Spring 2013

Carola Prosperi: Reclaiming Her Visibility

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Carola Prosperi: Reclaiming Her Visibility

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For Defense March 22, 2013
Abstract

Women, throughout history, have been frequently viewed as passive and represented as oppressed. Italian Fascism was not an exception. Benito Mussolini, the head of the Italian Fascist regime, wanted to recreate the greatness that was the Roman Empire, and one of the ways to do so was to control the population demographic. To do this, he ultimately needed to control women and their rights, both general and reproductive. Through numerous laws and amendments, Mussolini, with help from the Catholic Church, managed to ban contraceptives and make abortion illegal. Also, he made certain jobs illegal for women, forcing them to stay and home and play the role of the mother. Furthermore, through financial incentives and government institutions, Mussolini made it seem more appealing for women to stay at home and have children, than going out to work.

While it might seem like Mussolini's plan to increase population was foolproof, many women did not follow this agenda. Women continued having abortions illegally, and the population actually ended up decreasing, according to what scholar Lesley Caldwell brilliantly named a “Demographic Strike.” While we as Americans have mostly been shown Italian women during Fascism as passive figures, thanks to recent academic research it is clear that this is not always the case. Women during Italian Fascism fought back, although not throughout a traditional feminist battle, since the feminist movement as it was known in pre-Fascist and Liberal Italy had been seriously undermined, but in a less overtly ideological and yet effective way. We can witness this effort of reclaiming one's body and mind through reading the stories and novels of many women writers of the time. One certain writer, Carola Prosperi, is an example of this. Although she did not consider herself to be a feminist writer, reading her stories
today, it is clear that she would be considered a feminist writer. While she was a predominant writer for newspapers like *La Donna* and *La Stampa*, she also wrote many novels regarding topics such as abortion and abusive relationships. In the collections of stories, *Felicità in Gabbia*, written in 1922, Prosperi gives a voice to oppressed women, showing their strength to make decisions regarding children and marriage. It is startling to see how, although she discussed such taboo topics from a very independent and unique point of view, she continued to be published steadily during Fascist times. We have to wonder if, in such a sense, women were indeed so “invisible” that not much attention was actually given to what they were writing, so much that they could, more easily than men, escape censorship. Although in recent times, more attention was given to Fascist women writers, I still feel that more work needs to be done, especially through translating many of the “invisible” and forgotten stories that could offer the American audience a much more complete perspective of the multi-faceted Fascist women society.

For these aforementioned reasons, I have decided to write my Honors Thesis on Women, Fascism, and Carola Prosperi. I will begin my thesis with an introduction, which will include information about Fascism in general, women and Fascist laws, and information on Carola Prosperi herself. Also, I will look into specific translation theories, and then elaborate on the theory that I used, as well as the problems that arose while translating the stories. Following the introduction, I will have a translation of three stories from Carola Prosperi's book, *Felicità in Gabbia*, named *Paternità, Mancanza di Serietà*, and *L'Oscura Passione*. I am choosing this book for many reasons, the first and most important being that it has never been translated into English before. Secondly, Prosperi's stories gave women the chance to say that they were not just sitting by and letting Mussolini take control of their world.
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Introduction

I think 'feminine literature' is an organic, translated writing... translated from blackness, from darkness. Women have been in darkness for centuries. They don't know themselves. Or only poorly. And when women write, they translate this darkness... Men don't translate. They begin from a theoretical platform that is already in place, already elaborated. The writing of women is really translated from the unknown, like a new way of communicating rather than an already formed language.

-- Marguerite Duras

My sophomore year of college, during the Italian 4010 seminar on translation, I realized what a powerful tool translations can be in order to change the perception of a certain culture. In Sherry Simon's book, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, she describes Homi Bhabha's theory of “translational culture,” which is “a new site of cultural production.” What Bhabha is referring to is the idea that, by translating a piece of literature to a different language, there is a creation of a new type of culture, or, better said, the discovery of the culture that is being translated. In relation to translations, Simon elaborates, stating that translation can be used “as an activity which destabilizes cultural identities, and becomes the basis for new modes of cultural creation.” When the opportunity arose to write a thesis, I started thinking how my project could offer a contribution in clarifying some common misperceptions about Italy. Because, as Simon said, translation can lead to the creation of new cultures and understandings, I saw this thesis as an opportunity to do just that. Translation is a cultural practice, meaning that the product is influenced by the translator's experiences in a similar way to what occurs in the writing of history. Since most Italian social and political history has been written by men, about men, I feel that it is important to translate some women authors to

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implement the perspective of how women writers played an important subversive role during the Fascist era in Italy (1922 – 1945).

The experience that really brought my attention to the social aspects of Fascist Italy was watching Italian cinema as a teenager. My father grew up in Italy during the 60s and 70s and watched many classic Italian movies, such as *Roma Città Aperta* by Roberto Rossellini, *Il Giardino dei Finzi Contini* by Vittorio de Sica, and *Una Giornata Particolare* by Ettore Scola³. My father wanted me to experience Italy the way he had, and before I went abroad for my junior year of high school to Viterbo, Italy, he made me watch *Roma Città Aperta*. My eyes were instantly opened to a different world of hunger, violence, and fear. As an example of post-war cinema of the Neorealist style, women in *Roma Città Aperta* are regarded as figures of the regenerated nation, specifically the character of Pina, played by Anna Magnani. Pina is the personification of Rome, disheveled and passionate. She is of working-class origins and living in fallen conditions. She is a single, unwed mother, and identifies with her community using her colloquial language. She is, in essence, everything that the Fascist regime did not want. Paradoxically, when I later read Carola Prosperi, Pina reminded me of some of her characters, such as Leila in *Beyond the Labyrinth* and Mrs. Costanza in *A Dark Paradise*, and I started to wonder if the portrait of women representing different values than those of the Fascist nation may have started well before the end of Fascism in 1945.

This film, although it may seem like merely an example of cinema in post-Fascist times, is a translation of Italian women into film through the eyes of the director. This type of translation, called an intersemiotic translation, or transmutation, is “an interpretation of verbal

³ *Rome, Open City, The Garden of the Finzi Contini’s, and A Special Day*. TRANS.
signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems.”4 While most people might think of a translation being a transcription from one language to another, it can also be the interpretation of an idea to a different type of media, such as the translation of women of Fascist Italy to a non-propaganda type film. The choice to translate these ideas into a film was made for the exact same reason that I chose to translate a piece of feminist literature from Fascist Italy: it gives a larger audience of people the chance to understand a certain subject that might be foreign to them. By making knowledge available through media such as films, or through translations of text to a more commonly spoken language, there is a translation of cultural values that can, as stated above, help shed light on common misperceptions about certain societies and peoples.

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I. Historical Background

The 1945 film by Roberto Rossellini, Roma Città Aperta, opened my eyes to the Italian reality of the late war period and the fact that Italy did, in fact, suffer a great deal during Fascist times. In High School, we had only ever been taught of Italian Fascism as the “little brother” of the German National Socialism party. Now, when I think about this I can not understand why some teachers would underplay the role of Fascism in history and decide to not offer the younger generation a better perspective about the dictatorship of Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini (1883 – 1945) and his role in leading Italy into the Second World War. Furthermore, if teachers did decide to discus Fascism, they discussed politics and the actions of men, not anything about the role of women. Not only did Mussolini, also known as Il Duce, condone warfare and colonization in other countries, specifically Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia, he also supported the killing of many political figures and supporters, the eradication of free press, and the oppression of women.

Fascism in Italy began as a movement during the early 1900s as an attempt to regain prestige and power that existed during the time of the Roman Empire. After World War I, Italy was economically and politically in shambles. Due to the disastrous effects on the country as a result of World War I, Italy did not have a widespread nationalism or view of a positive future. Because Italy was trying to enter into a post-war economic race with the United States, the collapse of the Lira was devastating to Italy as a nation as well as to the popularity of the government. Clearly, Italy was not in a stable state. The idea of Fascism took hold was able to gain popularity and power easily.

While the rise of Fascism and Mussolini was originally seen as a positive change for
Italian society, it can been seen now that Fascism, while promising change and surplus, did not do anything of the sort. Just on the surface, Fascism banned rival political parties; imprisoned and drove into exile other political leaders; and killed between 2,000-3,000 political opponents. Furthermore, the Fascist party destroyed the free press; liquidated non-Fascist trade; infringed on the law; sponsored a secret police; bribed Italians to spy and report on their friends, neighbors and family; and reinstated patriarchal practices in a largely matriarchal society.\(^5\)

II. Women and Mussolini

Although it can be seen that Mussolini's main threat was from those deemed “enemies of the state”, such as Jews and people of different races, it can also be seen that Mussolini concerned himself with the role of women in Italian society. As stated earlier, one of the goals of Italian Fascism was to reinstate a patriarchal society, which in addition to changing the role of men meant putting restrictions on women, their freedoms of speech and ability to work, as well as restrictions concerning childbirth and motherhood. Due to the elevation of the importance of family, women were faced with the extreme anti-feminist nature of Italian Fascism, which led to severe rules and regulations enacted to control women in every way, shape, and form. To society, a woman was presented first and foremost as a mother, not as someone with equal political and economical opportunity. Fascist propaganda tried to remediate this loss of power by conveying motherhood as a joyful and worthwhile experience, that would overall not only be enriching the life of the mother herself, but also helping the general good of the regime. Furthermore, propaganda of the time insisted that it was a woman's “duty and responsibility” to be a mother, and the only way to do this was putting motherhood as their only goal in life, leaving education and occupation by the wayside. Motherhood was defined as “the physical act of making babies,” and their “rights in the workplace, their contributions to culture, and their service as volunteers were called into question by the official message that their permanent duty was to bear the nation's children.” This idea was also carried out in the demand that women not be elegant, for a woman who dresses in a more humble and ordinary way is viewed as more prolific. While women of today might find it strange that so many women listened to such words, the Fascist

regime made it very worthwhile for women to have children via material gains. There were financial incentives, as well as the creation of child-care centers to help mothers focus on being the bountiful caretaker for the household.

Italian Fascist social propaganda was not the only force behind the idea of women as mothers. The Catholic Church only strengthened Fascist policy by supporting their doctrine with biblical background. Because the Catholic tradition predated the Fascist regime, the Catholic endorsement of the agenda for women only helped coerce women more. Furthermore, the Church's position within Fascist policy was affirmed with the Lateran Pacts in 1929, which reaffirmed the agreement made in the Statute of the Kingdom of Italy in 1848, saying "the Catholic Apostolic Roman Religion is the only religion of the State." This statement granted the Church a considerable amount of freedom, since it held such a privileged position within Italian society. The Church's presence as the only external support system for many families, via welfare networks, made the Church an institution in the daily lives of many families, which helped in the broadcasting of its views.

One of the Fascist's goals in Italy was to create a pure race, and to do so, they created something of a demographic campaign starting in 1922, developing further in the 1930s. Mussolini, in his Ascension Day speech on May 26, 1927, set a target population for the country of 60 million by 1950°, and thus a number of rules and stipulations were put in place to make sure that the goal was reached. The first part of the demographic plan was to stress the importance of marriage. The Fascist party believed that, by promoting the importance of family and marriage, the birth rate was going to increase. Mussolini's government decided to make

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marriage more appealing by placing a series of incentives on the population, both negative and positive. First, Mussolini placed a two-part tax on single, unmarried men between the ages of 25 and 65. The first part of this was a yearly tax based on age, and the second was a tax of 25% percent of their total yearly income, with few exceptions. Furthermore, the law of June, 1929 gave men with children public employment at the central and local level, as well as the opportunity for cheap subsidized housing. Also, the Italian government followed suit with Nazi Germany's idea of marriage loans. The general idea was that the loans were only available to couples under the age of 26, and would not require repayment until six months after marriage, or an extra 18 months if the wife was pregnant. What's more, if the wife continued to have children, the debt was cancelled completely.

Not only was there incentive to marry, there were also numerous incentives to produce more children and create a large family. The definition of “large family” varied based on profession: while state employees had to have a family of seven or more dependent children to be considered large, most families had to consist of 10 or more dependent children, or 12 born children with six still dependent upon the family. For large families there were tax exemptions and material assistance from the local government. School taxes were waived, and a family allowance was allocated to certain state employees with large families in 1929.

