devoted a biography and a novel to the American poet. So, the presentation of the text at the beginning of the Eighties is made by a feminist scholar who has written extensively on women's myths and representations and who clearly offers her keys of interpretation to the Italian reader. Two quotations open the introduction: one from Virginia Woolf's *Diaries* where the author Woolf talks about the subject of the conferences in Cambridge and a quotation from the original text. Bulgheroni highlights how the essay was originally an *oral* text to be read to a specific audience the author was addressing and that has been *translated* into a written text. The notion of orality in Woolf's works certainly is an important one and can be recovered both in her essays and novels. Similarly, Bulgheroni suggests that the reader can find here another major theme of Woolf's creative imaginary: metamorphosis. This theme brings us back to another main topic for Woolf, that is to

3. We will not take into account the translation made by Mistrulli because it was published in the same year of Saracino's translation but presents less interesting elements to analyse.

say, androgyny.⁴ Bulgheroni also analyses some metaphors of the text beginning from the «room» itself that represents: a space where the woman author can exist; where she has been hidden for a long time; the room built with money; the room and its connection to motherhood and the female body. Certainly, all these metaphors were widely discussed by Michèle Barrett (1979) and other feminist critics working on Woolf at the end of the Seventies, just a few years before this edition was published. The final metaphor underlined in the introduction is that of Shakespeare's sister, an emblem for women's artistic or intellectual role in the past. The Introduction stresses another aspect important for translation, that is to say the textual typology. The essay utilizes some techniques of the short story and can be easily recognizable as a *hybrid* genre. One of the translators of Text 1, Juan Rodolfo Wilcock, was an Argentinian poet who lived in Rome since 1955 and who wrote reviews for literary journals and newspapers. He translated from other European languages and together with Livio Bacchi Wilcock also translated an anthology of Woolf's essays entitled *Per le strade di Londra* (1963).

Text 2 is also introduced by a famous literary critic and feminist activist of the Seventies, Armanda Guiducci who wrote widely about women's role and position in society (see for example, GUIDUCCI 1976 and 1977). This introduction is mainly biographical and connects the author's major themes to important events in her life. Knowing that Guiducci wrote a biography on Woolf, *Virginia e l'angelo*, this does not come unexpected. The title itself «Il percorso creativo di Virginia Woolf», or «Woolf's creative path» prepares the reader for the information about the social context where the writer lived, her interest in the Suffragettes, the references to *Three Guineas*. The introduction is ended with bibliographical data on Woolf's translations into Italian. The translator of Text 2, Maura del Serra, is a poet and playwright and translates from German, English, French and Spanish. She also translated *The Waves* (Newton Compton 1992) and *Orlando* (Newton Compton 1994). For the translation of *Una stanza tutta per sé* she won a literary prize for the difficult balance between fiction and essay writing of the text itself. Unlike the previous translators, Del Serra inserts a preface to the TT where she emphasizes some of the issues already tackled by Bulgheroni: the androgynous, women's social history, the lack of a feminine literary canon and the shadow of the female genius. To these she adds something more specific on the translating process, especially dealing with the many voices of Woolf's text. Del Serra inserts footnotes which mainly refer to references that could possibly be not known to an Italian reader, like for example, *minor* authors or texts still not translated into Italian. In so doing she outlines important elements present in the original text.

Text 3 is equipped with a preface, a rich bibliography, many footnotes, and it is presented together with the original text. The translator, Saracino, teaches English literature and postcolonial studies at the University of Rome La Sapienza; she has translated many important authors among which Doris Lessing, Edward

4. Many have been the studies on Woolf's use of the androgyny theme, see for example, Heilbrun (1973); Topping Bazin (1973) and Showalter (1982).

