

Foreign Women  
Authors under Fascism  
and Francoism



# Foreign Women Authors under Fascism and Francoism:

*Gender, Translation  
and Censorship*

Edited by

Pilar Godayol and Annarita Taronna

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# INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

## PILAR GODAYOL AND ANNARITA TARONNA

When Mussolini carried out his March on Rome, I was eleven years old. I lived the next twenty under fascism and I know very well how it operates. I was lucky enough to have an exceptional father, a professor of economics and convinced democrat, who would give me daily explanations of the ideological, sociological and social phenomena that could turn European countries into fascist dictatorships, always with the connivance of the powers-that-be, the military, the big companies, the Church ... and the ignorance of the people. Dictatorships go through two stages: the first is the establishment of power, which may be more or less traumatic. In Italy it was not, but it was so in Spain as a consequence of your civil war. The second stage is that of consolidation, in which factors of police repression play a very important part, but in which there are also intangible factors such as arbitrariness. You are now in a situation that people call Kafkaesque. Your company is totally legal. Everything we have done with the Formentor Prizes is also legal. Where is the danger? Why are they investigating a supposed collaboration with communism in your activities? These are useless questions under a dictatorial regime. Someone has reported these literary gatherings as being a political conspiracy against who knows who. Against the State, against the regime? Those of us who know the truth cannot help but laugh. And this is where you should abandon the attempt to answer with completely logical reasoning these accusations for which there are absolutely no grounds. (Einaudi in Castellet 2010, 117-118)

The Turin publisher Giulio Einaudi (1912-1999) and the Barcelona publisher Carlos Barral (1928-1989) met in the summer of 1959, when the former visited Spain for the first time and established contacts with anti-Francoist intellectuals. Over the next thirty years, they cultivated a genuine friendship and a profitable collaboration. In 1933, Einaudi, *il principe dell'editoria* in Europe, when only twenty-one years old and with the Fascist regime fully established, founded the Einaudi publishing house and became one of the most prestigious international publishers of the

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of the introduction by Sheila Waldeck.

twentieth century, with a large catalogue of outstanding titles. On completing his degree in law, Barral took on the management of the Seix Barral publishing house, a family business founded in 1911, and during the central years of Francoism gave it a new direction, publishing classics of the progressive culture of the fifties, sixties and seventies. Barral admired Einaudi and always tried to follow his example. Einaudi supported him unflinchingly. From his personal experience of living under a dictatorial regime, he was able to give him advice and guidance at grim and critical moments.

The opening words of this introduction are part of Einaudi's measured and calming address to Carlos Barral and other friends in publishing, in his suite in the Hotel Manila in Barcelona, after the police had thwarted the second edition of the Formentor international literature prizes, which Barral and Einaudi, along with other European publishers, had founded a year before. At the beginning of May 1962, when faced with the danger of a gathering of anti-regime intellectuals, coinciding with moments of social and political conflict (the miners' strike in Asturias and disturbances in the universities of Madrid and Barcelona), Franco's government reacted with threats towards Barral, his publishing house and the Formentor prizes. Not only did government officials carry out an inspection of the publishing house and summon the international press to declare that Seix Barral was suspected of receiving financial backing from subversive dissidents in exile, but the police also interrogated Carlos Barral, Jaime Salinas and Giulio Einaudi, whose turn it was to preside over the prizes and who that same year had edited an anthology against the Francoist regime entitled *Canti della nuova resistenza spagnola (1939-1961)*. From then on, the prizes were awarded in other cities and Giulio Einaudi was banned from entering Spain, being labelled as a "Marxist publisher" (Luti 2013, 7). Before leaving Barcelona, Einaudi wished to encourage Barral and, drawing on his own political experience, gave the address reproduced above, in which he portrayed the modus operandi of totalitarian regimes and the censorship strategies they have used, from time immemorial, to quash ideas and control literary creativity.

All totalitarian regimes, past and present, erect walls to prevent Otherness, difference, modernity from entering. Einaudi and Barral fought against these walls, which, as Tzvetan Todorov reminds us "human beings have been building since the remotest antiquity" (2010, 7). These two publishers exemplify the many cultural agents (publishers, writers, critics, translators, correctors, etc.) who, not from exile but from within, confronted the Checkpoint Charlie of the censorship under the dictatorships of Benito Mussolini (1922-1940) and Francisco Franco (1939-1975). Both regimes

were interventionist systems that wounded and amputated written culture. In spite of the different timeline, similarities and parallelisms may be drawn between the power of the censorships exerted on Italian and Spanish publishing and translation under the Fascist and Francoist regimes. In particular, there are some common cultural features and processes that characterized translation practice under both dictatorships.

