

THE IMPACT OF CENSORSHIP ON THE TRANSLATION AND PUBLICATION OF VIRGINIA WOOLF IN ITALY IN THE 1930S

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ABSTRACT: Defined as “the decade of translations”, the 1930s saw the publication of Virginia Woolf’s novels *Orlando*, *Flush*, and *To the lighthouse* in Italian. In the cultural and political context of Fascism, this is unexpected, given the peculiarities of Woolf’s experimental prose. Italian literary criticism was firmly founded on a normative anti-modernist canon, supported by both the Catholic Church, which decried modernism and excommunicated some modernist writers, and by the literary movement led by the anti-Fascist and liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce. This *de facto* intellectual dictatorship complemented the official cultural policy of the Fascist regime by generating another dimension of censorship that invariably affected the publication of periodicals and books. The present work focuses on the effects of this triple (political, moral, and literary) censorship on the first translation of *To the lighthouse*.

KEYWORDS: Translation Censorship, Domestication, Cultural Policy, Modernism, Aesthetics, Close Reading

1. Introduction

This article aims to demonstrate how the first Italian translation of the “modernist” novel *To the lighthouse*, produced by Giulia Celenza in 1934 under the Fascist dictatorship, was affected by an interplay of three different types of censorship. The first derived from the *de facto* “idealistic or intellectual dictatorship” (Coli, 1982, pp. 236-237; Ruberto, 2019) or cultural influence (Gramsci, [1926-1930] 1966; [1932] 2014, pp. 213-215) of the liberal philosophy of Benedetto Croce (1902), who advocated classicism and the art of *bello scrivere* [“beautiful writing”]¹ under traditional aesthetic principles of poetry.² The second type of censorship came from the ex-communication of the “modernist” movement by the Catholic Church in 1908. The third type was the political censorship introduced under the Fascist cultural policy banning the cultural “foreignisation” of translated texts. It is argued here that these three independent but equally imposing types of “censorship” converged in the defence of national literary norms and against any forms of modernism. The present study shows how the first translation of the novel was highly “domesticated” in its literary and linguistic style.

Critics have generally pointed to the openness of Italian culture to foreign literature. Cattaneo (2007, p. 17) notes that it was precisely under the Fascist regime that English literature was introduced into Italy in the form of original texts, translations, reviews,

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¹ All the English translations in square brackets are made by the author of this article.

² Gramsci ([1926-1930] 1966, p. 153) defines Croce as “a world leader [whose function] could be compared with that of the Catholic Pope (...). The last edition of *Encyclopædia Britannica* commissioned the entry term ‘Aesthetics’ to Croce”. Similarly, the literary critic Cecchi ([1947] 1964, p. 131) declared “Né sono possibili dubbi che, sul pensiero e la cultura d’ogni paese civile, l’opera del Croce esercitò incalcolabili influssi” [“Neither can there be any doubts about Croce’s inestimable influence on the thought and culture of every civilised country.”].

manuals and bibliographies, while Elisa Bolchi (2010, p. 199) claims: “Even though Fascism was a harsh and patriarchal dictatorship notorious for its strong nationalism, raised barriers and censored press, there were forums in Fascist Italy where Italian and foreign literatures could be published, read, and discussed”. In fact, during the 1930s, a period later labelled by Cesare Pavese (1951, p. 223) as “the decade of translations”, the Italian publishing market experienced an unusual flood of translations (Carducci, 1973, p. 23; Rundle, 2010a, p. 2, 2010b, p. 15). With so many translations circulating in the country, readers had the chance to encounter many classic and contemporary authors from abroad. Antonio Gramsci (cited in Fernandez, 1969, p. 14) and Cattaneo (2007, p. 46) have observed how paradoxical it was that the Fascist cultural policy in literature and arts effectively brought the nation under the hegemony of foreigners. Although the dictatorial regime never actually encouraged translations, Italian versions of foreign literary works outnumbered domestic products translated into other languages and published abroad. This meant that the country failed to achieve one of the regime’s aims of becoming a net cultural exporter (Billiani, 2007, pp. 138-160; 2020, p. 42; Ferme, 2002, p. 39; Rundle, 2000, pp. 72-74; 2010a, p. 3).