10 Ibid., 117
11 Ibid., 119
12 Ibid., 118
13 Ibid., 119

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III. The Role of Women Writers

At the time of selecting my topic of my Honor Thesis, I realized that I always understood due to films and literature I had seen and read, that women during Mussolini’s dictatorship were oppressed, but I wanted to understand how and why. By reading Robin Pickering-Iazzi, *Unspeakable Women: Selected Short Stories Written by Italian Women During Fascism*, I started to realize how the complexities and ambiguities of Mussolini's politics towards women were represented in women writers' short stories. While their role may have been undervalued, women writers played an important role within Fascism, and often their stories are striking, passionate, and worthy of study. The short stores written on the Third Page (Terza Pagina) of the *Corriere della Sera* by Maria Luisa Astaldi, Grazia Deledda, Ada Negri, Amalia Guglielminetti, Pia Rimini, and Marinella Lodi, help us understand the connections between regime policy and the attitudes and actions of female citizens in Italy. As Yarkin writes,

> Women's short stories gave voice to the issues common to female experience in modern Italy under the rule of Mussolini's regime. Because women's critical short stories appeared frequently on the cultural pages of Italy's newspapers and enjoyed popularity there, the themes and issues around which the stories revolve offer us valuable insight into the ways that women questioned and opposed the regime.

However, the Fascist regime was not just concerned with oppressing women via the law. It also tried to establish a national organization dedicated to the health and well-being of mothers and children in Italy. The *Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia* (National Agency for Maternity and Childhood, ONMI) was established in 1925 in order to help control and restore morality in mothers. It focused on the family and children as the basic unit of society, and in turn the nation, as well as functioning as a type of supervision of children of families using the welfare

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14 Genna Yarkin, “Her and Yet Not Her” Women Authors Questioning Mussolini's Fascist Regime on the 'Terza Pagina' of Italy's Newspapers, 1925-1936 (Bryn Mawr, 2011) 2.
15 Ibid., 3
institution. Because there was an ever increasing trend to have multiple pregnancies due to high rates of infant mortality and death in childbirth, ONMI also served as a body that helped improve the conditions of the women of Italy, with both their physical and moral health.\(^\text{16}\)

While it might seem that the ideas and propaganda on how families should be run were coming directly from the government and the Church, the family organization and dynamic was traditionally controlled by the mother of the household. Not every woman during Fascist times sat back and watch the new ideas unfold. Marcia Landy states that “every aspect of a woman's every day life – her growing up, role in the family, child rearing, use of leisure time, work, forms of organizing, role in the war effort, and later role in resisting Fascism – presents a checkered story of involvement in, and even in conflict with, the regime, not a seamless and unified picture.”\(^\text{17}\) While the greater public and those in power might have wanted the people of the time, as well as people now, to think that all Italian women were complacent and accepting of the regime's thoughts about the role of women, it is simply not true, and that is precisely why Mussolini realized that the only way to implement his policies was by trying, in every way, to influence the woman in the family.

It could be seen that the head of the Fascist Regime, Benito Mussolini, had only one, unwavering stance regarding women. However, history proves that his opinion was impressionable and ambiguous. As seen above, the messages coming from popular culture were already ambiguous, and only became more ambiguous when Mussolini made it illegal in 1923 for women to be “heads of middle schools...teach history, philosophy or economics in the grammar schools (licei) or technical institutes [and they were excluded from a] variety of courses

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\(^{16}\) Caldwell, 129

\(^{17}\) Landy, 11
of specialization, not only in teaching.”18 Because wages were so low to begin with, men avoided these jobs, leaving them to women. However, what Mussolini did not recognize right away was that this law would require women to move away to teach in locations that were less populated and less likely to have teachers already. The migration to more rural areas provided women the exact opportunity that Mussolini did not want: they could become independent, both emotionally and financially; move away from the control of their patriarchal families; and be relieved of the pressure to bear children.

In Maria Luisa Astaldi’s story, Fog, women's education is showcased in a negative light, just as Mussolini had intended. In the story, Miss Lucia is a young tutor for a family near Milan and is not yet married. Everyone around her constantly reminded her that she needed to marry to become a respectable woman, yet she still refused. After a long winter, she did not return to tutor, and the family goes to search for her, only to find that she was hit by a truck during a bout of thick fog. When they inquired as to how she had died, the warehouseman of the town said that she had invited many people to her house to inform them that she was leaving to get married in Milan. When she left in her white wedding dress, the truck was unable to see her in the thick fog and struck her. To explain it more clearly, the warehouseman says “it was, like they say, something you'd read in a novel. We found piles of books in her house. She read so much she ruined her brain. Because women aren't like us. Books are bad for them.”19 This quote showcases the general sentiment toward women of the time: they were not to be educated, because they were too fragile to handle what books could tell them. This directly relates to what Mussolini wanted to prevent by forbidding women to teach certain subjects in schools. By preventing them

18 Caldwell, 125-6

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from teaching complex subjects, he would also prevent them from studying them on their own, and thus protecting their delicate minds from insanity.

In Victoria De Grazia's book, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945*, she examines Mussolini and his regime's stance toward women, stating that “the Duce's regime fell back on the traditional authority of family and religion to enforce biologically determined roles as mothers and caretakers...[his] laws relegating women to the home, and their public cult of motherhood in the name of building national-state power were similar enough to justify speaking of a common fascist politics toward women.”20 While it might seem clear from this quote that Mussolini was staunchly trying to relegate women to do his bidding, and “returning women to home and hearth, restoring patriarchal authority, and confining female destiny to bearing babies,” she also realizes just how ambiguous Mussolini's opinions were as a result of other laws and comments made regarding women.21 While it is clear that the idea to demote and demoralize women was in the forefront, it was also clear that a certain part of the Fascist dictatorship wanted to “celebrate the *Nuova Italiana,*” or the New Italian Woman. She continues, saying,

(...)

By trying to deny women their civil rights and opportunities, yet trying to give them any comfort

20 De Grazia, xi
21 Ibid., 1
22 Ibid., 2
and support to help the growth of the nation and Fascist doctrine, was a contradictory stance. Further, by re-writing the social scripts on the roles of men and women, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, Mussolini gave more power to women than he intended. He gave women the opportunity to be the head of the family, since they were the ones producing and raising the sons and daughters of the Fascist empire. They were the new faces of the Fascist regime, and could chose to do as they pleased, regardless of what Mussolini desired.

Initially, Mussolini had hoped that, although he was re-establishing the patriarchal society, women would be the main force for establishing fascist morals within the family, since they were the ones who were always at home with their children and rearing as members of the Fascist party. However, he did not realize that some of the laws and institutions he put in place would allow women to develop their own opinions and create intellectual resistance to the regime. Thinking that women were a passive and invisible force in his favor, Mussolini did not expect to aid the development of some of the most active anti-Fascist activists during his rule. By offering this historical background, it will be easier to understand Carola Prosperi’s ideas and intentions in her writing, as well as the legacy she now leaves behind, and what we can learn from it as modern readers.
IV. Carola Prosperi

Carola Prosperi (1883 - 1981), the author whose work I selected to translate, was a writer from Turin, in the north of Italy. She held a degree in Elementary Education, and taught at the Niccolò Tommaseo school in Turin. After teaching, she wrote for newspapers and magazines such as *La Donna* and *La Stampa* in Turin. She started writing fables and children's stories in the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, such as *L'ochina nera*, *Coda di topo*, and *Reucci e fatine al chiaro di luna*23. After her initial success, she continued to write novels such as *La profezia*, *La paura di amare*, and *La felicità in gabbia*24. Her first notable success came with the novel, *La paura di amare*, for which she won the Rovetta literary prize. Before the end of her life in 1981 at age 98, she had authored more than 35 novels.

Prosperi was a very prolific writer for her time, which would lead one to believe that she would be equally as well known in Italy as in other countries today. However, when looking into previous translations of her work, I found that only four of her books and short stories had been translated into English.25 Furthermore, there are only very few critical articles regarding her works of literature, and many were written in the 1990s, as seen in the compilation of essays on Prosperi titled *Carola Prosperi, Una Scrittrice Non “Femminista”*. While doing my research, it appeared that there were no critical essays written about her work, or even about her life in general, during the Fascist period. Also, aside from the previously mentioned book, it was difficult to find any other type of critical references on Prosperi. It seemed odd that there could be such little information on such an active and prolific writer, either in Italian or in English. She was a steadfast, although not consciously feminist, writer in a time of female oppression, writing

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23 *The Black Goose, The Mouse Tail, and Reucci and the Fairies in the Moonlight* TRANS.  
24 *The Prophecy, The Fear of Loving, and Caged Happiness*. TRANS.  
about topics that were illegal or highly frowned upon by both the regime and the Catholic Church, yet she continued to try to have her voice heard by the public regardless.

Carola Prosperi continued to publish for *La Stampa* throughout her life. It is clear, however, that, while she was an active woman writer, due to her prevalence in the newspapers of Turin, she was also “invisible” in a certain sense. While her pieces were published regularly, there is the question of just how much people were actually reading them, and even more, how they 'translated' the message contained in some of these stories. Because women in Italy have been viewed as the lesser gender for years, the people reading these stories might have thought her opinion was worthless or invalid, or simply labeled her stories as 'romance'. Because she was a woman writer, the ideas that she broadcast to the world, no matter how taboo or anti-Fascist, were overlooked and viewed as pointless banter. While this may seem like something negative, it is this oversight that allowed Prosperi to continue writing and have her ideas become cemented in history for the readers of today to interpret and engage.

Because the Catholic Church was such a central force in Italian culture, it dictated all ways of life, including appropriate topics of discussion and discourse. Even before laws were enacted under Mussolini making activities such as abortion illegal, the Catholic Church had made their opinion on the matter clear, stating that abortion was against the will of God and the Holy Scripture. Also, topics such as sex before marriage, prostitution, and spousal abuse had been judged as immoral by the Church well before the government had given their official opinion on the matters. Because of this, Carola Prosperi was, in theory, restricted when it came to topics that she could respectfully write about within the public eye. However, this did not stop Prosperi from writing numerous short stories and novels revolving around the difficult topics.
What it did affect, however, was the amount of attention she received. As we will see later, Prosperi, although she was a prolific, popular, and very active writer during Italy's Fascist era, was not recognized and seriously valued by literary critics during her time. Because of her choices to write about topics that were not considered “moral” by the Church, and thus the country in general, and by not complying with the 'fantasy' representation of women as devoted mothers and wives, which was the only representation Mussolini accepted, she was overlooked and disregarded by literary critics. Other writers, such as Grazia Deledda, who won the Nobel Prize in 1926\(^\text{26}\), and Ada Negri, who won the Premio Mussolini in 1931\(^\text{27}\), were recognized and praised by the Fascist government for their writing. Even though they have been grouped into the same category of “women writers of Fascism”, they clearly were more visible than Prosperi, in part due to their writing style and choice of topics for their work. Even in their case, it is evident that the regime chose to disregard some of the most interesting and potentially subversive stories of these writers. In fact, from the beginning of her career, Deledda found herself to be concerned with women's issues, and “she believed in divorce and women's suffrage, and she abhorred forced marriages.”\(^\text{28}\) Clearly, these beliefs and ideals did not follow the Fascist “New Woman” fantasy, yet she was still rewarded for her writing that remained neutral.

I offer a few examples of how Carola Prosperi’s short stories can be interpreted as originally “subversive” towards the laws and the policies implemented by Mussolini. In *Beyond the Labyrinth*, translated and published by Robin Pickering-Iazzi, we can see how the protagonist chooses to rebel against the idea of marriage and motherhood as the only possible true “realization” of a woman's destiny. In this story, a young professional woman, Leila, who has

\(^{26}\) “Grazia Deledda” [Cronologia](http://cronologia.leonardo.it/storia/biografie/deledda.htm) 5 Mar. 2013.