First of all, the only publications allowed were books and translations in Italian and Spanish of authors in tune with the conservative ideology of the regimes. Secondly, more ideologically controversial texts began to be translated under the suspicious eye of the censors, who required all publishing houses to apply for written approval from the Italian and Spanish Ministry of Culture, or similar body. Thirdly, there were similar ideological limitations imposed on works that discussed or invoked national identity, communism or obscenity. Fourthly, censorship was very arbitrary and publishers were on occasion able to dodge it in order to publish authors and titles that might have seemed at first sight too ideologically threatening. Last but not least, the system of readers' reports adopted by the regimes was an effective way of exercising control over the political and ideological value of the works. Under both dictatorships, the readers entrusted to examine the work and give a positive or negative verdict were generally people held in high esteem by the regime or by the publishing house endorsed by the regime.

In *Foreign Women Authors under Fascism and Francoism. Gender, Translation and Censorship*, censorship and translation are two of the cornerstones of the book. A third, gender, completes the triangle. With the nuances and peculiarities due to the different historical, political and social contexts, the totalitarian systems of Mussolini and Franco attempted to impede, manipulate and condition the entry of subversive foreign literature written by women, especially that which contained discourses and representations of the condition and moral code of women that were opposed to the orthodoxy of the regime. The purpose of Fascism and Francoism was to prevent the entry of the revolutionary feminine Other, with the aim of stopping the feminine population from denouncing the system's misogynous and androcentric controls and claiming the civil and political rights that had been usurped. Both dictatorships, to a greater or lesser degree, considered feminist literature to be a distorting factor for the development of their ideology. In the case of Spain, the official Francoist culture had imposed the traditional Catholic values and had condemned women to a secondary, subaltern position. In the case of Italy, the Fascist regime, besides its nationalist, fundamentally xenophobic and racist ethos, was also a misogynous regime under which women found themselves in

an unprivileged and unequal position compared to men. In addition to this, there was a sequence of policies, legal amendments and the establishment of specific “female” institutions aimed to further the State’s project for the improvement of the Italian race and the defence of maternity and childhood.

Heeding the advice of the mythical work of André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (1992), which urges researchers to constantly ask themselves questions about the production, the reception, the context and the actors involved in a translation, our methodological principle in this book has been a constant questioning aimed at achieving a thorough analysis of the connections established between translation, gender and censorship during Fascism and Francoism: Which foreign women’s texts were selected, canonized or marginalized during both dictatorships? What kind of strategies and editorial policies were adopted by the Ministries to exert control over the importation of foreign women’s works? Is it possible to identify a network of intellectuals, publishers and translators who were able to challenge and even elude the censorship’s control of translation? If potentially “subversive” concepts were involved, who proposed the foreign women’s publications? Who were the translators? Did they have political and ideological affinities with the authors?

All the contributions to *Foreign Women Authors under Fascism and Francoism. Gender, Translation and Censorship* share the objective of bringing to the fore the “microhistory” (Munday 2014, 64) that exists behind every publishing proposal, whether collective or individual, to translate a foreign woman writer during those two totalitarian political periods. The nine chapters presented here are not a global study of the history of translation in those black times in contemporary culture, but rather a collection of varied cases, small stories of publishers, collections, translations and translators that, despite many disappointments but with the occasional success, managed to undermine the ideological and literary currents of the dictatorships of Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco.

We have divided the book into two parts, “Fascism (1922-1940)” and “Francoism (1939-1975)”, and each one is organized beginning with the more panoramic studies, followed by the case studies in chronological order. The first part, dealing with Fascism, consists of four texts. The first, by Valerio Ferme, provides an initial overview of the practices behind the translation of American women writers during the Fascist years. On the one hand, it explores the reasons for the success of such authors as Louisa May Alcott and Harriet Beecher Stowe, due to the general presentation of gender roles offered by the former, and to the strong Christian themes

emanating throughout the latter's work, both of which coincided with the general tenets embraced by Fascism. On the other hand, it examines the more controversial cases of authors such as Pearl Buck (Nobel Prize for Literature, 1935) and Gertrude Stein, among others, the former being the second most-translated American author during the quinquennium 1936-1940, and the latter being of great importance among Italian literati both for her influential role in the promotion of other American authors and for her transformative stylistics. The second chapter, by Eleonora Federici, focuses on the translations of a well known work, *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), written by one of the major authors of the time, Agatha Christie. Specifically, the relevance of this choice of text is due to Christie's position as a touchstone writer of the genre, and to thematic and linguistic properties of the text which throw up many questions on the practice of translation under Fascism. In the translations under examination, Federici investigates the extent to which some changes, cuts and omissions were made in order to make the new text an ideologically adapted and re-elaborated Fascist version. The third chapter, by Vanessa Leonardi, analyses the Italian translation of the first novel of a series whose main character is named *Bibi*, written by Danish author Karin Michaëlis. By comparing the first official Italian translation carried out under Fascism and its later version published in 2005, along with the first German translation, Leonardi carries out a contrastive analysis that will allow us to determine whether the translation strategies employed by Villosesi in the first Italian version can be attributed to either manipulation or censorship in line with the regime's ideology. The fourth chapter is by Annarita Taronna and focuses on the representations of gender identity and gay sexualities in some literary works translated during Italy's Fascist period, by investigating the production of such British writers as Radclyffe Hall, Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. Drawing on different archival sources for the account of the relationship between translation, censorship and gender issues in these cases, the chapter analyzes documents that are still available today and which demonstrate the silent but also subversive power of those translators who introduced the gay production of such British writers into the Italian literary market and culture.