According to Ferme (2002, pp. 210-211) and Rundle (2010a, pp. 55-66), the resulting position of the country as a net cultural importer was partly due to an earlier ambiguity on the part of the regime. It had initially considered foreign literature to be a source of innovation and an instrument of cultural exchange, but then gradually began to fear the subversive power of translation and could not refrain from enforcing censorship to defend national identity. What started as “silent tolerance” later became “an active hostility towards translations conceived much more as an idea than as an activity itself” (Taronna, 2018, p. 83).

The “translation invasion” was not perceived until 1929, when the publisher Mondadori inaugurated the first low-cost series of detective stories initially distributed by newsagents (Rundle, 2010b, p. 23). This innovative way of selling translated books successfully spread across the country, paving the way for a long list of novels and literary works in general. Among the so-called *libri gialli* [“yellow books”] – “detective stories” initially published in Italy with yellow covers – were translations of Agatha Christie’s novels, whose immediate popularity became a cause for concern, leading to their being subject to censorship (Ferme, 2002, p. 50).

The large number of inexpensive translations circulating in Italy during the 1930s increased publishers’ profits significantly. “Escapist fiction”, mainly comprising adventure and romantic novels or detective stories depicting a world away from the monotonous life of farmers and workers, was not generally opposed by the regime. Some publishers, such as Mondadori, Einaudi, and Bompiani, as well as translators, were engaged in a subtle cultural battle to allow the country to stay in touch with contemporary European and American experiences (Billiani, 2007; 2020, p. 63; Nottola, 2010, p. 178; Rundle, 1999, p. 427). For Rubino (2010, p. 150):

(...) 1929 was the year that saw the real launch of the new publishing strategy, with the appearance of three new series of foreign literature: “Scrittori di tutto il mondo” [“Writers of the world”], directed by Gian Dàuli on behalf of the Milanese publisher Modernissima, “Narratori nordici” [“Northern Narrators”], edited by Lavinia Mazzucchetti for Sperling & Kupfer, Milan, and “I romanzi della vita moderna” [“Novels of Modern Life”] published by Bemporad, Florence.

Translators played an essential role in selecting texts and deciding how to translate them. Many authors, notably Pavese, Montale, Cecchi, and Vittorini, translated books with a slant that often did not conform to Fascist ideology. Vittorini, in particular, was one of the most politically engaged intellectuals working against the regime, and his anthology of translated American authors, *Americana*, fell foul of the censors.³ However, in such a context, evaluating the impact of the censorship policy is not a simple task. There were other cultural, social, and historical factors in operation which often imposed a form of self-censorship upon literary translators before the works even reached the official censors. The first Italian translation of Virginia Woolf’s *To the lighthouse* (1927) by Giulia Celenza, published by Fratelli Treves Editori in 1934 under the title *Gita al faro* [“Excursion to the lighthouse”], is a typical case in point. The present study identifies certain stylistic features in the translation that are considered to represent a compromise between the demands of the foreign text and the need for cultural protectionism.

Before embarking on this case study, however, let us briefly examine the role of periodicals in diffusing translated foreign literature under censorship, and the impact of historical and cultural factors on the censorship of literary translations.

2. Periodical and book publishing in Fascist Italy

The twentieth century was defined by Langella (1982, p. 3) as “the century of periodicals” due to the hundreds of such publications on the market. Indeed, periodicals became the preferred channel of a militant culture, an instrument of communication and a new place for the production and distribution of cultural products. Many literary journals did not have any link with the regime, and in the thirties, represented important fora for discussions about foreign writers. Authors and translators were able to take part in the dissemination of international culture against national provincialism. The surveillance and censorship implemented by the regime did not prevent either the emergence of a clandestine press or the publication of discordant voices in freely circulating journals. The dictatorship, therefore, never succeeded in gaining intellectuals’ consent, though it conditioned their actions and reduced their freedom of manoeuvre.