Said, Joseph Conrad, Kazuo and Bessie Head. Her preface to the text is a long one and emblematically entitled «La stanza e le parole», or «The room and the words» and begins with a reference to Leonard Woolf. The preface dwells on Woolf's love for words, her shaping and moulding of language; the author is not imprisoned by words, the syntax is an open one and so are the discourses implicit in her text. The footnotes are many and precise on facts and information on the literary and social panorama of the time: women writers and intellectuals, woman related legislation and cultural aspects. The same translation has been used by Mondadori (1998) but all the paratextual elements have been taken out and replaced by footnotes by Nadia Fusini, a famous scholar of Woolf, who has also translated many of her novels and has written on the modernist writer. Fusini's footnotes are at the end of the text and they are about women writers, historical figures of the time, places the author describes in the text, but also references to Woolf's *Diaries* and the major themes present in all her novels. Fusini adds some information on literary criticism on Woolf's works in Italy and visualizes the many intertextual elements retraceable in this text. In this way she outlines how it is difficult to get all the implicatures when dealing with the pragmatic level of meaning of the ST.

In the present analysis the main aim is to look at the different modalities that regulate the translators' work; how they deal with the linguistic and cultural boundary crossing and what implications do the translators' choices generate for the female form of discourse implicit in the text. We cannot go into detail but even a first glance at the covers can tell us something about the translations. The cover of Text 1 is a picture of an Art Nouveau glass window, the cover of Text 2 is the reproduction of a famous picture by Edward Hopper, «Room in Brooklyn» (1932), the cover of Text 3 shows Roger Fry's painting «Lady Seated in an Omega Interior» and the cover of the Mondadori edition shows a famous portrait of the novelist by George C. Beresford (1902). If the first is a glamorous image, it does not tell anything about Woolf's work, the second one recalls the idea of a woman alone in a room but looking outside and not writing or studying in a room for herself, the third connects Woolf to the Bloomsbury group and to the artist and intellectual she wrote a biography about and the fourth is a beautiful and known image of the author when young. Interestingly, the only cover where the names of the writer of the introduction and the translator are together with the author's name is that of Text 2.

We will give now some examples of the translators' choices and translating strategies choosing different issues such as the use of pronouns and lexical choices:

Example 1: (pronouns, action)

But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction — what, has that got to do with a room of one's own? I will try to explain. When you asked me to speak about women and fiction I sat down on the banks of a river and began to wonder what the words meant.

Text 1

Ma direte, non le abbiamo chiesto di parlare sulle donne e il romanzo – che c'entra il fatto di avere una stanza tutta per sé? Cercherò di spiegarvi. Quando mi avete pregato di parlarvi sulle donne e il romanzo, mi sono seduta sulla sponda di un fiume e mi sono domandata cosa significassero quelle parole.

Text 2

Ma, direte, Le abbiamo chiesto di parlare delle donne e il romanzo – cosa c'entra avere una stanza tutta per sé? Cercherò di spiegarvi. Quando mi avete chiesto di parlare delle donne e il romanzo, mi sono seduta sulla riva di un fiume e ho cominciato a chiedermi cosa significassero quelle parole.

Text 3

Ma insomma, potreste dire, ti avevamo chiesto di parlarci delle donne e il romanzo – cosa ha a che fare, questo, con una stanza tutta per sé? Tenterò di spiegarvi. Quando mi avete chiesto di parlarvi delle donne e il romanzo sono andata a sedermi sulla sponda di un fiume e ho cominciato a chiedermi che cosa volessero significare quelle parole.

The first difference among the first two translations and the third one is the use of the pronouns: the use of the third person pronoun in Text 1 and Text 2 and first person pronoun in Text 3. This choice offers a more formal way of addressing the reader in the first two cases and a more informal one in the third. Moreover, the option for the first person pronoun underlines the action carried on by the narrator (who clearly is the mirror of the author) asking herself at the very beginning of the essay what she should say about the subject of the conferences that have then been *translated* into the book. Saracino underlines the performativity implicit in the writing of the text and she focuses on the relationship between speaker/writer and her audience. This focus on the subject's action is reiterated also through the choice of the verb tenses in Text 3.