The second part consists of five texts. In Chapter 5, Montserrat Bacardí presents a panoramic view of the Catalan women translators of the first period of the dictatorship, from 1939 to 1962, the year in which a new Press and Printing Law came into force and Catalan publications were no longer persecuted for the mere fact of being in Catalan. Though they became known before the war, in the postwar years the majority of

Catalan women translators either went into exile or no longer published, given the impossibility of diffusion. If some of their translations appeared, it was through semi-clandestine channels: literary gatherings, private presentations, or publications that were illegal or produced abroad. The sixth chapter, by Fernando Larraz, concentrates on the collections “Biblioteca Breve” and Biblioteca Formentor” of the Seix Barral publishing house, and the censorship imposed on the translations of some of the foreign women writers included in its catalogue, amongst others, Nadine Gordimer, Margarite Duras, Doris Lessing, Dacia Maraini, Mary McCarthy, Carson McCullers and Nathalie Sarraute. The three following chapters are case studies of three women writers. Carmen Camus Camus, in Chapter 7, deals with the writings of the British author Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and the Spanish translations of the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, putting special emphasis on that of 1977, of the collection “Tribuna Feminista” of the publishing house Debate. Camus also analyses the self-censorship and the suppressions that the translators of the versions of 1977 and 1998 imposed on themselves. Chapter 8, by Pilar Godayol, investigates the institutional censorship of five works by the French writer Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) which were to be imported or translated into Spanish before the 1966 Law. The study of the censorship dossiers on the publishers (Emecé, Pésique, Edhasa and Seix Barral) demonstrates the strategies used by the state apparatus during the first period of Francoism to impede the entry of works by Beauvoir, considered by the regime to be philo-communist, feminist and atheist and thus a dangerous writer. The closing chapter, by Cristina Gómez Castro, deals with the North American novelist Harper Lee (1926-2016) and the Spanish translation of her masterpiece, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Pulitzer Prize, 1960) published in Spain in 1961. Gómez Castro analyses the censorship and reception of this author, considered to be a “single novel author” for fifty-five years, given that she did not publish her second work, *Go Set a Watchman*, an earlier draft of her first work, until 2015.

The aim of *Foreign Women Authors under Fascism and Francoism. Gender, Translation and Censorship* is to show that, during the totalitarian regimes of Benito Mussolini and Francisco Franco, the history of translation was full of unofficial feminine stories: from surprising publishing successes to unexpected failures, from versions censored by the dominant system to versions self-censored by publishers and translators themselves, from prohibitions, arbitrary decisions, cuts and administrative silences to extraordinary concessions and transgressions. Now that many of the translations that were in fact published (or not) during this black

period in European culture are more than fifty years old, it is necessary to remember and explain their many varied stories in order to weave a feminine and feminist historiography of plural, non-essentialist, and non-hegemonic translation.

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**PART ONE:**  
**FASCISM (1922-1940)**

# NOTES ON THE FASCIST CENSORSHIP

ANNARITA TARONNA

Recent research (Rundle 2010; Billiani 2006, 2007, 2008; Ferme 2002) has placed translation issues at the very centre of our understanding of Fascism by revealing some unprecedented cultural, ideological and political aspects which have been largely ignored. Specifically, assuming that in 1920s and 1930s Italy translating foreign texts came into being as an activity overdetermined by ideological, literary and economic discourses and constraints, the study of translation will provide an insight into the relationship between the translator and the historical context in which he/she worked as an active agent for the cultural and political environment of the receiving language. Throughout this evolution in the regime's attitude to translation, it was the symbolic value of the phenomenon that caused the most concern, and, on the whole, not the impact that translations may have had on Italian literature. This is significant in that translation provides us with a means of understanding how the regime viewed itself and how that view of itself was constructed.

On this background, the ability to disseminate foreign literature, and more specifically, foreign women literature, under Fascism is undoubtedly a fascinating area of research, given the regime's nationalistic agenda and the role assigned to women in those years. Novels written by British, American and German women gained a great deal of success and managed to circulate around Fascist Italy by providing examples of a new concept of femininity in terms of independence and emancipation, thus in sharp contrast with the Italian model of woman endorsed by the Fascist ideology. Nevertheless, gradually these nonconformist examples and models coming from Britain, the United States and Germany began to be viewed as threatening for the Fascist regime which, through extremely tight control measures, managed to block the free circulation of some of these books around the country.