³ Vittorini’s *Americana* was ready for publication at the end of 1940 when the veto came from the regime. The Minister of Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, motivated it in a letter to the publisher Bompiani dated January 1941 (cited by Rundle, 2010a, pp. 200-201): “l’antologia non farebbe che rinfocolare la ventata di eccessivo entusiasmo per l’ultima letteratura americana: moda che sono risoluto a non incoraggiare” [“the anthology would rather rekindle a flush of excessive enthusiasm for the late American literature: a trend that I am resolved not to encourage.”]

The publication of some translated excerpts in periodicals created a sense of anticipation about works published outside the regime's propaganda machine. Some literary magazines played a significant role in the positive reception of Virginia Woolf in Italy. For example, the journal *Il Baretto*,⁴ founded by Piero Gobetti in 1924, hosted reviews of Woolf's first two novels *The voyage out* (Woolf, 1915) and *Night and day* (Woolf, 1919) by literary critic Umberto Morra di Lavriano (1928, pp. 27-28), before it was closed down in 1928 at the behest of Mussolini's censorship board.⁵ Despite being short-lived, *Il Baretto* was very influential in determining which books would be translated. It had been founded with the intention of exposing the national culture to foreign works of literature, and its editorial board (which included Alessandra Scalero, the translator of Woolf's novels *Orlando* (Woolf, 1928, 1933) and *Flush* (Woolf, 1933, 1934a), as well as authors and literary critics such as Morra di Lavriano, Giacomo De Benedetti, Leone Ginzburg, Natalino Sapegno, Umberto Saba, and Emilio Cecchi) supported an inclusive culture that would comprise foreign history, politics, and literature, a project born in opposition to the spreading rhetoric and provincialism of the Fascist regime.

For some intellectuals, literature was the only way they had of challenging the dictatorship. The monthly literary journal *Solaria*, with a modernist approach and anti-fascist stance, which started up in 1926, explicitly aimed to use literature for political controversy (Bonsaver, 2007, pp. 140-143; Duyck, 2015). It, too, was closed by the regime censorship, following the seizure of its forty-first issue published in 1936 (but backdated 1934). However, other periodicals were born, such as *Letteratura*, directed by Alessandro Bonsanti, and *La Riforma Letteraria*, by Alberto Carocci – the former director of *Solaria* – and Giacomo Noventa (Bolchi, 2007a, p. 190).

A dissenting article published in a periodical might usually escape censure as representing one voice amongst many, supported to some extent by the others. In contrast, the author of a book could easily be singled out by the censorship body (Cattaneo, 2007, p. 52). Nevertheless, publishers continued to defend their right to circulate translated books because it was a profitable market, trying to outwit the system by cultivating interlocutors inside the regime (Galfré, 2005, pp. 127-132; Rundle, 2004, p. 65). Arnoldo Mondadori, for example, maintained an intricate network of personal relations with Mussolini and other high-ranking officials (Guerra, 1983, pp. 90-99), and Bompiani and Einaudi also worked closely with the MinCulPop, the Ministry of Popular Culture (Rundle, 2010a, pp. 87-92). This state of affairs endured until full-blown centralised censorship was instituted between 1934 and 1939.

Until 1934, the year of publication of Celenza's translation of *To the lighthouse*, the political censorship was anything but strict or widespread. On the contrary, censorship was initially quite loose, incompetent, and often individually and locally enforced rather than

⁴ The periodical was founded in honour of Giuseppe Baretto, an eighteenth-century literary critic, translator, and linguist.