The second difference, a more subtle but important one in the reader's perception of the text, is the lexical choice: the verb *tentare* in Italian gives the idea of an attempt to do something and conveys a feeling of failure, of the subject's uncertainty of not being able to do that action. Choosing to underline the *uncertainty* of the result the translator of Text 3 addresses the reader and, in the translation of the final line, emphasises, with the insertion of the subjunctive mood, «volessero significare», the author's doubts on the meaning of the words *women* and *fiction*, which Woolf puts at the very beginning of her entire discussion on women's role in society.

An important aspect of translating *A Room of One's Own* is, as the scholars dealing with Spanish translations have outlined, the translation of the impersonal pronoun *one*. The following examples illustrate one of the many cases in the Italian translations:

Example 2: One (impersonal pronoun)

There one might have sat the clock round lost in thought. Thought — to call it by a prouder name than it deserved — had let its line down into the stream.

Text 1:

Avrei potuto stare lì
l'intera giornata,
pensando. Il mio
pensiero – per chiamarlo
con un nome assai più
degno di quanto in realtà
non meritasse – aveva
gettato la sua lenza, per
pescare nella corrente.

Text 2:

Si sarebbe potuto
rimanere lì a pensare per
l'intero giorno. Il mio
pensiero – per chiamarlo
con un nome più
altisonante di quanto
meritasse – aveva gettato
la lenza nella corrente.

Text 3:

Era un luogo nel quale si
sarebbe potuti rimanere
seduti giorno e notte,
immersi nel proprio
pensiero – per usare un
termine più altisonante
di quanto meriti – aveva
tuffato la sua lenza nella
corrente.

A first glance at Text 2 signals the typing mistake of the first sentence that should be *si sarebbe potuti rimanere* but what is interesting is the use of the impersonal in both Text 2 and Text 3. In Text 3 however, probably due to a choice for a more elegant version in the TT the translator has inverted the structure of the sentence. The choice of the masculine plural «seduti» reveals a more traditional language choice; the option –being the subject a woman sat near a river thinking about other women– could have been the feminine plural *sedute*. The insertion of the feminine would not have changed the meaning of the sentence but stressed the fact that the author is talking as a woman and speaking mainly to other women; however, it is an uncommon choice in Italian texts. Another difference is visible in Text 1 where the translator opts for an author-focused translation inserting the first person pronoun «avrei potuto stare lì» and so highlighting Woolf's action reiterated by the addition of the possessive pronoun *mio* ('mine') not present in the more general «thought» of the ST.

Curiously enough, in some cases the translators of Text 1 and Text 3 opt for translating choices clearly in contradiction and not coherent with the overall structure. Just to give one example, in the following example Wilcock utilizes a diminutive «pensierino», a strategy usually connected to women's use of language, and takes out the subject from the final part of the sentence: «what I am going to say» becomes «nelle pagine seguenti» ('in the following pages'):

Example 3: (diminutive, action)

I will not trouble you with that thought now, though if you look carefully you may find it for yourselves in the course of what I am going to say.

Text 1:

Non voglio parlarvi adesso del mio
pensierino, benché, se guardate
attentamente, lo troverete da sole,
nelle pagine seguenti.

Text 3:

Non starò ad infastidirvi con questa
riflessione, adesso, anche se, cercando
con attenzione, è possibile che la
scopriate da sole nel corso di quello
che dirò.

Possibly, the use of the diminutive could be an ironical way of addressing the reader implying that the author knows that women's thoughts are not relevant for quite a lot of people, including all the intellectuals and writers who have written about the subject *women and fiction*. In any case the deletion of the subject remains and the author's voice loses the strength perceptible in the ST. The subject's action at the end of the sentence is on the contrary kept in Text 3 where Saracino's more *literal* and impersonal translation maintains the centrality of the subject.

Another important change in the Italian translations is inherent to lexical choices as the Example 4 demonstrates.

Example 4: (lexical choices)

But at second sight the words seemed not so simple. The title *women and fiction* might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, women and what they are like, or it might mean women and the fiction that they write; or it might mean women and the fiction that is written about them, or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together and you want me to consider them in that light.