The close analysis of history, censorship and the translation of foreign women writers through Italy's Fascist past shows that translation may play an important role in provoking a shift in the paradigm when aesthetic criteria of assessment have to come to terms with the rules imposed by publishers' needs and the government's censorship. The fracture of the

paradigm here represented by the translation of such writings poses many questions to the reader undermining Fascist authority, and this was not acceptable, since texts needed to support Fascist ideology and values and perpetuate a definite idea of “Italianess” and national identity. From this perspective, anything could be changed, scenes or conversations among characters—even if illuminating for the plot’s development—could be omitted, foreign words could be deleted and characters could be presented in a totally different way from the original characterization, in their name, nationality, way of speaking and thus narrative function. It was paramount that anything clashing with the Fascist representation of the nation, of Italian identity and culture, of virility and femininity, should be omitted.

In this context, translators played an extremely important and original role, as they were forced into their professional duties by publishers’ needs and the government’s censorship. They would have to modify the texts according to a not clearly defined Italian spiritual viewpoint. This, in practice, meant suppressing passages in order both to pass the censor and improve the artistic value of the text. Specifically, references to suicides, miscarriages, abortion, Jewish culture and offences against the Fascist morality of devotion to the State and to the family had to be avoided. Often these devices had to be adjusted in order to fit in with the Fascist ideology.

On these premises, the need to trace here a more detailed framework of the Fascist censorship in relation to the question of translation can help understand the history of the Italian translations of some British, American and German women writers and the extent to which these texts challenged and subverted the Fascist censorship creating narrative spaces of resistance in which further aesthetic meaning and knowledge could be subtly produced beneath the surface. The idea behind this section is thus to provide an initial overview of the practices underscoring the translation of British, American and German women writers whose works could appear at odds with the cultural and political dictates of the Fascist regime.

Finally, the research also attempts to examine censorship as a multidimensional experience which depends on the potentially infinite multiplication of the interstitial spaces and perspectives emerging in the gaps between dominant and subaltern subjects (Billiani 2006, 75). By exploring censorial mechanisms in terms of ideology, nationalism, traditionalism, it is possible to fill a historiographical gap by discussing some issues around translation, censorship and the representation of gender identities in Italy’s Fascist past and to provide unprecedented insights into translation studies and practices that have reiterated the

importance of investigating dominant structures of knowledge and power which are implemented in every translation.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# TRANSLATING WOMEN AUTHORS UNDER FASCISM, LESSONS FROM AMERICA

VALERIO FERME

### Introduction

Translation is a field that, as a whole, opens our understanding onto multiple angles of interpretation. For one, the original meaning of translation in the 14<sup>th</sup> century suggests the bodily removal of an object (typically a saint's body and/or its relics) from one place to another, giving it a new resting place, but also disturbing its metaphorical eternal peace by forcing it into a different milieu. Additionally, "translation" enables one to carry forth into (or through, or across) a new environment, artifacts originally destined for audiences and cultural milieus that might have little in common with the audience and culture targeted by the translator. As such, translation and its objects evoke multiple questions that, depending on the angle of entry of the interpreter's gaze, elicit responses that are as rich and varied as the interpreter's ability to bring together initially disconnected perspectives. In this sense, it is useful to think of translation through the concept of the rhizome, which operates underground (just like the saintly, translated body), as a "map [that] is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification [...] it always has multiple entryways" (Deleuze and Guattari 10). Thus, depending on the viewpoint we adopt and the direction we undertake in reading our evidence, the connections change.

I begin my essay with this reflection, because an exploration into why American women writers were translated under Fascism requires a broad approach (and multiple lines of inquiry) into the societal and cultural practices that were taking place during this restricted timeline of Italian literary history. And, depending on the questions and cultural perspectives I explore, this essay might provide some novel ways to interpret the interest of the Italian literary market in American women authors.

An anecdote might lead us into the topic with a sideways perspective on the gendering of translation under Fascist dictatorships. In 1943, the SS arrested and imprisoned Franco Pivano, brother of the more famous Fernanda, the America-phile student of Cesare Pavese whose translation of *The Spoon River Anthology* into Italian had just been published by Einaudi. Franco Pivano was imprisoned because, in a roundup of the publishing house Einaudi, the SS had found a contract for the translation of Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* that had been erroneously written in his name (the two shared the initials "FP," but his sister was clearly the established translator).<sup>1</sup> Upon hearing the news, Fernanda, who was a courageous sort and not easily intimidated, went to the SS command and explained the case of mistaken contractual identity. The SS were convinced and released her brother, but held Fernanda and, only following a lengthy interrogation, released her, as well (De Fusco 145). While my deduction might not be accurate, the differential treatment of the Pivano siblings by the SS (the brother imprisoned after being summarily questioned; the sister released after a lengthy interrogation) suggests a brand of reverse sexism in the treatment of the siblings-as-translators. The brother, understood as the translator of an American author whose books, and this book in particular, had been banned from being translated, was incarcerated as a threat to the ideology and culture of Nazi-Fascism. Yet, when the authorities discovered that the sister was the translator, she explained her way out of imprisonment, in many ways suffering a lighter fate than her brother might have if he had, indeed, been the commissioned translator. Should we make something of this disparity? Could we suggest that the understanding of women implicit in the ideologies of Nazism and Fascism granted them a degree of extended immunity from the more vicious treatment reserved for their male counterparts? The question is one