⁵ Its founder, despite his liberal ideas, was accused of connections with the left and especially with Antonio Gramsci, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, who had been in prison since 1926 (Langella, 1982, p. 95).

dictated by central institutions (Ferme, 2002, p. 219). Even later on, when the censorship of literature became more active, the solutions tended to be tailored to each case, which meant that the system as a whole was unpredictable (Bonsaver, 2007, p. 95). Publishers could select texts to translate, fully aware that a government review would only take place at the end of the editorial process when the investments had already been made.

In the early years, the regime managed not to impose preventive censorship, but encouraged publishers and writers to make choices that would meet patriotic ends, including protecting the Italian language and culture from foreign influence (Rundle, 2010a, p. 102). However, attitudes changed with the Fascist autarkic policy launched by Mussolini in reaction to the League of Nations' response to his conquest of Abyssinia and Ethiopia in 1935-1936. Hence, in an atmosphere of increasing severity, rigid measures were imposed by the Minister of Popular Culture to control both existing and future translations.⁶ Now publishers began to systematically intervene in the texts in order to ensure they would pass the censorship (Ferme, 2002, p. 210).

The entry of foreign works became ever more restricted. In 1938, the government imposed a ban on Jewish authorship, and books by Jewish authors were confiscated and removed from the market. In the case of translations, there was a need to smooth out or conceal any "foreign" aspects, so foreign names now had to be translated into Italian. Some translations were banned because their contents were considered offensive. One example is *All passion spent*, by Virginia Woolf's friend Vita Sackville-West, about a woman who refuses to follow the conventions of the time; it was translated and published by Mondadori in 1935 in the Medusa series dedicated to foreign literature. The same fate befell *The well of loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall,⁷ translated on Alessandra Scalerò's initiative and published in 1930 by the small and short-lived publisher Modernissima.

It is no exaggeration to say that writers and translators in Italy were now subject to a *de facto* triple system of political, moral, and literary censorship. The State's control system converged not only with the anti-modernist position of the Catholic Church (Luperini, 2018,

⁶ The new government measures – cited by Fabre (1998, p. 32; 2007, pp. 27-28) and translated into English by Rundle and Sturge (2010c, p. 147) – were as follows: "1) As of the 1 April [1938] only the Ministry [of Culture] is entitled to authorize the diffusion in Italy of foreign translations. 2) Publishers can send the Ministry copies of the book they intend to translate into Italian, in the original language, either directly or via the Prefecture. 3) The Ministry will inform Publishers – via the appropriate Prefecture – of its decisions as quickly as possible. 4) Publishers are permitted to submit works for approval also in the form of proofs in Italian translations. 5) No prior approval is required for purely scientific treaties (...) or for works which are universally recognized as classics".

⁷ This novel had initially escaped censorship control and appeared in Italy only two years after its publication in the UK, where it underwent a trial on obscenity in 1928. Strangely enough, the censorship occurred in the same country where *Orlando*, Woolf's virtuoso lesbian novel, was published the same year to fulsome praise' (Souhami, 2008, p. viii). In British society, where the censorship of books happened through trials, Woolf managed to escape since "her sexual allusions were too aerial to invite scrutiny by the Home Secretary" (Souhami, 2008, p. viii). These events, which were followed by a long history of trials in the UK, testifies to how censorship of literature in the 1930s was equally widespread in other European countries, although under different political regimes and for different reasons.