\(^{28}\) Yarkin, 23
been engaged for three years, is pushed by her shallow fiance, Adriano, to ask her parents to do their duty and give her the money she deserves so that the couple can finally get married. Leila, who has a steady job at the local cotton mill, a diploma in bookkeeping, and lives in a rented room in the town, attempts to ask her parents for money, yet fails to do so. She suddenly realizes that she is happy on her own, without a man or husband, particularly one who tries to blackmail her into doing things against her will and who is trying to shame her into doing so, saying “if they don't want to give you anything, threaten them with the possibility that our engagement might be called off. After all, they ought to think about how lucky it is that along the way you happened to meet a person like me...”29 She discovers that being single actually led her “beyond the labyrinth”. She enjoys being independent, earning her own money and choosing where to spend it, whether it is on herself or caring for her aging parents. This story, written in 1929, highlights the then modern idea that women did not need to be marry to be happy or successful, which is directly against Mussolini's demographic campaign. Having seen how her parents fell in love foolishly, which resulted in the “fickle young man” (her father) falling in love with another woman, Leila decides her and Adriano's “points of view are too different for us to continue to stay together” and calls off the engagement.30 This modern take on marriage is something striking for its time. Most people viewed marriage as a social necessity and political requirement, and Mussolini's laws made it seem that way as well. However, in this case we see someone who takes happiness and love into account over the necessity of marriage. Further, we see that, because women were able to be employed and live independently, they were experiencing less and less the need to have a husband by their side, which is completely against the Fascist

30 Ibid., 51
To help further the creation of large families in Italy in a time of declining birth rates, the Fascist regime decided to do away with contraception and abortion. In 1931, the Penal Code was edited to incorporate a section titled *Delitti contro l'integrità e la sanità della stirpe* (Crimes against the wholeness and health of the race). In Article 553, titled “Incitement to Practice Against Procreation”, states that whoever promotes or advertises anything against procreation (i.e. contraceptives) shall be sentenced to prison for up to one year, as well as given a fine of up to 4,000 lire.31 Furthermore, Articles 545, 551, and 555, made abortion a criminal offense, punishable by two to five years in prison both for the woman receiving the abortion and the person performing it.32 However, these sanctions did not stop abortions. Even though the statistics regarding abortion include information on miscarriages, *Maternità ed Infanzia*, a journal published by ONMI in 1942, stated that there were even higher frequencies of abortions, up to 20%, in comparison to other types of measures like contraception.33 While the banning of contraceptives and abortion was put into place to directly influence the falling birth rate, it was also denying women the legal right to make their own choices about their well-being and their body. Since all kinds of family planning and medical services for women had been opposed by the government, women were forced to either treat themselves, or seek out a secretive clinic. In 1936, a study showed that out of 50 women who had abortions, only 10 of them did not suffer permanent damage to their reproductive organs.34

The problem of unwanted maternity and abortion is reflected in one of Prosperi's most

32 Caldwell, 121
33 Ibid., 121
34 Ibid., 121
striking stories, and one that I chose to translate for my project: *Fatherhood*. It is worth noticing how, even in the title, Prosperi is making of sort of anti-regime statement. While Mussolini is pushing the idea of a nation founded on the importance of “motherhood”, her story is called “fatherhood” and is actually the story of an unwanted and failed pregnancy. In this story, we see a young man who receives a parcel containing the remains of his aborted child. While this is already a disturbing image for anyone, either in the past or today, what is interesting about this story is the reaction of Paolo Gavini, the main character and father of the child. Obviously, he is shaken, just as anyone would be, but his main concern is what people around him will think if they discover the parcel in his jacket pocket. The story examines shame. The issue of shame does not arise from his lover's abortion, the shame arises more from his being involved in the act of disposal of the fetus. In fact, towards the end of the story, the young man starts believing in a delirium that he was the one who killed the child in the end, not the abortion. This “epiphany” is not that far from the truth, since it was his inadequacy in coming through as a “father” that led the woman to have an abortion. Similar to the character Adriano, that we met in the story *Beyond the Labyrinth*, Paolo is also a very shallow, cowardly, and selfish man, different from the “fantasy” of virility that Mussolini was trying to promote as the national image of the Italian man. This story also helps us understand that, even with Mussolini's attempts to force the growth of the Italian population, people viewed abortion and parenthood as more of a dramatic and personal social issue, instead of a governmental one.

In her book, *Felicità in gabbia*, written in 1922, Prosperi addresses extremely taboo topics for a Fascist era such as abortion and domestic abuse, topics which were ignored by the Fascist government. By exposing her opinions behind these subjects, Prosperi was able to give a
voice to women who were being silenced by an oppressive government, and show the world that women were not submitting to the Fascist regime.

While she did not consider herself a feminist writer, many of Prosperi's books discussed topics such as loveless marriages, female unhappiness, abortions, and domestic abuse. Her view of these topics, particularly feminine power and control and women's ability to make decision regarding their future selves, would, in today's terms, make her a staunch feminist. This can be seen clearly in some of her short stories. In *Fatherhood*, for example, the woman is in complete control of the relationship, even deciding whether or not to abort a child.

Prosperi's novels and short stories investigate the power struggle between women and men, with some reflecting upon the innate strength of women, and others speaking to the animalistic power that men held over their wives, as in *The Dark Passion*. In the next two stories I chose to translate, *A Lack of Seriousness* and *The Dark Passion*, Prosperi speaks more about the dangers of women being weak and correctly following the Fascist ideal of passivity and dependance upon men.

The debate of power and women versus men is prevalent in the stories I translated below. Earlier, we saw that Pina from *Roma Città Aperta* was my vision of the strong, Italian woman, but in Prosperi's stories, that image is questioned. In the first story, *Fatherhood*, the strength of Irma is never debated. She is an independent woman, who can decide to exact her revenge against Paolo by aborting their child and giving him the unborn fetus. She makes her own money, by whatever means that may be, and is viewed as a separate entity, not just an accessory to a man. The next two stories, *A Lack of Seriousness* and *The Dark Passion*, Prosperi speaks more to the dangers of women being weak and following the Fascist ideal that women be passive
and dependent upon men. In *A Lack of Seriousness*, Augusta, who was once lively and happy, is beat down by her husband and his family to become one of them, quiet and complacent. Because she did not stand up for her self and become an independent woman, she let herself be taken over by negativity and abuse, which drives her to become insane at the end of the story when she looses her child. In *The Dark Passion*, Elena is rescued from an abusive relationship by her mother, a widow who has had all three of her daughters abandon her, leaving her with a young grandchild. However, after spending time at home with her mother, Elena decides to return to her monster of a husband because, as a woman, it is her duty. In both of these stories, Prosperi is speaking to the age old tradition in Italy of a woman being nothing without a man. Even if the husband, or the husband's family, is physically and mentally abusive, the woman must change to appease him, as it is her job as a woman to make her husband happy and carry his children, no matter what the circumstance. It is only in the last story that we see a reaction that calls out as a warning to women in Italy at the time. Mrs. Costanza, Elena's mother, at the end insults Elena by calling her a *femmina*, or female, which may not seem like an insult to us today, but what she is really referencing is the dependency that Elena has developed and the need that she feels to forgoes her own happiness and well-being for that of her husband, as well as the instinctual part of Elena that returns to dependency. In all, these stories convey a certain message of what Prosperi viewed a strong Italian woman to be: an independent and confident woman who was able to make their own decisions regarding their own lives and prosperity, regardless of their profession or marital status.

From the descriptions of the three stories, this was a complex translation experience due to the subject matter. Prosperi's writing style is very direct and descriptive, writing in sometimes
Decadent style, especially when it comes to descriptions of physical features and personality traits. While the topics might be morally complex, Prosperi writes in a very clear and precise way, leaving out extraneous details and opinions. Prosperi lets you read her story and then contemplate her point of view, which is only subtly apparent in the stories themselves.

Furthermore, the stories leave you thinking about what you would have done in the position of the protagonist, especially in *Fatherhood* and *The Dark Passion*. By narrating as an omniscient narrator, we are able to understand exactly what the protagonist is thinking, and experience it through the eyes of the narrator just as he or she is experiencing it, letting us get the full intimacy of the story and relate it to our own lives. That said, Prosperi also writes in such a style that can be applied to any time period, regardless of the small details such as personal belongings or stylistic changes. Her topics are universal and always prevalent in society, which lends to a universal feeling to the story, transcending time and cultures.

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35 Note: The Italian Decadent style, or *Decadentismo*, was a literary movement that began in France in the 1880s. Though viewed as a degeneration of Romanticism, an early movement, it became very popular in Italy, especially with writers such as Grazia Deledda. Its stylistic characteristics include musicality, free verse, synesthesia, and in-depth descriptions. The topics that are usually addressed are neurosis, illness, depression, death, morbid sensuality, and the femme fatal. (“Decadentismo” *Encyclopedia of Italian Literary Studies*, (New York: Routledge 2007) 579)
V. Translation Theories

Because of the seminar I took on translation in my sophomore year, it was impossible for me to translate Prosperi's stories without thinking about what specific translation theories I was using or referencing. I also began thinking about how I would go about changing the American perspective of the Italian woman through this translation. Would I be able to convince English speaking populations through Prosperi's stories that Italian women weren't exactly what Mussolini wanted us all to believe? Would I be able to avoid adding my own personal opinion regarding topics that I am very passionate about? Upon finishing my translation, I was able to delve deeper into my own personal theory, and discover where my influences had come from.

Throughout history, there have been many different theories and concepts concerning translation and the translation process. In the mid-19th century, Madame de Staël was an advocate for translation in a time that translation was “increasingly denigrated as a derivative and non-productive activity.” For de Staël, “a well-made translation can procure “familiar and intimate pleasure,” and can “more efficiently than any other means, keep a literature from falling into the banality which is a sure sign of decadence.”

During my translation efforts, I focused on creating my own method and how it relating it to the theories of translation that I had studied in my seminar on Translation. I originally began translating the piece by following Carlo Izzo's idea of the “humble translator”, a translator that has “an attitude of humility and discretion towards the original text. The translator, in order to leave room for the author of the foreign text, must disappear and become invisible.” However, I quickly found out that writing such a direct translation that I had originally planned to write was...

36 Simon, 63
37 Madame De Staël, Oeuvres complètes de Madame la Baronne de Staël-Holstein (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1844) 294
impossible. I had to be a somewhat visible translator in order for the translation to flow and read well in English, and to convey the subtlety of the message.

I focused on two prominent translators: Lawrence Venuti (1953 - ) and Alexander Fraser Tytler (1747 - 1813). Although both of these men wrote in very different times, hundreds of years apart from each other, I believe that their critiques and comments on the theories of translation are still valid to translation practices today. Lawrence Venuti is known for his idea of keeping the translator visible, as to help keep the culture of the original work in tact. While I might not believe in the idea of being visible as a translator, as I made a point to be as invisible as possible during my translation, I do agree with Venuti's reasoning, which is to prevent the domestication of the text. The domestication of the text would ignore the original host culture and replace it with “domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political.”

To avoid this, I made sure to ignore any political or social agendas that exist in the United States or in Italy today. Because I was dealing with such taboo topics, such as abortion and domestic abuse, both of which are political, cultural, and social issues in this day and age, it was very important to let the text speak for itself, and remain invisible as a translator when it came to my own opinions or the opinions of my government regarding these subjects.

However, it was important to ensure that the political sentiments of the time were clear in these stories, since these repressive laws and ideas were the impetus behind the stories of Carola Prosperi. For example, in the story Fatherhood, it was important to really emphasize Paolo's feelings about the aborted fetus that he was now in possession of. He felt uneasy, as if he was breaking the law. He was constantly preoccupied with what the people around him would think if

they knew what he had in his jacket pocket and what his past was with this woman of the night. While these might also be the feelings and thoughts of a man in the same situation today, it is clear that the general population viewed abortion as an intensely negative and dirty act, which is important to understand when reading this story from today's perspective.

During the translation process I also used Alexander Fraser Tytler's “Three General Laws or Rules” as a guideline. The three rules, “the translation should give a complete transcript of the ideas of the original work; the style and manner of writing should be of the same character with that of the original; and the translation should have all the ease of the original composition” 40 outline the three principles I tried to follow while translating. Firstly, I did not change the ideas or original sense of the story at all during the translation. Also, I did not change the writing style of Carola Prosperi in the translation. While it was difficult, which will be further explained below, and few changes were made, her general descriptive style as well as her voice as a writer was not changed in the English translation. Lastly, with my edits and minimal additions, allowed the “ease of the original composition” to be maintained, leading to a fluid and readable translation.