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<sup>1</sup> Hemingway was a *persona non grata* for Fascism ever since the publication of *A Farewell to Arms*, where he had described in unflattering terms the retreat of the Italian army following the defeat of Caporetto. He was one of the few American authors whose work was severely restricted from translation into Italian. While his work would not have passed the sieve of Fascist censorship due to its content—as was confirmed in 1940 by then-Minister of Popular Culture, Alessandro Pavolini, to Valentino Bompiani, that American authors should not be translated if they depicted Italians in unflattering ways (D'Ina and Zaccaria 39)—there is also evidence that the prohibition against translating Hemingway's work might have been due to a personal antipathy that Mussolini developed for Hemingway following a 1923 newspaper article that the latter penned in the *Toronto Daily Star* in which he described Mussolini as the "biggest European fake" (as cited in Alù).

that should guide our analysis as we explore the translation of American women authors in Italy under Fascism.<sup>2</sup>

## The Antecedents

The relationship between the Italian literary market and foreign ones was well established before the advent of Fascism. Publishing houses relied heavily on translation to supplement their steady flow of national authors. That said, the literary market had not developed strong ties with American literature during the early years of the twentieth century, in part because American authors were not as well known internationally as they would become in the 1920s and 1930s during the heyday of the American expatriate presence in Paris, and in part because the Italian literary industry considered American literature a minor literature when compared to the Italian and European ones.<sup>3</sup> Though some translations of American authors had appeared already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* and Harriett Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* being the obvious examples), and into the 20<sup>th</sup> (one need think only of the popularity of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* among a restricted crowd of intellectuals), they contributed only marginally to publication in the Italian literary market in the period between the two centuries. With the exception of Beecher Stowe's book—which I will discuss more carefully later in the essay—the translation of American women's literature was even more limited, as was generally the market for Italian female authorship. Though starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Italian women wrote and achieved significant fame (one need only think of Grazia Deledda, Carolina Invernizio, Ada Negri, and Matilde Serao, in addition to the *cause célèbre* of Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* in 1906),<sup>4</sup> they tended to be marketed for popular

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<sup>2</sup> I should point out that Fernanda Pivano did spend time in jail, not for the translation of *A Farewell to Arms*, but rather for that of *The Spoon River Anthology* of Edgar Lee Masters. My anecdote simply serves to make the point that, in differentiating between the treatments of the siblings, Fascist authorities committed the venial mistake of considering a woman, and her translation and motives, to be less threatening than those possibly attributed to a man.

<sup>3</sup> For the concept of "minor literature" and its potentially destabilizing effects on a majoritarian tradition, see Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. While I do not use the term with that connotation here, it certainly applies to how American literature affected Italian literary aesthetics and their market in the 1920s.

<sup>4</sup> For a sweeping panorama of Italian women authors who achieved some fame between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Patrizia Zambon's "Le

venues, such as the *feuilleton* or the *romanzo d'appendice*. Often their work was deemed inferior, with notable intellectuals like Antonio Gramsci calling Invernizio an “earnest literary hen,” since her work was deemed second-rate when compared to that produced by foreign (male) authors (*Quaderni*, vol. 1, p. 344).

A significant and unexpected transformation related to the opening of the Italian literary market to American writers took place around the time that Fascism came to power in Italy. I have given a detailed explanation elsewhere for how this transformation took place,<sup>5</sup> but I should summarize here some of its most significant findings. Following the end of World War I, the balance of the economic and political power in the West shifted toward the United States, which had remained unaffected structurally by the war, and had come out of it strengthened by the substantial loans that it had given its European Allies. These loans and the continued presence of American troops in the aftermath of the war created favorable conditions for the transfer of commercial and cultural products from the United States to Europe. Nowhere was this more evident than in the transformation of the film industry in Italy. Prior to 1920, the Italian cinema industry had been the second largest in the world. However, the default of the Italian Bank of Credit (*Banca di Credito Italiano*), which had supported the creation of countless production houses in Italy, brought to its knees an industry that was the second largest in the country, as it employed over 500,000 people. The bank’s collapse produced a chain reaction that, by 1922, the year when Mussolini became Prime Minister, portended a financial crisis of unspeakable proportions not only for the film industry, but for the country as a whole.<sup>6</sup> Mussolini, who had come to power on a nationalist agenda that promoted cultural autarchy, decided to do the pragmatic thing: he invited American production companies to create movie beachheads in Italy to match their military ones in the rest of

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autrici della letteratura italiana. Bibliografia dell’otto/novecento.” It should be noticed, however, that Zambon’s project does not mention Invernizio, who was probably as famous as any Italian woman author at the time, given that she published a staggering number of popular novels (around 150), and garnered a following that few other women authors achieved then or since.