p. 35; Vian, 2012, p. 59),⁸ but also with the “intellectual dictatorship” exerted by liberal philosopher Benedetto Croce through the aesthetic norm of *bello scrivere*⁹ [“beautiful writing”]. In a letter dated 7 September 1931, Gramsci ([1971] 2014, p. 161) described Croce as “una specie di papa laico ed è uno strumento efficacissimo di egemonia anche se volta per volta possa trovarsi in contrasto con questo o quel governo” [“a sort of lay pope, and a very effectual instrument of hegemony even if, from time to time, he may find himself at odds with this or another government”]. Indeed, his influence was such that Italian culture in the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by the philosophical current of neo-idealism and a general need for formal balance in the arts. It is ironic that, in his opposition to literary innovations, even those introduced by famous writers in Italy and other European countries (Croce, 1902, 1938, 1954), this liberal anti-Fascist philosopher who opposed Catholic policies in so many ways was, in this respect, aligned with the aesthetics of the Church. Partly as a result of his influence, literary translations of modernist works in Italy were generally driven by an agenda of domestication and the desire to impose the “high” register of the Classics.

3. Virginia Woolf in Italy

The decision to translate Woolf’s novels in the thirties was not made by chance. According to Calvani (2018, p. 65), it was the (relative) commercial success of these works in England that justified her introduction into Italy. She had already written five novels, including *To the lighthouse*, when Carlo Linati firstly introduced her to Italian readers in an article published in the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* on 24 January 1927, asking “è dunque impressionista la Woolf?” [“Is Woolf, then, an impressionist?”] (Bolchi, 2007b, p. 71). The thirties saw the publication of three of Woolf’s novels in translation. By the time the Italian version of *To the lighthouse* was published in 1934, translations of *Orlando* (1933) and *Flush* (1934a) had already appeared, accepted by the regime with no apparent fear of contaminating Italians with their “foreignness” (Calvani, 2018, p. 63).

To the lighthouse was published in England by The Hogarth Press in 1927. The novel, considered as a sort of autobiography, revolves around the Ramsays’ family life, and as such appeared to be in tune with Italian cultural values.¹⁰ On 31 December 1929, Woolf granted the publisher Fratelli Treves Editori the translation rights, and it was decided that it would be translated by Giulia Celenza, an Anglicist who was already an acclaimed translator of Shakespeare, Stevenson, and Swinburne (Pancheri, 1999-2001, p. 265). The novel was expected on 31 March 1931 but took a further three years due to Celenza’s health problems, which eventually resulted in her death in 1933 (Bolchi, 2007a, p. 46).

⁸ Only in June 1966 did the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the Catholic Church announce that its widely-known *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* [“List of Prohibited Books”], which included about 4,000 censored books, would no longer have the force of ecclesiastical positive law with the associated penalties.

⁹ *Bello scrivere* is a very old expression dating back to the great rhetoric of Ancient Rome and the *Dolce Stil Novo* of Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio (Fornaciari, 1839, pp. 11-12).

¹⁰ As Morra di Lavriano (1931, p. 45) notes, “La famiglia (...) impregna di sé il paesaggio in cui si muove” [“the family (...) imbues the environment in which it moves”].

When the translation did finally come out, it was praised by critics. For example, Alberto Consiglio (1929, p. 6), writing in the periodical *Italia letteraria*, talked about “her [Woolf’s] perfect work”, while Emilio Cecchi and Paolo Emilio Paolini praised Celenza’s work for rewriting Woolf’s concepts in her own words (Bolchi, 2007b, pp. 46-47). In his preface to the Italian edition of *To the lighthouse*, Cecchi (1934, p. xi) praised the translation as having dealt very adeptly with what he regarded as a most challenging work: “Forse, in *To the lighthouse*, la Celenza affronta il compito più difficile, per la stessa natura riflessa e composita della scrittura della Woolf” [“Perhaps, in *To the lighthouse*, Celenza faced the most difficult task due to the reflected and composite nature of Woolf’s writing”]. However, he ended by saying “noi vogliamo che *To the lighthouse* parli da sé al nostro lettore” [“we want *To the lighthouse* to speak to our readers for itself”] (p. ix):

(...) ogni traduzione anche la più perfetta è infine un compromesso. Si vorrebbe poter augurarsi ed ambire che tutti i compromessi riuscissero come questo [each translation, even the most perfect one, is, in the end, a compromise. One would like to be able to wish and hope that all compromises turn out to be as this one.]. (Cecchi, 1934, p. ix)