Another translator I looked into while working was Étienne Dolet (1509 – 1546) and his Five Principles:

1. The translator must perfectly understand the sense and material of the original author, although he should feel free to clarify obscurities
2. The translator should have a perfect knowledge of both SL and TL, so as not to lessen the majesty of the language.
3. The translator should avoid word-for-word renderings
4. The translator should avoid Latinate and unusual forms
5. The translator should assemble and liaise words eloquently to avoid clumsiness 41

While Dolet makes strong points, and I did follow the spirit of his principles, such as avoiding

41 Étienne Dolet, La Manière de Bien Traduire d'une Langue en Aultrc 1540, 27, qtd. in Jeremy Munday, Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications (New York: Routledge, 2008)
word-for word rendering and attempting to avoid clumsiness, I must disagree with some of his assertions. His first principle, the idea that the translator must “perfectly understand” the subject matter at hand, is more appropriate for technical or scientific translation. I believe there is no way that the people of today, including myself in the role of translator, can fully understand exactly the sentiments of the time period, the zeitgeist, and exactly how the author in question wanted their piece to be understood. We can only intelligently assume what the author intended their audience to understand, just as we can only guess the sentiment of the people she was addressing in regard to the subject matter. I believe that, while the translator must have a general knowledge of the time period and subject matter at hand, it is unnecessary for the translator to “perfectly understand the sense and material of the original author.”

Another point I would tend to disagree with is his requirement for “perfect knowledge”. While it is absolutely imperative to have fluent knowledge of both the original language and the language of the translation, it is not required to preserve the “majesty of the language.” As explained in the next section, some certain phrases, words, and concepts cannot translate “perfectly” into English from Italian. Further, when eventually translated, the words that result in English may not have the same emphasis or “majesty” that they once did in Italian. That does not mean that the translation suddenly becomes a poor one, or that it should be disregarded. It simply means that the English language does not possess the flexibility or vocabulary to describe what the Italian language accomplishes better.

I would like to discuss the idea of humble translations. I tried in my translation to be as humble as possible, so as to avoid any conflicting ideas that could harm the original meaning of Prosperi’s stories. However, I will affirm that it is a challenge to remain humble when trying to make a coherent and fluid translation. As discussed below, it is necessary to make slight changes, whether it be vocabulary or grammar, to the translation in order to ensure it's readability in the end. While this could effect the emphasis on certain words or ideas, I did not intentionally change anything regarding content. In this sense, I remained humble during the translation,
letting Carola Prosperi's voice be heard through her stories.

The question of how to translate a woman's writing versus that of a man might seem like an odd thing to consider for someone who has never studied translation before. However, it is something that I needed to acknowledge while translating Carola Prosperi. As we can see from Marguerite Duras' quote regarding women and translation mentioned in the Introduction, Duras recognizes the fact that women have been sheltered from experiences that people tend to like to read about, even things as simple as experiences that men have every day. She also, in this sense, is saying that female literature is something unprecedented, and something that cannot be related to anything that has happened in the past. However, what do you do when you're translating a woman writer who is writing from the point of view of a man? Clearly she is writing from “darkness”, as Duras would say, but is what she's saying incredulous, or can it be seen as revolutionary?

This is the problem I encountered while translating *Fatherhood* and *A Lack of Seriousness*. Prosperi was able to convey her feminist ideals through the figure of a man, whether it was directly through him or through a story that the protagonist was telling. By doing this, it might have been a way to make her stories more appealing to the population at the time. As we have learned above, women writers were not viewed as relevant or important to the general public, and were usually disregarded and overlooked. However, if it appeared that a man was talking in the story, it could be possible that more people would read it and consider it to be something written by the hands of a man, instead of a woman. While I am not certain that this is why Prosperi was writing from the prospective of a man, it is an interesting idea to consider. However, when it comes to translating this type of a story, would you ignore the woman behind the man, or would you give her a voice? In this case, I decided to become an invisible translator,
and let the voice that was intended to be there shine through, whether it was a completely masculine voice, as can be seen in *A Lack of Seriousness* when Claudio is talking about how to raise children, or a somewhat feminine voice, as when Paolo is talking about how he feels that he killed his son in *Fatherhood*.

Another interesting idea appeared when I was translating the last story, *The Dark Passion*. When reading about Fascist doctrine, it became apparent that a woman's purpose was to be complacent and please the husband, at any cost. However, when translating the section in which the mother, Mrs. Costanza, was speaking to her daughter Elena in the end, it was, in a sense, a very masculine voice, or at least a very contemporary feminine one. By calling her daughter a “woman” and meaning it to be an insult, it immediately registered as a male voice in my mind. Today, women do not insult each other by calling them women. You would only ever hear that insult from a woman to a man, a man to a woman, or a man to a man, but never a woman to a woman. Because of this, it occurred to me that maybe Carola Prosperi was trying to be ambiguous, and trying to keep her gender out of the central theme of her stories. While her opinions might have been integral in the stories, there are points of view from both genders. This makes the stories universal, not just in terms of the subject matter, but also in the voices behind the stories, as there is rarely a clear male or female role.
VI. Problems with Translation

Although I tried to remain an invisible translator throughout this work, some problems emerged during the translation process that prohibited me from being invisible. While I strived not to change the sense-for-sense aspect of the translation, many of the problems led to the inevitable change of the word-for-word aspect. The first issue I came across was the use of colloquialisms. Prosperi refrained from writing in a formal style, which led to many colloquial phrases and addition of colloquial words. For example, in the first story, *Fatherhood*, we can see that there were certain phrases, such as “al diavolo tutto ciò che...” Translated directly, it means “to the devil everything that...” While this is not technically incorrect to say in English, it comes off as an awkward phrase, and something that is not heard much in day to day conversations, or even in literature. Thus, I translated it to something of similar meaning, using the word “damn” instead of “to the devil.”

The Italian language uses many colloquial phrases that do not translate easily to the English language. One example of this is the phrase *mano a mano*. Literally translated, this phrase means *hand to hand*, which does not make sense in the context in which it is written. However, when translated sense-for-sense, the phrase means *step by step*, or slowly. In the same story, Prosperi makes reference to the main character taking off his *paletot*. At first, the word confused me, since I had never seen this word in any piece of Italian literature in the past. However, I then realized, at the time of this story, French was still viewed as a language of the aristocracy. Because the man in the story appeared to be of a higher class, I translated the word from French, only to discover that it meant *jacket*, and perhaps in doing so I missed some of the notion of using an elite word, as Prosperi intended.
Regarding Tytler's “Three General Laws or Rules”, I found myself focusing the most on these ideas while translating a rant by Claudio in *A Lack of Seriousness*. Because Claudio is nervous about the arrival of the baby and still somewhat disappointed with his wife, Augusta, and trying to calm himself by airing his grievances regarding the youth of the day, the flow of the rant is somewhat choppy and broken up. I followed Tytlers' idea of the translation having “all the ease of the original composition” and “the ideas of the original work” by translating it in the following way:

...un maschio o una femmina... in fondo mi è indifferente. Questo non importa niente, quello che importa è l'educazione, capitan. E l'educazione bisogna incominciara presto... quasi, si può dire, dai primi giorni di vita del bambino. Il bambino si accorge subito se può dominare o se sarà dominato, sente subito la forza della mano che lo deve guidare. Ah, vi assicuro che noi avremo la mano solida, capitan! Non dico di mia moglie che, poveretta... si è diversa da noi, è stata allevata in un altro ambiente... per quando ora si sia uniformata... si, insomma, ma è un po' diversa. Del resto, non sarà lei destinata a dirigere questa educazione : sarà io. E vi assicuro che mio figlio non diventerà uno di questi giovanetti, che a sedici anni han già la chiave del portone e possono andare al Caffè concerto o giocare e che mia figlia non diventerà simile a queste ragazze che girano per la strada con le sottane strette e I tacchi alti, invece di stare a casa a far la calza...

...a boy or a girl... really it doesn't make much of a difference to me. This doesn't mean anything, that which matters is education, Captain. And you need to start education early... almost, you could say, from the first days of life of the child. The child understand immediately if it will dominate or be dominated, it feels the strength of the hand that will guide it. Ah, I promise you that it will have a solid hand, Captain! I'm not saying that it will be my wife, poor thing... she's different from us, she grew up in a different environment... but now she has grown accustomed... yes, well, she's a bit different. She won't be the one destined to give out child their education: it will be me. And I promise you that my son won't be one of these young people, that at 16 years old he will already have the house key and go to the concerts at the Caffè or to go play, and that my daughter won't be like those girls that go walking down the streets with tights skirts and high heels, instead of being at home with her knitting...

As can be seen in the original version, Claudio is using this speech as a way to convince himself that having a child was the right thing to do. Also, it appears that he is trying to justify how horrible he and his family have been to his wife. They completely changed who she was as a

42 Tytler, 27

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person, and yet they are still not satisfied with the person she has become. Because of these hidden meanings and feelings that come through in this rant, it was very important to keep the flow and character that was present in the original prose.

Another problematic area that was continual throughout the entire piece was the use of punctuation. While the Italian language can afford to have numerous run-on sentences and still make sense, the English language does not offer the same luxury. In many cases, such as descriptions of characters or places, sentences would take up entire paragraphs, and have no clear break. In these cases, I sometimes tried to add more semi-colons, or find a convenient place to start a new sentence. When starting a new sentence, however, I found that I had to add a few words to help the descriptions flow smoothly from one sentence to another. Yet another issue that was prevalent involved the clarification of person. In the Italian language, personal pronouns are used much more frequently. At the same time, however, personal pronouns for he and she can sometimes lead to ambiguity in the piece of literature, especially when it is being translated into a language such as English that uses names more than personal pronouns. To remedy this, I replaced the pronouns lei and lui with the names of the specific character, in order to help the reader understand exactly who was talking or being talked about.

Though I might disagree with the strictness some of Dolet's points in his Five Principles, the one I agree with the most is the idea of avoiding “word-for-word renderings.” While I did strive to be an invisible translator and avoid changing the majority of the text, there are some passages in which it was impossible to leave the translation as it had been word-for-word. Such a passage is as follows:

Ebbe una mala parola, una parola atroce, un impeto di sdegno e di rabbia che

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43 Dolet, 27
suffocò in parte la paura che lo paralizzava e gli diede la forza di chinarsi a raccattare, chiudendo gli occhi, la piccola orribile cosa, di chiuderla nel vecchi giornale – e al molle contatto si sentiva trafigger la nuca da mille dolori – poi in altre carte, di legare il pacco col grosso spago e di stringerlo forte. Il senso del pericolo, di quella sciacquatata responsabilità che gli bisognava accettare, lo spinse ad agire, rapido e preciso. Buttarlo in casa no, era troppo pericoloso. C'era da ringraziare Dio che non se ne fossero accorti. Riportarglielo a lei? Non sarebbe stato mal pensato, ma chissà che grida che insulti, che scene! Meglio era sbarazzarsene per la strada, nella notte, come fa una qualunque ragazza sedotta che non ha amici che l'aiutino e deve aiutarsi da se sola.

He mumbled a bad word, an atrocious word, a fit of rage and anger that suffocated in part the fear that paralyzed him and gave him the strength to bend down to collect that small, horrible thing, to put it back in the old newspaper – and at the soft contact the back of his neck was pierced with pain – then he covered it with another piece of paper, and tied the package tightly with the thick twine. The feel of danger, of that wretched responsibility that he needed to accept, pushed him to act quickly and precisely. He couldn't throw it away at home, it was too dangerous. He had to thank God that no one had noticed it earlier. Could he bring it back to her? It wasn't a bad idea, but who knows about the should, the insults, the scene she would cause. It would be better to get rid of it on the street, during the night, just like any of the seduced girls would do if they had no friends to help them and they had to help themselves.

As can be seen in the Italian passage, many of the words fall out of order in the English sense.

Also, some phrases, such as “c'era da ringraziare Dio che non se ne fossero accorti” would not make sense directly translated directly word-for-word. I changed the sentence structure in order for it to make sense in the English translation. Furthermore, I changed some of the vocabulary that would have not made any sense in English. While the words that I used still hold the same significance and meaning, as to not change the original meaning of Prosperi's story, some words just fit better in English than the word-for-word translation, as seen in the sentence “…col grosso spago”, translated to “with the thick twine” instead of the “fat twine.”