Text 1:

[...] Ma, dopo un attimo di riflessione, capii che il tema non era tanto semplice. Il titolo *le donne e il romanzo* poteva significare (e non era detto che non fosse appunto questo ciò che voi mi avevate chiesto) la donna vera e la donna nel romanzo; oppure le donne e i romanzi che esse scrivono; oppure le donne e i romanzi che parlano delle donne; oppure il fatto che, in un certo senso, le tre accezioni sono inseparabili, e voi volevate che io le considerassi sotto questo triplice aspetto.

Text 2:

Ma ripensandoci, le parole mi parvero meno semplici. Il titolo *Le donne e il romanzo* poteva significare (e poteva quindi essere questa la vostra intenzione) le donne e la loro immagine; oppure poteva significare le donne e i romanzi che esse scrivono; oppure, le donne e i romanzi che parlano di loro; oppure il fatto che i tre sensi sono in qualche modo inscindibili, e in questa luce volevate che li considerassi.

Text 3:

Ma a una riflessione più attenta, quelle parole non sembravano poi così ovvie. Il titolo «Donne e romanzo» poteva significare – ed è possibile che così lo abbiate inteso – le donne e ciò che esse sono; oppure le donne e i romanzi che scrivono; o ancora, le donne e i romanzi dei quali sono protagoniste; o poteva lasciare intendere che le tre cose sono in certo modo inestricabilmente congiunte e voi volete che io le veda sotto quella luce.

The translators of Text 1 and Text 2 focus on the subject's action changing the impersonal and inserting in one case the verb in the first person and in the other the possessive pronoun *mi* ('to me'). In Text 1 the translator opts for the simple

past of the verb *to understand* – ‘capii’ – while in Text 2 the presence of the subject is given by the possessive. On the contrary, Text 3 offers a more source-oriented translation of the first sentence in a formal style. The second change in the translations is the use of lexicon. In the first sentence Wilcock (Text 1) decides to change the term *words* opting for the word *tema*, that in Italian recalls a very general subject. The translators of Text 2 and Text 3 keep the term *words* translated as «parole», but in Text 3 Saracino inserts the term «ovvie» (‘obvious’) instead of *semplici*, that would be the literal translation of *simple*. This choice changes the tone of the sentence and stresses the uncertainty of the author on this specific subject. Another important difference in this passage is the use of punctuation and the marked pause given in the TT. The rhythm in Text 3 is different; it recalls a modernist and free style that in Text 1 and Text 2 seems compromised. The flow of Woolf’s prose is not perceivable in Text 1 and Text 2. Punctuation is an important element for reading in Modernist prose where the interplay of textual voices is central to the structure of the text. The notions of *non-linearity*, *dissolution of the subject* or *openness of discourses* are of primary importance for Woolf and should be maintained in the TT.

Example 5 shows how through lexical choices the performative action of the author is more or less underlined.

Example 5: (lexical choices)

But in order to make some amends I am going to do what I can to show you how I arrived at this opinion about the room and the money. I am going to develop in your presence as fully and freely as I can the train of thought which led me to think this.

Text 1:

Ma per farmi perdonare, farò del mio meglio per raccontarvi come sono giunta a questa opinione sulla stanza e sul denaro.

Text 2:

Ma cercherò di riparare facendo del mio meglio per mostrarvi come sono arrivata a questa opinione sulla stanza e sul denaro.

Text 3:

Ma per fare almeno parzialmente ammenda, tenterò quanto è in mio potere per dimostrarvi in che modo sono arrivata a formulare questa idea della stanza e del denaro.