Cecchi seems to have appreciated the way the translation appeared to conform with the cultural context dominated by Croce’s aesthetic idealism, exhibiting the high poetic level typical of the “Great Works” of world literature.¹¹ On the other hand, Marino Moretti, in a letter to Aldo Palazzeschi dated 19 August 1934 (Pancheri, 1999-2001), described the newly published translation of *To the lighthouse* as one of the most challenging works that he had ever read. While expressing his “ammirazione incondizionata” [“unconditional admiration”] for Celenza, he nevertheless found the source text to be “la cosa più inconsueta che si possa immaginare e lascia – direi che *deve* lasciare – perplessi. Giudica tu” [“the most unusual thing that one might imagine and leaves – I would say it *should* leave – one perplexed. See for yourself”] (Pancheri, 1999-2001, pp. 265-266, emphasis in the original). These opposing views make this case emblematic of a receiving culture in the grip of such particular cultural, social, and political conditions.

The next section will discuss some examples in which these factors made the target text diverge semantically as well as stylistically from the source text.

4. The translator’s choices

For Perosa (2002, p. 201), Woolf was appreciated in Italy through translations that completely altered her style, transforming her experimental writing into a more reassuring prose. Celenza’s translation of *To the lighthouse* was a case in point, muting the “revolutionary experimentalism” of Woolf’s modernism writing (Caw, 2002, p. xx) in order to conform to the regime’s diktats and appease literary critics dominated by the aesthetic canons of the time.

¹¹ See Cecchi ([1963] 1964, p. 384): “l’indirizzo critico che sempre ho cercato di seguire ha i suoi fondamenti nel Vico, nel De Sanctis e nel Croce” [“The direction of criticism that I have tried to follow is founded on Vico, De Sanctis, and Croce”].

As we have seen, publishing regulations determined that characters' foreign names be changed into Italian names: thus, in *Gita al faro*, Charles, Paul, Rose, Prudence, Andrew, and Roger became Carlo, Paolo, Rosa, Prudenza, Andrea, and Ruggero, respectively. The translation also uses a more formal style and higher register than Woolf's modernist writing. Unlike in the original text, where different registers are used to distinguish characters' social class, the same high-style register is employed throughout the translated dialogues, with upper-register words replacing more demotic ones. For example, "uscio" is used for "porta" ["door"], "ti levi" for "ti alzi" ["you get up"], "udendo" for "ascoltando" ["listening to"], and archaic forms are preferred in cases such as "ell'era" for "ella era" ["she was"], "ove" for "dove" ["where"] or "pei" for "per i/per gli" ["for the"].

A particularly significant aspect of Celenza's translation is the way the polyphonic effect of the source text, created by the blending together of various voices in a stream-of-consciousness style, is replaced by a single narrative voice.¹² For instance, the modernist technique of free indirect speech was systematically avoided in translation. Here are some examples taken from the 1927 edition of Woolf's *To the lighthouse* and Celenza's 1934 Italian version *Gita al faro*:

Example 1

EN: Of course, she said to herself, coming into the room, she had to come here to get something she wanted. (Woolf, 1927, p. 109)

IT: Entrò con la sensazione d'andare in cerca di qualcosa che le occorreva [She entered with the feeling of looking for something she needed]. (Woolf, 1934, p. 127)

We can see here that the character's voice has not been considered by Celenza, who prefers to rely on descriptive narration rather than enter into the character's mind. With the elimination of the original blending of inner voices, the translator imposes the traditional Crocean style, in which little space, if any, is dedicated to the inner lives of characters.