The last sort of problem I ran into was an issue of repetition and order. While in most cases it is accepted to use repetition in spoken dialogue, Prosperi used repetition frequently in her descriptions. One example occurs when she repeats the word adagio to emphasize just how slow the character was moving. While it might sound correct in an Italian text, translating adagio
adagio directly to slowly slowly does not sound correct in an English translation. To fix this problem, I only translated one of the repeated words, deleting the other. While the emphasis was not as clear as it had been in the original Italian, I chose to avoid awkwardness in the translation instead of keeping the emphasis. There are many examples of Prosperi writing in a confusing and convoluted order. For example, when she writes “adagio, bisognava andare” it translates to “slowly, he needed to go.” While Prosperi is clearly placing the word adagio before the action to add emphasis, this does not translate well to English, and loses its emphasis in the translation. To remedy this problem, I changed the word order to make it a more coherent sentence in English, saying “he needed to go slowly.” While one could argue again that the emphasis is lost in the translation, I will argue that the more important thing in a translation is the readability and the fluidity, not the emphasis of certain words.

The last problem I encountered was very specific. In The Dark Passion, I have already addressed the word, femmina, that Mrs. Costanza uses to insult her daughter, Elena, upon her decision to return to her abusive husband. In the translation, I used the word woman to replace femmina, but this is problematic. While femmina translates directly to female, there is not much of a difference between the words female and woman in the English language. In fact, the Collins English Dictionary defines the word female as “of, relating to, or designating the sex producing gametes (ova) that can be fertilized by male gametes (spermatozoa)”\(^44\), and the word woman as “an adult female human being”\(^45\) While the Italian dictionaries might have similar definitions, colloquially, the words donna and femmina have very different meanings. A donna refers to the way that you would address a woman, while a femmina refers more to the characteristics of a

woman, their feminine qualities. Since in English, female is used usually solely to distinguish the
gender of the person, and not their character, the word woman works for both of the definitions
that are in question. Calling either a man or a woman a woman in English tends to have negative
qualities surrounding it, just as calling someone a femmina does in Italian, though for different
reasons. As stated above, the word femmina can refer to the animalistic tendencies, such as
dependency. However, in English, it can be argued that calling someone a woman can be parallel
to calling them a coward. Since using the word female to convey this insult would not have
worked in the minds of modern English readers, I made the decision to use the word woman,
since it is a more commonly used insult in English today, and would resonate with more of the
population.
Caged Happiness
by Carola Prosperi

1. Fatherhood

The large grandfather clock in the entrance struck four when the student Paolo Gavini opened the door. He placed his dress shoes on the small heater, entered and put his dripping umbrella with the others under the coat hanger. The house was silent, as if it was deserted, as dark as night and cold, even though the owner of the house always said that the heater was on until late morning. Gavini's room was the last door on the right of the dark hallway. As soon as he had entered and taken off his wet jacket and hat, he shivered a little as he got an unpleasant impression that wasn't caused just from the cold. The room, discretely large and well furnished, more elegant than his own personal belongings scattered everywhere, was all in shadow; a yellowish shadow, almost muddy, that here and there made sinister reflections, reflections from a spectral light.

“What a day!” he sighed as he sat down in the room, feeling uncertain for a moment, almost desiring to leave the room again; he walked to the window, raised the shades and glared, annoyed at the street. Even outside everything was yellowish and opaque, people hurried by, with dark faces, as if they were tortured by a secret anxiety.

“What a day!” he repeated, sitting down at the desk and turning on the small, green desk lamp. At his back, the rest of the room remained dark, full of black and menacing shadows. On the large desk his beautiful silver objects shined, illuminated; his inkstand, his letter opener, his small pendulum, his cigarette holder, the frames of familiar portraits: a complete group. The image of the small blonde head of his little sister, a beautiful figure, resembled him. The bulk of

46 Originally paletot, translated from French
the objects on the desk were school books, French novels with yellowed covers, handouts to cut and opened letters. Paolo opened a book, but instead of reading, he looked at his hands lying flat on the desk: beautiful masculine hands, not too white, not too long, but smooth, warm, and robust, with the well maintained nails of a refined man. Those hands, beyond the cuffs of loose silk, were like an image of his person as a whole: his body was clean, hot, sweet smelling, and well dressed. His face, while not perfectly handsome, was pleasing and healthy, with a fresh mouth, white teeth, clear eyes, short and thick eyelashes, and even thicker hair, dry and perfumed and always accurately coifed. He could not tolerate when people messed up his hair. There was that girl, Irma, who had the habit of grabbing it with her skinny, cold hands, and every time he became infuriated with her. Oh, Irma...the image of her pale face, surrounded by disheveled hair, her eyes red from crying and her mouth swollen, contorted from sobbing, just as he had seen her the last time, flashed in front of him; but he drove the fastidious image away immediately, took another book and tried to study. But the same silence now seemed cumbersome, cold, dark, unsupportable: he yawned loudly, closed the book abruptly and put his head between his hands. How bored he was...how bored he was! “Damn this day.” A little earlier, at the cafe, his friend Ugo, a cavalry lieutenant, had said many times: “today is a day to stay in bed until the sun sets.” as if the day had a voice and he wanted it to hush. But Ugo had an appointment with a new lover that day and the weather that made people bored excited Ugo. Not him. At that time, he didn't have any lovers, he didn't want any, nor did he remember any. He just remained alone and that was it. That is, yes he remembered, he had to. Irma returned to the front of his memory, not as disheveled and furious as the last time, but rather in love, passionate and upbeat, just as she had always been. Her face seemed in pain, even in the happiest of moments. She had shadows under
her eyes, lips as cold as her hands and her forced smile. She dressed well and wore nice shoes, when she could, this was true, but she was decidedly skinny, a crybaby, clingy.... that image brought him some disturbing thoughts, they passed through his head slowly, slowly like small, cold, black serpents...he grew impatient. To hell with everything.

Still time passed and he remained there, his head on his closed book with his hands on his temples, his eyes open and a kind of stiffening in his neck. He had the sensation to turn around and look into the shadows, but it would have been difficult. There was something unpleasant back there. Plus, he preferred not to turn around. Why turn around? It was as if he felt two eyes behind him that were glaring, there, at his neck. They glared at him with a cold, hard look like a nail: two large eyes, black, underlined by the shadow...maybe he was dozing off. And that glare got closer, it got closer and enveloped everything like something cold, something slippery that made him shudder even down to the marrow in his bones. It was probably just a nightmare, nothing more than a nightmare, like those that tormented him as a child, at the time of the silliest fears...Time passed, slowly and wickedly just like the nightmare, and Paolo remained there, immobile until the maid knocked lightly at the door around seven. He shook himself, breathed a sigh of relief, and stretched his arms.

“Come in!”

She opened the door and entered quickly, bringing some ironed shirts and putting them on the bed.

“Marietta, if you could turn on the lamp there...”

The room was flooded with vivid light and he jumped to his feet, completely awakened, relieved from a large weight. With a little bit of contempt for himself, he lit a cigarette. How
could he not have smoked that entire time? And where had all of those extravagant dreams come from? The maid, in a white apron, opened the door to leave, but turned back, and, as if to respond to the question, says:

“They brought a package for you today, Mr. Gavini. I'm sorry for not having told you that before; I thought that you had seen it.”

“A postal package?”

“No...a normal one. There it is over there, on the chair near the wardrobe...They brought it by hand.”

“A porter?”

“A girl.”

Paolo didn't ask anything else. The maid left and closed the door, slowly. He remained standing, immobile, in the middle of the room, looking at the package for a moment, then he took it, put it on the desk, put out his cigarette, untied the knot made of coarse twine that bound the package, and undid the paper. Inside was more paper, worn and wrinkled, old newspapers, that he took off one after another with caution... What kind of dumb joke was this? And who had done it? But what he saw at the end surprised him so much that the last paper fell to the floor, with the contents: a small mass of black clotted blood, and that even seemed to have a form. The stench of a tomb hit is face, as if it was something live, something frightening. The thud that it made, falling, seemed like a small scream to Paolo Gavini. And he asked himself, stupidly, “did it scream? Did it scream? Did they hear it over there?”

Flattened from the shock, trembling with disgust, he looked at the floor without understanding, not daring to move, biting his hand without feeling the pain, with an unheard
desire to escape from that small, horrendous thing and hide far away, but still feeling stuck there, in that spot, like the similar terror that links an assassin with the body of the assassinated. He needed to get rid of it to be free! That was the best idea, the first idea that came to mind after that tumultuous sensation. Then the pale and furious face of Irma, her eyes full of darkness and her lips contorted from sobbing, flashed in his memory again, between the black waves of messy hair. She had gotten her revenge...she had gotten her revenge, that one! He mumbled a bad word, an atrocious word, a fit of rage and anger that suffocated in part the fear that paralyzed him and gave him the strength to bend down to collect, that small, horrible thing, to put it back in the old newspaper – and at the soft contact the back of his neck was pierced with pain – then he covered it with another piece of paper, and tied the package tightly with the thick twine. The feeling of danger, of that wretched responsibility that he needed to accept, pushed him to act quickly and precisely. He couldn't throw it away at home, it was too dangerous. He had to thank God that no one had noticed it earlier. Could he bring it back to her? It wasn't a bad idea, but who knows about the shouts, the insults, the scene she would cause! It would be better to get rid of it on the street, during the night, just like any of the seduced girls would do if they had no friends to help them and they had to help themselves. Quickly, he tore up the remaining sheets of newspaper on his desk and threw them away in the trashcan. He then got dressed, placed the package in his jacket pocket, grabbed his hat and walked into the illuminated hallway. In the foyer, the maid handed him his umbrella.

“It's still raining, Mr. Gavini.”

It seemed to him that she was looking at his filled pocket with a bit of confusion: he was a young man of elegance and he never carried packages. Her confusion was justified. With his
heart racing, he hurried to leave, almost fearing any type of observation. Outside, underneath the main doorway, he stopped breathing just for a minute and dried his forehead, realizing that he was sweating slightly. At that time his friend Ugo was already at the restaurant waiting for him. He wasn't repelled by the idea of confiding in him. Ugo, who was older than he, was better acquainted with life and women. He was open-minded, skeptical, and even cynical at times, but with good friends he was helpful. Of course he would have helped and accompanied him on that ill-fated expedition, and Paolo comforted himself in that thought, because he needed to cling on to someone, like a lost child. He quickly made his way to the restaurant and pushed open the glass door. But, entering in the bright and sparkling room, he had just enough time to to see that his table was empty, and that Ugo was at another table close-by with a woman, and that the waiter was standing behind him, waiting respectfully to take his jacket and hat and put them on the coatrack in the corner. With a mechanical gesture, Paolo smoothed his hair with his hand, sat at his place, unfolded his napkin and listened attentively to the waiter that, very correctly, leaning in slightly towards him, recited the list of food, giving him respectful suggestions. In that violent light, in the middle of everyone, in the usual elegant environment, he had the impression that his face slowly relaxed, to himself, effortlessly playing the usual part of the hour, which was a look of amiable indifference. Ugo had greeted him with a nod, and he responded with a greeting, accentuating the beautiful young woman, that gave him a long stare, underneath her large tulle hat. Women liked Paolo. When he looked at them, his clear eyes through his thick, dirty brown eyelashes brightened up with a caressing and seducing glance, while his fresh mouth, from his well drawn and slightly swollen lips remained serious. For many, that caress with his eyes was irresistible. He appealed to everyone without discrimination, a habit already formed, like a
courtesy to which he felt obliged. An acquaintance who had already eaten, came to sit down facing him, smoking, and winked at the woman.

“Where would your friend have found her?”

Paolo shrugged his shoulders: his eyes wandered around the room and stopped in the corner, where his jacket hung from the coatrack: you could see the swollen pocket... What if someone placed their hand inside? What if someone took his jacket by mistake? What could they do to him? Arrest him?

“What's wrong?” asked his acquaintance, looking him in the face, seeing that he had stopped eating.

“Nothing... A headache. This day has made me very on edge... Give me a lighter.”

He pushed away his plate and lit a cigarette.

“Eh, yeah,” said the other. “A cursed time...”