<sup>5</sup> In the book *Tradurre è tradire. La traduzione come sovversione culturale sotto il fascismo*. In this essay, I use some of the arguments I advanced there to support my perspective regarding the relationship between Italian and American texts.

<sup>6</sup> Prior to the collapse there had been over 80 production houses. By 1921, over 60 had shut down, and hundreds of thousands of workers had either been released or were on the verge of being fired (*Cinematografia Italiana ed Estera* 15.9 (31 luglio 1921), i-ii).



Europe and, at the same time, solved the issue of filming on location many of the epic films that were quite popular at the time. As a result of this financial intervention, between 1922 and 1938, more than two-thirds of the films shown in Italy were American-made.<sup>7</sup>

The magnified presence of America on the silver screen resulted in a “mythologizing” of the United States by the Italian public, as it came into contact with a world, such as that embodied by the prairies of the Far West and the metropolitan jungles of steel of New York and Chicago, that was unfamiliar and “marvellous” in its newness and difference. It also opened up the Italian cultural markets to a greater acceptance of American music (especially through the jazz that had been taking over the European major cities) and, as a distant third, to a greater acceptance of American literature, though even here the impact that American expatriates in Europe like T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Gertrude Stein were having on the avant-gardes had significant consequences for the advancements of literary modernism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Gian Piero Brunetta provided the following eloquent summary of how Fascism viewed the Americanization of the film market: “Typically, until 1938, Fascism did not oppose Hollywood’s colonization [of its cinema], because it believed that, in the American products, there was nothing harmful that might increase social conflicts. Even as of 1938, prior to the new law on cinema, American movies took home 73% of ticket receipts, while the regime continued to believe that it was more useful to import from abroad hundreds of titles each year rather than invest non-recoverable subventions in an industry [the Italian one] in a state of chronic disarray” (Brunetta 168). The translation from the Italian text is mine here and anywhere else where a non-English original is cited.

<sup>8</sup> The terminology attached to the “myth of America” is indebted to Dominique Fernandez’s *Il mito dell’America negli intellettuali italiani dal 1930 al 1950*. In that book, however, Fernandez ties the myth to the literary translations of Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini. By claiming this correspondence, Fernandez may himself have helped to perpetuate new “myths” about the myth, thus precluding a clearer understanding of the period and its discursive practices. Primarily, Fernandez proposed the idea that beginning in 1930 “the fascist regime, now firmly established, condemns Western modern art as immoral and anti-patriotic ... One must fight the dangerous influence of foreign literatures ... Whoever imitates a foreigner is guilty of injuring the nation” (12). The truth is that Italy’s intellectual culture under the regime was extremely fluid, and foreign literary works were being translated in larger and larger quantities, the peak coming between 1925 and 1935, but continuing well into the second half of the 1930s. My historical analysis also refutes the claim that 1930 is the year when the myth starts, because “the editors publish a few classics ... such as Poe, Hawthorne, Henry James, Edith Wharton ... and some commercially viable authors like Jack London and Sinclair Lewis” (15). By 1930, as I will explain in the next few pages, many “classics”

Concomitantly, favorable international laws pertaining to the costs of publishing rights for translations contributed to the substantial increase in the number of American authors whose work was translated into Italian during the *ventennio*. In particular, the international conventions of Bern (1886) and Paris (1893) established that author's rights on translations of their originals ceased ten years after publication. While the Berlin convention of 1908 extended authors' rights on the translation of their work to 50 years after their death (just as was the case for the originals), a clause was inserted, in response to the vehement opposition by many countries, that allowed them to reserve the right to continue to follow the agreements of the Bern and Paris conventions until they chose otherwise. Only in 1928, following the Rome convention, did Italy ratify the Bern-Paris agreements, but only for works published after 1921, leaving anything and everything published prior to 1921 subject to the 10-year rule (Leonelli 28; Marrubbini 221). As a result, Italian publishing houses, which were at odds with the high prices demanded by Italian authors for their work, and whose market share had decreased as the adventurous and intriguing plots of *feuilletons* and *romanzi d'appendice* took away readers from their book sales, found themselves with a gold mine on their hands. Not having to pay high prices on author's rights, and freed from similar tariffs on translation rights, they started scouring the markets for materials that could satisfy the new tastes of their readers. No market was more propitious for these developments than the American one, since many of the adventures that Italian audiences saw in the American movies that dominated the market were replicated in the Western novels of Zane Grey, James Oliver Curwood, and, especially, Jack London.