Text 1 and Text 2 present a less *literal* translation of the ST. While in Text 3 Saracino opts for the term «ammenda», similar to the original «amends», Wilcock and Del Serra choose different terms: in Text 1 «perdonare», which possesses a different connotation because it means ‘to forgive’, implying that a mistake has been made by the subject; in Text 2 we find the term «riparare», ‘to redress’, that if partly recalls the author’s intended meaning changes her tone and style. Woolf’s performative action as a writer and intellectual is clearly translated by Saracino in the second part of the sentence «I am going to do what I can...». In Text 3 the translator adds the terms «è in mio potere», which literally means ‘it is

in my power' thus highlighting the author's rhetorical capabilities to speak publicly as a spokesperson for women's issues. This idea is reiterated also by the choice of the term *dimostrarvi*, that means 'to give evidence', 'to demonstrate something to her audience', 'to give proof of her abilities'.

Similarly, in Example 6 Saracino opts for the term *sgorgare* which implies something that burst out, a force that cannot be stopped, instead of a more equivalent translation of the verb *to flow* (kept in Text 1 and Text 2). Lexical changes are evident also in the last sentence where the translator omits any reference to «waste-paper basket» and the verb *to forget* and changes all the terms focusing on the idea of a possible truth to be kept.

Example 6:

Lies will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping. If not, you will of course throw the whole of it into the waste-paper basket and forget all about it.

Text 1:

Dalle mie labbra udirete una serie di bugie, ma forse c'è tra di loro qualche verità nascosta; tocca a voi cercare questa verità, e decider se, almeno in parte, essa merita di essere ricordata.

Text 2:

Dalle mie labbra scorreranno menzogne, ma mescolata a loro ci sarà forse qualche verità nascosta; tocca a voi individuare questa verità, e decidere se merita, almeno in parte, di essere ricordata.

Text 3:

Dalle mie labbra sgorgheranno bugie, ma è possibile che frammista a esse vi sia una porzione di verità; sta a voi cercare questa verità e decidere se ce n'è una parte che merita di essere conservata.

5. Conclusions

If the translation of *A Room of One's Own* should be incisive in gender politics because this was the intention of the author, can we say this is carried out in the Italian translations? Certainly not. In many cases the translators of Text 1 lose the irony of the text, simplify it for the target reader and consequently do not *translate* Woolf's style, which is so important to be kept in order to preserve the message in this text. The author's language is lost in all the three translations taken into account and the translators' voice strongly comes to the surface of the TT. However, in Text 1 the translator is able to maintain Woolf's intention of addressing women and the empathy with the female reader so perceptible in the ST. He is also able to transfer the *spirit* of the text, the core message implicit in between the lines of the essay. Text 1 translates Woolf's ideas on women and education, civil rights, gender roles in society but does not give voice to the author's peculiar style. On the contrary, Text 3 presents a more literal translation, faithful to Woolf's modernist style. However, in order to obtain a formal equivalence the

translator respects the textual structure of the text and loses the oral quality of the ST. She tides up the style, and sometimes render the text in a more formal register than the ST. Woolf's feminine sentence is a hard one to translate and the translator tries to achieve this through a different use of punctuation but does not always achieve her aim. Also in Text 3 the translation of linguistic gender markers is a very conservative one. The translation of Text 2 is quite contradictory, sometimes referring more specifically to gender related issues sometimes quite traditional and canonical.

Text 1, Text 2 and Text 3 all present hybrid translations of gender issues and patriarchal language. Ideology and linguistic forms are not often translated keeping in mind gender; the guiding principles sometimes interrogate gender representations, in other occasions they clearly do not. Italian is a grammatical gender language, and no feminine is visible in these translations; the choice is always for the masculine. The three translators opt for traditional and canonical translation strategies. There is no feminization of the translation and no claim by the translators for a common creative status with the author, two strategies common in feminist translations. In all the translations into Italian the politics of language clashes with the translators' cultural differences. The translators' voice clearly emerges in the TT and sometimes shapes the TT in a different way from the ST, as if the result in the TT should be that of a pleasant, readable version. So, going back to our three main issues related to an analysis of gender-related elements in translation: to question the grammatical gender, to deal with neuter in translation and to break away from an androcentric view inscribed in language, we can see that they are not carried out in any of the TT.

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