He started talking about women again, interminably, which gave Paolo a real physical oppression. He felt as if a stone was pressing on him, bearing down on his heart and not letting him breathe freely. Little by little, the smoke from his cigarette veiled the things around him, while the figures of the others took on grotesque appearances behind the veil, as in fever dreams. Even Ugo's young woman, who was also elegant, with a young face very well made up, seemed ridiculous to him, contorted in a grimace that made her ugly. When Ugo came to say goodbye before leaving, he shook his friend's hand and nodded to him, as if to say “if only you knew what a treasure she is!” He seemed to him, with his face lit up and his eyes shining, hateful even. And it was to him that he had wanted to confide his terrible secret that suffocated him? Better not to trust anyone... anyone at all!

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“You're not coming?” asked his acquaintance, standing up.

“No,” he responded dryly and he continued rocking on his chair, smoking. Then he asked the waiter to bring a coffee and a bottle of cognac, and against every one of his habits, he drank a few glasses. Meanwhile, little by little, everyone left. He watched them leave with a fixed stare, almost morbid, filled with aversion. All of those people seemed to be directed towards some pleasing goal: those who were going to the theater, those who were going to make love...Love! He saw that word written across his eyes in letters of fire, like a threat of hell. Had any of them ever found themselves in his situation? None of the men probably...maybe some of the women. One of the same women who were getting up from the table in that moment, beautiful and careless, wrapping themselves in their furs and moving towards the exit, followed by their lovers. All beings were now horrible and disgusting...yes, horrible and disgusting. Everyone was going away...they were leaving him alone inside there, those evil people! And progressively he was left there alone. It seemed to him that his jacket, the last one left hanging, was moving and growing bigger, black and serious, provoked the attention of the waiters, it made itself noticed as something bulky and alive. With a great effort he got up, went to retrieve the jacket, and put it on, with the feeling of a condemned man.

“Now comes the fun!” he thought to himself in the door of the restaurant and grinned, taking his umbrella and walking slowly. Outside there were very few people, even in the arcades on Via Pietro Micca were almost deserted and the streets of Piazza Castello as well. Without thinking about anything, walking like an automaton, he walked passed them all and merged on to Via Po. Step by step, he got closer to the river, and it awoke in him the faculty to observe everything unusual: the passers-by that he saw alone inspired him with a curiosity mixed with
fear. A poor man was sitting underneath a portico, all curled up, with a hat over his eyes and his hands in his pockets. An urge came over him to stop and talk to him. The outcasts of society had always been indifferent or disgusting, but now they interested him, as if he felt tied to them by a strange sense of fraternity. Not the women though, those mistaken girls that seemed to slip out of the sidewalks, appearing in the light for just a moment, between two pillars...they made his heart beat with rage. One of these girls, pale, disheveled, with big black eyes and a mole on her cheek, that seemed to him to slightly resemble Irma, particularly repelled him. At that time she was laughing at him, probably, knowing that she put him in such a horrible situation, satisfied with her vendetta. Maybe she was already having a good time with another man, already healed, already calm, in that same room where he had gone the last time, and where he found her every time, obscene, obstinate in stolid affirmation: “It's yours...it's yours!”

“But, excuse me,” he had told her, coldly. “You're trying to tell me that I'm the only one? Give me a little bit of pleasure by not thinking that I'm that stupid, and don't come to me and tell me all of these stories. But wait, you will tell these stories to everyone!”

The girl, ill put, without any flirtatiousness that day, untidy and older, looked at him in silence, biting her lip, twisting her hands, then she started pacing back and forth around the poor room, pounding her feet, as if she was taken by some type of physical craving, like a bad storm that couldn't find a outlet. And suddenly she was attached to him again, awakened, and she made a scene.

“It's yours...it's yours...”

She didn't know how to say anything else, like a maniac. But he, cold and master of himself, didn't let himself be swayed. What the Hell! He wasn't stupid. Had he taken her
virginity? Had he even bothered to check if he was the only one at that time or if there were others, whom probably, certainly even, enjoyed her favors? What was their relationship supposed to be like between a girl who gives it up to everyone, or almost everyone, and a young man of a obvious gallantry? She said that she loved him, but women always say those kinds of things.

He had said everything to her, loud and clear; and the girl, sitting on the bed now, with her hands on her face, listening in silence, watching him put the money on the bedside table. She watched him leave and her black stare through her skinny fingers said, hollowly, “I will get my revenge!...I will get my revenge!”

And she got her revenge: this was it...

Paolo left the porticos. Piazza Vittorio seemed to be a desert. The men were sparse, small and black, and the trams ran with a far and dismal screech. He walked, always faster, pushed by the improvised fury of a man that wants to end his suffering. In a few minutes he crossed the bridge and arrived at the border of Casale, and continued walking on the street that hugged the river that led to the Madonna del Pilone. His fear was livid, cold, and slippery, submerged in the shadows of the thickets. It crouched on his shoulders, squeezing his neck, and pushing him forward and never left him. Was it natural, good God, was it natural that at that time a well-dressed man was walking on that street? If someone caught him, whether it was the police, a criminal, a pair of lovers, he would be lost, literally lost... Around him there was a terrible silence, worse than the roar of ruins. He closed his umbrella, walked down through the bushes, on the soft ground, holding on to the trunks of the trees that seemed to wriggle like living things. Then with his trembling hand he fondled, fondled, and found his pocket, took the package, and he threw it out with a sudden snap. There was a small thud...
Now he stayed there, stuck in the soft ground, as if invisible hands held his feet still; at the end he took a deep breath, climbed back up the riverbank, re-entered the street, and began walking, and then running madly. But the fear that now seemed to be clinging to him stopped him again, with its icy fingers like a skeleton. If someone saw him running this way, he would have been in trouble. He needed to go slowly, slowly like a stroll... The border... then the bridge... then Piazza Vittorio. In Piazza Vittorio he passed a taxi, stopped it, and got in. Safe... My God, safe! He passed his hands over his face as if to regain his lost spirits, he felt his arms, his shoulders. He was himself, still himself, Paolo Gavini, a young man of good family, a student in Torino, a free and healthy man, without chains, with a happy future. The sensation of inexpressible relief which he enjoyed in that moment inspired him with a certain leniency for humanity, that same humanity that a little bit earlier scared him and made him hate everyone, the lost women included. These women in their maternity, wretched and abandoned, had to do that which he, a man, had done exceptionally that night. They pitied him.

“Disgraceful...” he said. “You should never think of these things!”

He thought that it was very late: as if the entire night had passed during the anxiety, but he saw in Piazza Solferino that the people were just now exiting from the Alfieri theater. It inspired some happy thoughts: the next day even he would be at the theater, and then after a few more days he would no longer have to wear the torments of this night.

He re-entered the house slowly, walking on the balls of his feet. His illuminated room was now happy, clear of yellowish and sinister reflections, scary shadows, menacing eyes, fever dreams. He undressed quickly, hit his shoes on the pavement to rid them of dirt, and laid down underneath the blankets thinking that tomorrow could be the day he wanted, he didn't care about
anything anymore... And he shut his eyes.

But as soon as he shut his eyes, he saw it in the room... Not scary shadows, not menacing eyes, not reflections of nightmares... No, but that poor package, tied with the thick twine, there on the seat next to the dresser... His heart started beating fast, and with his trembling hand he reached for the light switch, and looked around. What package? There wasn't anything! Was the disease of fear settling in? He remained immobile looking into nothingness, with his elbow pressed on his pillow.

“No,” said something serious inside of him. “It's not fear now...”

He knew well that it wasn't fear. It was that terrible thought, the strongest, the most secretive, that which tormented him the most during those wretched hours, but he never dared to admit it. Stronger than fear, than anger, than rage, it hit his brain like lightening, making him obey it, accept it, admit it, just like it was, hot and flaming. Yes, the child was his. He had heard that it was his, since the woman had affirmed it angrily. He rejected it with arrogance and contempt that she shouldn't be sure about the fatherhood. Something in his heart, an instinct that never failed, which Paolo had inside of him, still pure and sincere, had told him: “It's yours! What the woman is saying is true!”

But he hadn't wanted to give up. The everyday Paolo, a man of the world, a man who saw his future in front of him, a selfish reasoner, rebelled. Every man would have done the same in his case! So what was the problem?

“It was yours...” repeated the ruthless voice inside of him. He was certain. That which he had thrown in the cold and rainy river, was flesh from his flesh, blood from his blood, and now this piece of life lay dead, frozen, in the turbid depth of that water, and nothing in the world
would have ever seen it again. It had made a small thud, and that was it... The entire night he thought of that thud that replayed in his head like a desperate scream...

Still, years later, every time, the morning, just as he awoke, a voice inside of him, without an echo, but sweet and deep, repeated to Paolo Gavini:

“You killed your son...You killed him!...”
2. A Lack of Seriousness

No havoc, no uproar, none of the usual agitations that upset homes in similar occasions. Complete tranquility. That morning, as soon as she woke up, Augusta, letting herself fall onto the couch, had stammered, looking around lost and wringing her hands, with a convulsive gesture:

“I think...I think I feel worse than usual...”

“Good!” exclaimed her mother-in-law. “Fantastic... That means that we're ready...”

Everything was set within a few minutes, with the precision and experience of serious people who never lose their minds under any circumstances. The midwife was called, the widowed sister-in-law rushed to the scene, the silent sister-in-law was sent for the neighbors, the servants were made aware, and the father-in-law was in the dining room, ready to be called.

Claudio, the husband, paler than usual and frowning, fixed the knot of his tie with nervous hands in front of the mirror and thought about whether or not he should go into the office. He was a young man, tall but a little stocky, with black hair and a blonde mustache, almost reddish, dark, round eyes, a large aquiline nose, a square jaw, with an expression of satisfied presumption and solemn severity. He dressed himself with banal elegance.

“I'm not going to go...” he decided in his head as he entered his wife's room, trying to give his wife a glance, contrite and encouraging and the same time. He thought to himself: “Augusta completely lacks courage and seriousness! It's so easy for her to let herself break down!”

He called her to in a tone of voice that was meant to be comforting and imperative at the same time, the same tone that he used, one time, to teach a puppy how to stand on his hind legs.
“Come on, Augusta, come on! Courage!”

She was walking around the room, being supported under her armpits by two women, while the others occupied themselves with the preparation of the bed of pain. She turned to look at him, in silence, her bruised face, her eyes with the supplicant stare of a terrified animal caught in a snare, and her mouth contorted into a grimace of restrained tears. Of course, he never would forget that face, that expression of an abandoned animal, more excruciating than ever in the middle of all those people.

With a certain sense of embarrassment he felt that his encouragements were maybe insufficient, combined with the fact that in that moment he was the most useless person in the entire house.

His mother – with a pale face, black hair, round eyes, an aquiline nose, the same hard expression on her face, the same stature, the same poise – went to meet him with an air of expertise.

“Go, go,” she told him. “You're not necessary. You can come back around 7, but not before.”

Obediently, he left, with an air of gravity, without being able to suffocate a certain anxiety: “If only Augusta had more courage...” he said to himself. “If only she looked a little bit like me!”

But Augusta didn't look a thing like him. Rather, the diversity that was so visible between the two of them caused a profound stupor for the people that knew them. “How could they have gotten married?”
This question was also asked by the mother of Claudio, with a nasal voice and a wrinkled forehead, who usually added “My son was so serious as a child!”

It was very true: as a child, Claudio had taken life seriously. He had seemed like a man until now, and a man of bad humor, always occupying himself with his school work, and lately his work from the office. He always had his nose in his books, always aware to not let his neighbors cheat, sulky and serious. He never laughed, never made a noise and sometimes, with a severe air about him, glared at his father when he attempted to tell a joke that he had heard at the dinner the table.

“Claudio looks like me,” said his mother, proudly. “He looks more like me than the other children. How could a young man such as him marry a girl like Augusta?”