## **Gender and Translation in American Literature Translated under Fascism**

In *Tradurre è tradire*, I explored the substantial increase in translations from American literature in the years 1911-1940.<sup>9</sup> My analysis there focused especially on the transition from the years 1911-1920 to the years

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already had a 10-year history of translations, while Jack London had been one of the most popular translated authors from 1924 onward. More obviously, the literary myth was generally an evolution of the interest which Italians developed for American cinema and for the stories of emigrants who had returned to Italy. Only in a second phase did the literary writings of selected fiction contribute to the expansion of this myth.

<sup>9</sup> See especially Chapter 2 of my book.

1920-1935, when translations of American literature more than doubled. Between 1911 and 1920, we find very few translations of American authors, though I notice that a woman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, tied with Mark Twain as the second most translated author (with seven different translations and editions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), behind Edgar Allan Poe (Ferme *Tradurre* 224). The only other women on the list were Louisa May Alcott, with two translations of *Little Women* to her name, and the naturalized American writer Frances Burnett, with one translation of *The Secret Garden*. The next decade, however, saw a substantial jump in the versions of these books that were translated for an Italian public, in addition to the presence of new female authors among those translated into Italian. I counted 12 versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 10 of *Little Women*, and 6 of *The Secret Garden* (Ferme, *Tradurre* 225),<sup>10</sup> as well as the first translations of books by Edith Wharton, Anita Loos, and even Fannie Hurst. What could account for the increase in the number of editions, especially since both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Little Women* had been published more than a half century before, their translation rights had long expired, and both had long-established translation histories, which would suggest a saturated market for reprints, new translations and/or editions? Moreover, what did the addition of Wharton, Loos, and Hurst suggest about the translation of American women authors into Italian?

I suggested earlier that the “mythologizing” of America is responsible for the opening of Italian cultural markets to American imports. A renewed interest in these books might be feasibly explained by an increased desire to know “all things American” by the Italian public. It is also true that, because of the advantageous conditions for the translation of deceased foreign authors (Louisa May Alcott died in 1888, Beecher Stowe died in 1896), the costs of translating and producing new versions of these books might have induced numerous publishers to put out competing copies of the same books on the Italian market. Most competing versions of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Little Women* were priced well below typical first edition books by Italian authors and other foreign authors (at £3 versus £10 for the more expensive books, among which we do find the books by Wharton, Loos, and Hurst). One possible reason for this lower

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<sup>10</sup> I should note that I use the term “version” here purposefully. Oftentimes, these translations were heavily redacted and eliminated numerous pages from the original. This was done both to render the translation more fluid, and to ensure that the book was “readable,” especially when they were advertised for children, as was the case with *Little Women* and *The Secret Garden*. There existed a significant degree of censorship in these redacted versions, mostly with regard to sex scenes and violence against children.

price is that they were published as the equivalent of today's paperback editions, typically in smaller print and on cheaper paper than the more elaborate first editions published in Italy at the time. Another factor was they were typically advertised as "popular" and/or "children's" novels, a tactic that suggests a degree of economic, intellectual, and linguistic accessibility by broader strata of the population (conversely, Anita Loos and Edith Wharton's books were advertised as romance novels or women's comedies, and targeted a different, more prosperous, audience, since they were publicized as *libri per signore*, books for ladies). I believe, however, that other factors were at play in the increased interest in the translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Little Women* in Italy, factors that, as often is the case with translation, were tied to "ideological and social determinants" that help "situate the translated text within the context of its social and historical circumstances, and consider its role as a political instrument" (Venuti 10-11).

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the most widely sold and translated books published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The arguments espoused in the novel, such as abolitionism and Christian piety, were claimed to have contributed to the start of the Civil War in the United States. It is difficult to think of it as being advertised in Italy, during the 1920s, as a popular and/or children's novel. Yet, it is equally easy to see how the themes contained in the novel, if tidied up and rendered less visibly disturbing, could promote the kind of ideological formation that would make it an apt instrument of political and social persuasion.

When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in the United States in 1852, it took the country by storm and ignited a controversy that continued unabated well into, and after, the Civil War years. Its author became an international celebrity, and the book was immediately translated into numerous languages, with four Italian versions already in circulation by 1854. Stowe's book became immensely popular in Europe at that time, precisely because, in advocating against slavery, it aligned with the impetus toward freedom that dominated many European countries at the time, as the principles of democracy and equality animated anti-royalist, republican uprisings throughout Europe. When Stowe arrived in England in 1853, throngs lined up to greet and catch a glimpse of the woman who, with her book, had stirred the abolitionist factions in America. With regard to Italy, already in 1856, Beecher Stowe traveled to Rome on a trip that confirmed her fame on the continent. It also made her and the book beacons for independendist and unification patriots who saw in the emancipation from slavery a parallel to their own desire to emancipate themselves from foreign rulers. Surprisingly, Beecher Stowe was again in

Rome on May 9, 1860 (Charles Stowe 352), just days after the beginning of the war for Independence that unified Italy, though her letters make no mention of the events taking place in the peninsula during her visit.