Example 2

EN: Then her husband thought, "That's what they'll say of me"; so, he went on and got one of those books. (Woolf, 1927, p. 109)

IT: (...) e certo il signor Ramsay, temendo che quel giudizio venisse riferito anche a lui, era andato a prendere quel romanzo [and undoubtedly, Mr Ramsay, fearing that this judgment would be referred also to him, had gone and fetched that novel]. (Woolf, 1934, p. 127)

Mr Ramsay's interior monologue in the first part of the sentence is again ignored by the translator, who uses the third person with the result that "the readers are presented with the characters' thoughts rather than plunged into them" (Morini, 2014, p. 142).

¹² Woolf (1924, p. 20) describes how her "smashing and crashing" of writing rules was designed to achieve a full representation of her characters' inner worlds without stylistic constraints.

Example 3

EN: she felt again, sinking deeper, as she had felt in the hall when the others were talking, There is something I want – something I have come to get, and she fell deeper and deeper without knowing quite what it was with her eyes closed. (Woolf, 1927, p. 110)

IT: (...) ella, immergendosi dentro di sè, capì (come già nel vestibolo, mentre scorreva coi giovani) di aver bisogno di qualcosa; di qualcosa che era andata a cercare là dentro; e, senza saper che fosse, continuò a immergersi dentro di sè ad occhi chiusi [Plunging within herself, she understood (as in the vestibule, while talking with the young men) that she needed something; something that had gone looking for in there; and, without knowing what it was, she continued to immerse herself within herself with her eyes closed]. (Woolf, 1934, p. 128)

Again, Celenza rephrases the whole sentence, adding brackets. The phrase “There is something I want”, expressed in the first person in Woolf’s modernist style and introduced with a capital letter, is merged with the rest of the sentence.

Example 4

EN: Almost one might imagine them, as they entered the drawing-room, questioning and wondering, toying with the flap of hanging wall-paper, *asking, would it hang much longer, when would it fall?* (Woolf, 1927, p. 120, emphasis added)

IT: Penetrati in salotto (è facile immaginare con quale curiosità) presero a giocherellare coi brindelli del parato di carta, *domandandosi se resterebbero ancora un pezzo ciondoloni o quando si staccerebbero*. [Penetrated in the living room (it is easy to imagine with what curiosity) they began to fiddle with wall-paper shreds, *wondering if they would remain dangling any longer or when they would detach themselves*]. (Woolf, 1934, p. 138)

In this more complex example, the literary technique of blurring the narrator’s and characters’ voices is erased.

Example 5

EN: For how would you like to be shut up for a whole month at a time, and possibly more in stormy weather, upon a rock the size of a tennis lawn? She would ask. (Woolf, 1927, p. 4)

IT: “A chi piacerebbe esser confinati per un mese intero, e forse più in tempo di burrasche, sopra una roccia grande quanto un campo da tennis?” ella esclamava [“How would like to be confined for a whole month, and possibly longer in stormy weather, upon a rock the size of a tennis lawn?”, she exclaimed]. (Woolf, 1934, p. 5)

The rhythm of Woolf’s prose is achieved in part through her intentional omission of quotation marks, which is perceived as an unnecessary barrier between the reader and the character’s mind. In this example, we can see how Celenza, in contrast, has restored the quotation marks, thus normalising Woolf’s experimental writing style.

Example 6

EN: He should have been a great philosopher, said Mrs. Ramsay. (Woolf, 1927, p. 9)

IT: “Sarebbe potuto riuscire un gran filosofo,” disse la signora Ramsay [“He could have been a great philosopher”, said Mrs Ramsay]. (Woolf, 1934, p. 11)

Again, the quotation marks have been added, and the semantics have been changed by using the expression *sarebbe potuto riuscire* [“could have been”] to translate “should have been”.

Example 7

EN: He never seemed for a moment to think, But how does this affect me? (Woolf, 1927, p. 241)

IT: Bankes non aveva mai, neppure per un momento, l'aria di pensare: “Quanto e come questo può riguardarmi?” [Bankes never, not even for a moment, looked like he was thinking: “how much and how could this concern me?”]. (Woolf, 1934, p. 116)

Once again, “borders” between the narrator’s and the character’s voices have been added using quotation marks.