It wasn't that Augusta was good wife. Quite the contrary: young, healthy, spotless, grown up in the city, only child, with a discrete dowry and a good personality, tall and skinny, with wispy brown hair, a round, pale face with dimples, a big, divided chin, large red lips and blue eyes, calm, and laughing. There, laughing, in fact, too laughing! They had spoiled her, she even confessed it herself; her parents listened to her in ecstasy, to her childish chirping. They would always pull her up quickly and give her kisses and hugs, without ever speaking of sad things, nor of misery, of duties... they were happy looking at her while she ate or slept, listening to her play the piano, watching her jump around the house, maybe only on one foot, hearing her laughing with her friends, or chatting with the canaries in front of their cage on the balcony full of flowers. They never asked anything of their daughter, nothing more than being beautiful and funny, or talking with her tender heart, or knowing how to give so many kisses with such sweetness, or to love and laugh...
Oh, an incorrect education, absolutely incorrect, from beginning to end! Claudio's mother, when the girl had come to the house, fresh like a spring breeze, with her eyes still damp from the tears caused by her parents separation, but with her lips already in a smile, she remained a little taken aback and thought to herself:

“That girl must not have been educated in a very serious way...” A little later, after having told her son about her doubts, she calmed herself a bit after hearing him respond:

“Well then, mother, we'll re-educate her. Beneath it all, Augusta is a good person.

Yes, she was a good person, perhaps too soft, too malleable for those tough hands. Even she, as soon as she had entered into her new home, had heard that not all parents were like her own, the same ones that were now crying, poor things, in their empty house. But her cheerfulness was so spontaneous in her soul she wasn't able to conform right away to the cold seriousness of the environment in which you never laughed and never said a word more than what was necessary. For a little, she continued laughing, running from window to window, chatting, offering caresses with her white hands, kisses from her fresh mouth, with such a lack of seriousness, oh! a lack of seriousness that shocked everyone. Everyone, her parents-in-law, her husband, her widowed sister-in-law who was depressed, her quiet sister-in-law who was nervous, made, made a commitment with zeal and ardor to infuse her with the seriousness that she lacked. One by one, her laughs were suffocated, her smiles extinguished, her hand that gave caresses became used to staying in her lap, her fresh mouth had learned to stay shut, and her eyes learned to see things in a different way. It was a great deal of work, but anyways, the re-education was done. Now there was nothing bad: Augusta knew how to move and when to speak, and her eyes filled with fear always looked at her husband's face, as if to read his commands and orders, that
she needed to obey.

“If only,” Claudio persisted to think, always under the weight of that certain uncertainty.

“If only she had a little bit of courage.”

He sighed, shaking his head and realizing that courage, especially in those situations, was more difficult to instil than seriousness.

He arrived mechanically before his office door, and entered. The usher was in the hall dozing; two employees, taking advantage of the miraculous absence of their boss, sure to not be seeing him until tomorrow, had already left. The only one left was the older one, an old man who was a little deaf, ex-military, straight, stiff, with an immobile and wrinkled face, with small elusive eyes, covered in sadness. He was an amazing employee, taciturn, active, precise like a machine. Seeing his boss enter he stood up, but didn't make the slightest movement of shock when Claudio, with a cordiality that was very unusual, pats him on the back and says, “It's happening, Captain...”

“Good, good...” responded the old man with his usual low voice. “A boy, Mr. Engineer?”

“Ah, we don't know yet...” And Claudio started laughing. “We won't know anything until tonight, at least that's what my mother says, and she understands those things...”

“Surely, surely...”

“Until tonight...”

The captain went back to work, with his head low, and Claudio tried to imitate him, but he couldn't. He felt, like never before, the need to talk, to move around, to communicate with someone. Looking every second at his watch, he grew impatient and amazed to see how slowly
the time passed. Still he sat in his place. What the Hell! Did he, he especially, want to give off the impression of such little seriousness? Sitting, instead of writing, he put his elbows on the desk and placed his head in his hands and began talking to the Captain, who never responded, but let his head nod from time to time, respectfully.

“...a boy or a girl... really it doesn't make much of a difference to me. This doesn't mean anything, that which matters is education, Captain. And you need to start education early... almost, you could say, from the first days of life of the child. The child understands immediately if it will dominate or be dominated, it feels the strength of the hand that will guide it. Ah, I promise you that it will have a solid hand, Captain! I'm not saying that it will be my wife, poor thing... she's different from us, she grew up in a different environment... but now she has grown accustomed... yes, well, she's a bit different. She won't be the one destined to give our child their education: it will be me. And I promise you that my son won't be one of these young people, that at 16 years old he will already have the house key and go to the concerts at the Caffè or to go play, and that my daughter won't be like those girls that go walking down the streets with tight skirts and high heels, instead of being at home with her knitting...”

He flung himself against the youth of today, against the weakness of parents, against the universal levity. He grew eloquent and in his voice you could hear the satisfaction, the bitter pleasure of someone who had always had an aversion to all of the joys in life and who could finally exert himself over two beings that belong to him, the delights of restless seriousness, systematic contradictions, an illuminated tyranny. He was already looking forward to that joy, while he repeated with his satisfied smile: “A solid hand, right, Captain?”

“It's true, it's true...”
“Well, these are not new things for you, since you are ex-military. Your family was this way too, right?”

For a while, the old man did not respond. Then he said, with a voice that seemed even more tired and more faint:

“I had this misfortune to lose all of my family and to end up alone... So it's really a different situation, Mr. Engineer, and I see everything in a different way...”

He shut up. A chill passed through the air and Claudio shivered. He frowned, became mute right away, and made himself write, with an effort of will. There was a long silence, a few hours passed and at nightfall the Captain left, after putting all of his papers in place. Claudio stayed there for another moment, alone, and then went home, slowly: he didn't want to get there too early, or too late...just in time.

He got there in time to see the house upside down, the doors wide open, the terrified face of his mother, as she ran to meet him, breathless and shaking:

“Just now...the delirium...suddenly...we called, but you weren't there anymore...The girl was stillborn...”

“Who is singing right now?” he screamed, tightening his teeth.

“It's her...”

In bed, Augusta, with her deranged face, sang loudly, interrupting herself time to time to laugh with a horrible cheerfulness; she shook and shook her head on the pillow and hugged something shapeless and pale to her chest, a little bundle that, at first, Claudio couldn't identify.

“What is that?”
“The baby...”

The husband, clutching his head between his hands, bent over his wife and called out:

“Augusta!”

She didn't respond. She looked at him and laughed, and then looked at the others and laughed again... it seemed that she was challenging them with rapture, with irony... Then she didn't see anyone. She looked far away, in the darkness, in the emptiness, and she saw a triumph of sun, glimmering rays of light, fields of gold, scarlet flowers. She heard the songs of the larks, of her canaries, she saw her flowered balcony, a far away world, superbly happy, to which she slowly ran, with her head towards the sky, her hair blowing in the wind, her baby girl hugged to her chest, singing with joy like a liberated slave.
When Mrs. Costanza arrived to get her and take her away, Elena was alone in a room on the bottom floor, sitting in an corner, immobile, with her hands in her lap, staring blankly, obliviously. Her mother, from the threshold, hardly recognized her, and called our to her calmly, with a sob:

“Elena! What are you doing?”
Elena saw her come over to her without shock; instead of jumping up to hug her, she murmured sorrowfully:

“They left me here alone...”

Seeing her reduced to this form, skinny, destroyed, with hair striped with grey, her face emaciated, bruised from a strike to the face, dry lips, her lost gaze, a person completely shrunken down. Mrs. Costanza felt a sword drive through her heart.

“They couldn't assassinate me,” she thought. “But they could shock me.”
She started talking sweetly, slowly, almost fearing not being understood well.

“Come on, courage. By now everything is done. One couldn't say that you got this separation easily, but, in the end, you got it. Free, you're free! You can come away with me right away, actually you have to... And your trunks? And your things? You didn't prepare anything? You don't have anything? Well, all the better. Come with me as you are. And where is he?”

Her husband was far away, hunting.

“And where is she?”

The mother-in-law was on the floor above them, shut in her room. The house - a large
house in the countryside that looked like an old crumbling castle and a farm at the same time – seemed to be empty and, with the windows closed, the large, squalid, and cold rooms, with a profound silence, like a tomb, had a certain gloominess that squeezed the heart. Suddenly, they heard someone slinking in the next room, whispering softly, a whisper that came closer and then went away: they were the servants that were spying on them. A groom appeared in the doorway, then crossed the rustic and deserted hallway in silence and opened the door of the stable. You could hear the sound of dry footsteps of the horses and the piercing neighing.

Mrs. Costanza shivered: it was as if she had entered in that sinister house like one falls into a trap. She looked over her shoulder, shaking, with the terror of those who are afraid of being surrounded by enemies at any moment.

And to say that Elena had lived inside there for ten long years, ten grim years of humiliation, of shame, of pain and of tears! Mrs. Costanza couldn't wait to leave, and she wouldn't breathe a sigh of relief until she had taken away her daughter, all bundled up at least in a shawl, with an old fashioned hat on her head, next to her on the train, taking her far away, to home. How long had she not experienced a moment of joy – even sad joy! - such as this! She couldn't say that she was fortunate when it came to her daughters. The first, Angelica, who looked like her, died young, full of life, married a for a few years and a mother for a few months, leaving as her legacy a daughter that fell ill. The second, Adele, ran away from home with an infamous adventurer, she never came back to her childhood home. She became a mediocre actress, a famous socialite, and she passed her miserable life of risk and adventure who knows where. But none of them had surpassed in misery the grim fate of the last one, Elena. As a little girl, during a holiday with family friends, she fell in love with that young man, who asked her
right away to marry him. Mrs. Costanza wasn't happy, deep down, but seeing as he was from a
good family, discreetly rich, young, as handsome as he was vulgar, tall, strong, tan, with an
energetic and hard face, very taciturn, almost timid, of reserved manner, of simple taste, living in
the country with his mother... You could not say no lightly. And Elena was in love, which was an
even bigger reason. So, right after they got married, the husband took her away to that big house
in the country, where the poor thing, was told by the neighbors, the servants, and the
acquaintances, that she was never allowed to have any kind of visitors. The mother-in-law was
an old hag, jealous of her daughter-in-law, ready for all of the hatred, for all of the infamies even
to overwhelm her. The husband wasn't anything but a crude peasant, a very brutal man, full of
cruel instincts and complicated wickedness. Between these two, Elena, dominated, vilified and
even beaten, had lived the most miserable life of a slave that one could ever imagine, losing all
consciousness and every piece of dignity, becoming a crude peasant herself, more neglected than
the maids that served the house, almost forgetting that she used to be an elegant young woman of
high society. It seemed that he took pleasure in degrading her in every way: one time he beat her
in the presence of others, and another time he kicked her out of the house, letting her shake from
the cold the entire night.

Mrs. Costanza had heard these things from strangers. As refined, generous, impulsive,
and sensible as she was, she yearned and moaned with pain, worse than if she had her daughter
lying in a coffin. Still, because of the fear that her son-in-law inspired, she had thrown herself
into the fight, passionately and stubbornly. She found herself in a horrible fight against two evil
people, in a fight without a truce that costed her peace, health, money, and that made her pass
desolate days and horrible nights of crying and despair as if Elena could not tear herself away
from a cave of robbers.

Sometimes, the lawyers would get involved and they grew impatient, raising their arms telling her:

“My dear, your daughter just needs to move around a little bit! She doesn't need to do much, in the end! She's a woman, not a sheep... You could almost say that she doesn't appreciate all that we're doing for her...”

“She's a poor, unconscious girl!” moaned Mrs. Costanza. “She's been brutalized by those two... And she's probably scared.. I'm scared, think of that! I have never been there and I don't intend to go... I'm sure that they themselves would shoot me with a pistol in the back or one of the peasants would shoot me! And they definitely intercept my letters. No, no, it needs to end, I had to spend my last penny and bring myself to misery. I thank God that my poor husband died ten years ago, right when Elena got married. If only he had seen how badly the marriage turned out!”

Every now and again, in response to the numerous letters written by her mother, Elena wrote briefly, vaguely, scribbling like a child, with unstitched sentences, in which she complained but it wasn't clear about what, contradicting herself right after with sentences less incoherent.

“You see?” said Mrs. Costanza, who went to read the letters to the lawyers. “Even she doesn't know what she's afraid of. It's evident!”

In the end the fight was ended abruptly: by now, the mother-in-law was old and didn't have enough energy to rebut, and maybe the husband was tired of fighting to keep a wife to abuse and nothing else.
“It's like a dream,” said Mrs. Costanza when she saw Elena in the house, and everyone cried that day: the servants who had known her when she was younger, the old Mrs. Stella who had been the teacher to all three of the girls and now the grandchild, Maria Luisa; even her, a soft, translucent, sickly figure that had been seen like an aunt when she was little. But she didn't remember that now, crying desperately upon seeing her, from joy and compassion together.