While it is possible to justify the enthusiasm for Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1860s Italy, what kept the book a bestseller in multiple versions, redactions, and editions under Fascism, with the spike I have already documented in the years 1920-1930? How did one justify, ideologically, the success of a book that ran counter, in its opposition to racial castes, to one of the central operational goals of Fascism, colonial conquest? It is difficult to reconstruct the appeal that the different versions, often heavily redacted, would have had on the Italian people in the 1920s. Yet, an analysis of the book's main themes provides general ideas for why the regime would continue to allow the translation and sale of Beecher Stowe's book.

For one, the book represented a strong counter to the mythologizing view of the United States as an emblem of freedom and liberty. The depiction of slavery and of its cruelty functioned as a critique of America's idealized vision of itself as a beacon of freedom at a time when relationships between the two countries were often problematic. Indeed, while the new anti-immigration policies enforced by the United States through the Immigration Act of 1924 that especially targeted Italian immigrants were welcomed by a Fascist regime bent on keeping Italians citizens under its sway, the treatment of Italian immigrants by the United States government and its people was reason for repeated interrogations and pleas for justice by the Italian diplomatic corps in Washington.<sup>11</sup> Emblematic in this sense were the trials of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti that extended from 1922 to their execution in 1927: even though the two were anarchists who opposed the policies of Fascism, Mussolini

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<sup>11</sup> Going back to the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Italian immigrants had been targeted as dirty, dangerous, and subhuman not only in newspapers and public discourse, but also in their treatment by government authorities. To date, the largest group lynching in American history took place in New Orleans on March 14, 1891, and it targeted 11 Italian nationals who had been acquitted in the shooting death of the Chief of Police, David Hennessy. Immediately after the lynchings, as no justice was being meted out against the perpetrators, a long period of tense diplomatic relations followed, whereby Italy almost pulled its full diplomatic corps from the United States. The lynchings in Louisiana were not isolated. In 1899, another group lynching of 5 Italians took place in Tallulah, MS. Other lynchings of Italians took place all over the United States even in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. For a general view of discrimination against Italians in the United States, see LaGumina's *Wop! A Documentary History of Anti-Italian Discrimination in the United States*, Toronto, Buffalo, and Lancaster (UK): Guernica, 1973.

pleaded until a month before their execution for a new, fairer trial that would take into account evidence that might have exculpated the two Italian immigrants. Given the strong anti-Italian bias in American society at the time, a book that depicts the most lurid aspects of American discrimination toward the lower strata of the population would continue to be published and circulated by the Fascist regime to counter the obsession of many Italian citizens with the American world.<sup>12</sup>

Balancing this portrayal of American society in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a subtler one that, in subsequent years, led many to criticize the book for its paternalistic and stereotypical representation of the relations between whites and African Americans in the book.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, if my reading is correct, critics have suggested that Beecher Stowe's description of African Americans in the book are infected by a certain anthropological condescension toward their behaviors and rituals, which emphasize the emotional life of the slaves (their love of music and song, their impulsive behaviors), and which created stereotypes of the "good whites" helping the "poor blacks" emancipate themselves and achieve their freedom. In the world described by Harriett Beecher Stowe, it would be inevitable that white allies would hold the power to help those who were enslaved; but the novel also creates a general ideological sense that the slaves are dependent—economically and culturally—on their white counterparts.

This is precisely how Fascism presented its colonizing mission in Africa: the Italian colonizers were not only, or not really, displacing the natives, but were providing them with the support necessary to bring them under the cultural sphere (and the past) of Rome's empire. Mussolini's rhetoric in this sense could not be clearer. In the speech of May 9, 1936, in which he declared the birth of the Italian Empire with the conquest of Ethiopia, he claimed that the "peaceful" Italian empire was one of

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<sup>12</sup> In this sense, in parallel to the idealization of America, there was a countercurrent of Italian intellectuals who contributed essays about America which, critically, cut the United States down to size, by highlighting its foibles. Two journalist/critics whose books about the United States were published in those years were Mario Soldati (*America primo amore*) and Emilio Cecchi, whose *America amara* I discuss for how it portrays African Americans according to the general terms described in the text.

<sup>13</sup> An initial critic was James Baldwin, who in the 1949 essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" interestingly (for the purpose of this essay) claimed that "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a very bad novel, having in its self-righteous, virtuous sentimentality, much in common with *Little Women*," and suggested that it was not really a novel, as much as a pamphlet, which relied on stereotyped knowledge of African Americans, and depicted them as vignettes, rather than people.