Woolf’s novel is also full of quotations from English literature, mainly poems. Celenza not only refrains from adding any paratextual explanation or comment (which arguably disguises the presence of “foreign” elements that would undermine the image of an original text), she also imbues her translation with poetics from the receiving culture. As pointed out by Calvani (2018, p. 81), “the intense lyricism” of *Gita al faro* noted by Rosati (1933, p. 638) is achieved by echoing the neoclassical poems praised by Croce. For example, the original poetic expression “With stars in her eyes and veil in her hair” (Part I, Narrative unit 1, par. 27) is translated by “cogli occhi stellati e veli alle chiome”, which echoes Giosué Carducci’s ([1875] 1877) “stellati occhi” [“starry eyes”]¹³ and Gian Pietro Lucini’s (1908) “veli alle chiome” [“veils on her hair”].¹⁴ Presumably, Celenza’s use of literary expressions by neoclassical poets would make the reader associate the translated text with the Crocean tradition and bring it into line with the traditional forms dictated by the Catholic Church and Fascist censorship.

Indeed, there seems to be not enough evidence to support Morini’s (2014, p. 141) contention that Celenza was “disturbed by the lack of borders in Woolf’s novel as a result of forgetfulness and sloppy writing, rather than as a conscious artistic choice reflecting a world-view and a new ideology of fictions”. The fact that she was an Anglicist and acclaimed translator makes it unlikely that she would have misunderstood the nature of Woolf’s

¹³ See the 38th verse of the poem to a woman “Alla stazione in un mattina d’autunno” in Carducci’s *Odi barbare* ([1875] 1877): “o stellati occhi di pace, o candida” [“oh starry eyes of peace, oh candida”].

¹⁴ See the first stanza of Lucini’s (1908) poem “Il carme di angoscia e di speranza”: “Mi stanno a lato le Grazie/ non piangono, ma fremono/ han neri i veli alle chiome” [“On my side, are the Graces/ they do not cry, but quiver/ black are the veils on their hair”].

prose. It is much more probable that she was aware of the constraints of time and was trying to find a reasonable compromise between the challenging prose of *To the lighthouse* and the strict editorial rules imposed by the regime.

5. Conclusion

During the 1930s, the Italian book market faced a flood of translations, which caused concern about the effects of foreign influence on domestic culture and gave rise to a governmental campaign to control the phenomenon. The liberal philosophy of Benedetto Croce and the Catholic Church helped to form a *de facto* intellectual dictatorship against modernism. Mussolini's government had taken an ambivalent approach towards foreign writers who, while being seen as threats to tradition, were also essential sources of business for publishers. The regime was well aware that restricting translations damaged economic activities, as the translation market was generating significant earnings. Nonetheless, foreign literature continued to be disseminated, even in domesticated translations, as in the case of Virginia Woolf's *To the lighthouse*. The experimental style of the source text, defined later as modernist, was "domesticated" in translation by Giulia Celenza in 1934. The act of adjusting and rewriting the text complied with the norms of translating the classics in a high-level register and formal style.

Many literary journals played a fundamental role in translation, hosting foreign authors without making any distinction of gender and nationality. Even in a political dictatorship, literary journals were vital in the field of literary criticism. However, the censorship mechanism affecting the press and publishing houses gained momentum soon after Mussolini rose to power, intensifying sharply between 1934 and 1938.

A close analysis has confirmed the "domestication" of Woolf's *To the lighthouse*. Results show the translator's effort to dismiss almost every British aspect of the text, nurturing the image of a poetic novel. "Foreign" features were not rendered, arguably to avoid problems with different kinds of censorship and to accommodate the text comfortably in the receiving culture. As a result, almost all of the original modernist aspects of Woolf's style remained hidden from Italian readers for decades.

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