“We'll need to remake her life now.”

That's what her mother said and thought, and everyone occupied themselves with the remaking of her life. They treated her with infinite concern, as if she had just gotten out of ten years in prison, fasting, and torture of every type. They gave her the most beautiful and happy room, they gave her the most tender meat at the dinner table, they poured her the most generous glasses of wine. Every day, her mother put something for her on her vanity: an exquisite perfume, a bouquet of rare flowers, a bag of sweets... Everyone toiled to offer her refreshments and sweets. But it wasn't easy to remake her life. Elena did not speak, she did not gain weight, and overall she did not change her attitude. Always wearing the same dress, always flat and withered, with a bruised face in which her eyes had a gloomy look about them, and unkept hands. Her hair was tied up in a messy bun on the base of her neck, locks of hair fell out of her bun, hanging on her neck and ears, without her feeling the need to remove them. She seemed like a peasant. Oh the horrible degradation of a creature that was so young, flourishing, beautiful, who respected herself, who was aware of her condition, who loved the elegance of life! And that woman who looked neglected, without honor, without dignity, fallen into degradation, dazed like a sleepwalker, taciturn as if she had become mute, listless and indifferent to everything, always huddled up looking at nothing and biting her nails. She was the Elena of the past, to whom the
daily bath was more indispensable than bread!

   With a constant push, her mother tried to wake up her old consciousness. Everyday, timidly, she tried to make an observation.

   “Elena, why don't you put any perfume in the water when you wash?”

   “Maria Luisa, give Elena your nail powder, you'll see how it will make her beautiful once again!”

   “You should change your hairstyle, Elena. With a little bit of art you could easily hide those grey hairs.”

   And every time, Elena shrugged her shoulders and said:

   “Ah, it doesn't matter... I don't care about these things, you know Mom? I don't care...”

   Elena didn't want anything and she was so feral that she ran away every time a visitor was announced. In vain, Maria Luisa offered to play music with her, and Mrs. Stella sacrificed herself to read page after page of the most recent books to her: nothing awakened her degraded soul.

   “I don't want to...” she said, thinking of who knows what, biting her nails.

   “Oh how they reduced her!” said Mrs. Costanza, dismayed. “She reminds me of someone when she's like this... Who does she remind me of, Stella?”

   Mrs. Stella remembered who she looked like. Didn't she have the same abandoned attitude, dark and almost insane, of that wet nurse, the first wet nurse of Maria Luisa, that had become so ill from nostalgia and melancholy thinking about her country and her husband that her breast had dried up?

   “It's true! It's true!”

   The same terrible brutalization, the same appearance of a married woman...
“Nostalgia of what?”

Mrs. Costanza didn't dare to investigate, but was shocked when Elena told her, one day, with a new voice:

“Did you know, she's dead, that woman...”

“Your mother-in-law? How do you know?”

“He wrote me...”

“He writes to you?”

“Only once... Now he's alone...”

“And what do you care now?”

Elena didn't respond and her mother ran to Mrs. Stella.

“Did you know?! Did you know that he writes to her? That he has this kind of audacity? How did the letter get to her? We need to watch her...”

Mrs. Stella watched her and found out that the deaf and dumb girl had managed to corrupt a servant that brought her letters from her husband. Shocked, her mother sighed as if she was in agony.

“So it's not over! That man hates me, and he wants to get revenge...but he will not break me. Plus, Elena won't be tricked...Oh my God!”

Elena shut herself in her room to respond to her husband. Silent, cautious, wary, looking around at every moment with a darkly suspicious air about her, ready to defend herself, she wrote, wrote and wrote...with the same cautiousness she got ready to leave, but at her door, that night, while she was trying to escape, she found the old teacher.

“Elena, you, you are going to kill your mother. Come, come see her. Don't be crazy...
Listen, you know she loves you... We found out that you want to run away like a lost woman...
Your mother will die... At least come listen to what she wants to say to you...”

Reluctantly, almost repugnantly, Elena let herself be led to the room to the next room where her mother, lying on the sofa and pitifully assisted by the sweet, shocked, granddaughter. She had her hands on her heart in turmoil and longing, shaking her head back and forth, so pale that it seemed that she would expire at any moment. To see her daughter dressed, ready to leave, she found enough strength to get up.

“It's not possible,” she stammered. “It's not possible... Elena, that man is tricking you... He wants you back just to torture you again and to make me die from a heart attack. Don't believe him Elena!”

“You know,” responded her daughter awkwardly, looking at the ground. “Now he's changed... He doesn't have a mother anymore... It will be different, you'll see. You're exaggerating... You've always exaggerated... Plus, he's my husband...”

“And what does that mean?”

“He's my husband and he's my duty...”

“Elena! Nobody has ever had the duty to let themselves be killed! Think about all that you suffered through! And you didn't have to do it, and to see you go back there, like this, voluntarily...”

Her tears suffocated her voice, they dripped from her eyes, they ran down her face, quickly.

Elena sighed, swallowed her spit, with tiredness, she looked around and said again, blindly stubborn, occupied by only one thought, taken by a single desire:
“In the end, he's my husband. He wants me to come back. He's waiting for me...”

“No! This is how a crazy person reacts, or a... If you're crazy, I will keep you here on purpose... You're separated legally, do you understand? And I have the right to detain you. The duty, actually. Are you crazy, then, Elena?”

“I'm not crazy,” responded her daughter abruptly. “And I'm allowed to do what I want. I want to go back to my husband. If I was going to flee this way, it was to avoid a scene, but now that I must declare it, I'll declare it: I want to go back.”

There was a long, labored silence. Then the old woman spoke with a trembling voice.

“Did you hear her? Did you hear her, Maria Luisa, my angel? Stella, my friend, did you hear her? She wants to go back. She wants to leave us, we who have spent half of our fortune and who gave our lives for her... We who pleaded almost on our knees to let us cure and nourish her, to love her and make her laugh... This house where everyone loves her, they serve her and they respect her... She wants to abandon that. This honored house where she lives in peace, she wants to abandon that. She would prefer to return there, to that prison, to that infamous house where she will be scorned, trampled, despised, and beat, yes, beat! Is that really what you want?”

“It's my husband's house... It's my house...”

“No, you know no one prefers darkness to light, stench to perfume, manure to roses, unless... yes unless you're being depraved. Don't tell me you love that man, because if that's real...”

“It is true!” the daughter said proudly. “I have to love my husband...”

“Oh, good reason! A great excuse! See, in this moment it seems to me that you're going back to your husband and dishonoring your house a thousand times more than when your sister
Adele ran away, like you, ashamed, like you, with a lover that was an adventurer, living for
games and intrigue, but who seems like a gentleman compared to your drunk peasant of a
husband, greedy and cruel. Are you worthy of him, just because you love him? Do you know
what you are, if you love him?

They looked at each other for a minute, mother and daughter: the older woman tall and
impotent, burning with outrage, the other small and humble, who was curled up as if she wanted
to disappear underground, and she even felt that her mother wouldn't have won, that the daughter
wouldn't have backed down.

“Do you know what you are? A woman!”

“Grandmother!” stammered Maria Luisa terrified, not understanding the insult. Mrs.
Stella started crying, seeing the other's face darken, looking at her mother from below, the same
scary stare and vile movement that her husband made when he raised his hand to strike her.

“A woman! Go away!”

She ran away, fuming, and her mother fell down on the sofa. In the dark silence that
followed, Mrs. Stella continued to cry silently, Maria Luisa shook like a leaf and Mrs. Costanza
sat there staring with dry and hardened eyes at the door from which her her unworthy daughter
left for good.
Bibliography


NOVELLE

FELICITÀ IN CABBA

LA

... CAROLA PROSPERI
PATERNITA'
La planta en general está formada por dos partes fundamentales: la raíz y la parte superior. La raíz tiene el papel de absorber agua y nutrientes del suelo, y la parte superior se encarga de la fotosíntesis, produciendo alimento para el resto de la planta.

En resumen, la planta es un sistema de partes interconectadas que trabajan juntas para garantizar el crecimiento y el bienestar del organismo vegetal.
Il teatro è aperto di sabato e di domenica. I \n
Teatro di Padova.

Non riuscire di altro come una manifestazione. \n
--- E no --- Io...

...scene. \n
La fisica è un bel gioco. I leone e la scomparsa. \n
Fino a quando. \n
...Pado, noto per della Piazza Vittorio-Pr...
Mancanza di serietà
Era solito salire in biblioteca, un vecchio legame,
vedendo il luccichio delle t占地, scritti
ed occhi scintillante;
ma dove si trovano, mi gradu, un impiego
che ha esaurito.
— Si, ma è questo un'illusione, a costruire
solo, che è il modo di vivere.
I. OSCURA PASSIONE

... Su, conforta, conforta. Ora mai più è la grost...
La felicidad de uno no puede ser medida simplemente en términos de felicidad. En la vida, la felicidad no es un estado de satisfacción temporal, sino una constante fluctuación. La felicidad está en los pequeños detalles de la vida diaria, en las risas compartidas, en los momentos de paz y tranquilidad. La felicidad no es algo que se puede comprar, sino algo que se construye a través de pequeños actos de amor y comprensión.

En nuestra vida, la felicidad no es una meta que podemos alcanzar, sino una experiencia que necesitamos experimentar constantemente. La felicidad no es algo que podemos buscar, sino algo que debemos crear. La felicidad no es una cosa que podemos encontrar en el exterior, sino algo que debemos buscar en el interior. La felicidad no es algo que podemos obtener, sino algo que debemos cultivar.

La felicidad no es un estado de vida, sino un estilo de vida. La felicidad no es un destino, sino un camino. La felicidad no es un fin, sino un medio. La felicidad no es algo que podemos imponer, sino algo que debemos permitir. La felicidad no es algo que podemos controlar, sino algo que debemos aceptar. La felicidad no es algo que podemos forzar, sino algo que debemos permitir.

La felicidad no es una película, sino una vida. La felicidad no es un sueño, sino una realidad. La felicidad no es una ilusión, sino una realidad. La felicidad no es una fantasía, sino una realidad. La felicidad no es un lujo, sino una necesidad. La felicidad no es un privilegio, sino una obligación. La felicidad no es un privilegio, sino una obligación. La felicidad no es un lujo, sino una necesidad. La felicidad no es un sueño, sino una realidad. La felicidad no es una ilusión, sino una realidad. La felicidad no es una fantasía, sino una realidad. La felicidad no es un destino, sino un camino. La felicidad no es un estado de vida, sino un estilo de vida.
encontrar un paso hacia la izquierda y encontrar un camino hacia la derecha de la imagen. La imagen principal es una representación de un mapa con diferentes caminos y rutas. La escritura en la imagen es en español, con una combinación de letras y números que sugieren la presencia de información geográfica o orientación.

La imagen muestra un mapa detallado con marcadores de diferentes colores. Las flechas indican la dirección que hay que seguir para llegar a una determinada ubicación. El mapa parece estar diseñado para guiar a los usuarios a través de diferentes áreas, posiblemente para una actividad de senderismo o exploración.

El texto en la imagen está escrito en un formato que no es claramente legible, pero se pueden identificar palabras como "izquierda," "derecha," "camino," y "orientación." Estas palabras sugieren que el texto se refiere a las instrucciones que se deben seguir para seguir el mapa correctamente.

La imagen también incluye símbolos que parecen representar puntos de interés o lugares de interés. Estos símbolos pueden ayudar a los usuarios a identificar las diferentes zonas y áreas que se encuentran en el mapa.

En resumen, la imagen es una representación gráfica de un mapa con instrucciones y marcadores para guiar a los usuarios a través de diferentes áreas. El texto en la imagen es en español, y parece estar diseñado para proporcionar orientación adicional sobre cómo seguir el camino Correcto.
...E vero, vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero...

...E vero è vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero...

...E vero è vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero...

...E vero è vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero... E vero è vero...
La vecchia acqua è importante, per me è il cuore della mia vita.

Il mio cuore batte come un motore, ma è poco ascoltato. La gente passa senza fiutare il mio cuore che batte per loro.

La vecchia acqua è la mia vita. È il mio cuore che batte per loro. Ma loro non lo sentono. Non lo ascoltano.

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