

Punctuation Strategies in the Textualization Of Femininity: Virginia Woolf Translated into Italian

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates shifts in punctuation in the Italian translations by Nadia Fusini of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. It argues that shifts in textual cohesion contribute to the elimination of salient traits of Woolf's 'female sentence'. Shifts in punctuation are analyzed in the light of discourse and gender theories, and particular attention is paid to the use of the semicolon, the exclamation mark, the dash and the full stop.

KEYWORDS: female sentence, Nadia Fusini, punctuation, textual cohesion, Virginia Woolf.

Introduction

Punctuation is an element of textual cohesion that plays an important role in determining the meaning of a text. Garavelli (2003:45-49) maintains that punctuation acts at the syntactical, semantic and pragmatic levels by determining both the cohesion of the text and the coherence of the discourse. At discourse level, punctuation is used as 'istruzione alla lettura' ('instructions to the reading'), because it helps the reader understand the sentence structure, the distribution of information within the sentences and the illocutionary function of linguistic elements (2003:46). Rachel May claims that, in Modernist fiction, punctuation is used in experimental ways for visual effects or to highlight the interplay of textual voices, thus breaking with a tradition where punctuation was used to mark rhetorical periods for oral delivery or to delineate the grammatical structures of the sentences (1997:2-4).

Despite its textual relevance, punctuation seems to be a rather neglected area of study in linguistics (Garavelli 2003:xii). Nunberg (1990:6-7) laments the lack of systematic research on the use of punctuation in English and other languages and argues that most literature on the subject is of a prescriptive rather than descriptive nature. The rules of punctuation, Nunberg explains, are organized according to the underlying structure of natural language systems and are therefore more complex than what is normally prescribed in grammar handbooks. The reason why punctuation is a rather neglected area of study is because it has been traditionally regarded as the transcription of the prosodic features of spoken language and, therefore, as an 'imperfect and limited means' in the text (ibid:9). However, Nunberg argues, punctuation devices should be considered as 'text-category indicators of written language' meaning (1990:17). Another reason for the lack of systematic research on punctuation, as Garavelli (2003:51) suggests, is its polysemantic nature and the lack of consensus on the norms regulating its use.

Studies of punctuation in translated texts may contribute to a better understanding of the linguistic meaning and the semantic function of punctuation marks. The Italian linguist Monica Beretta (1982) suggests that the comparative analysis of translations may lead to a better understanding (and sometimes even to a reformulation) of obscure theoretical issues of

text analysis. In her study of the Italian translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, she found that the comparison of the English and the Italian texts helped her identify which types of ambiguity anaphors may carry in a text and how anaphoric ambiguity may contribute to text cohesion and coherence. The aim of this article is to show how shifts in punctuation affect the syntactic and pragmatic functions of punctuation marks in Virginia Woolf's novels, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and their translations into Italian (*La signora Dalloway*, 1993 and *Al faro*, 1992 both translated by Nadia Fusini). In particular, I will show how punctuation in the TT contributes to de-textualize the *female sentence* by means of: the alteration of the representation of multiple consciousness; the creation of binary constructions that are introduced by adversative links; and the closure of the Woolfian open sentence. In my analysis, I shall refer to linguistic theories of cohesion, Ferrari (2003) and Garavelli (2003), to Woolf's notion of the *female sentence* (Woolf 1919/1928), and to *écriture féminine* (Cixous 1975; Kristeva 1984; Irigary 1991). I shall focus in particular on the use of the semicolon and the full stop and I shall interpret the translation shifts in the light of studies that have been published to date on Woolf's 'feminine' style (Lidoff 1986; Bowlby 1988a/b; Roe 1990; Raitt 1990).

The Female Sentence

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf (1928:77) argues that the sentence that was popular at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a male sentence 'unsuited for women's use'. She describes the male sentence as grand and argumentative, moving forward and aiming at truth and beauty, a type of sentence which perpetuates men's need for success and gratification:

The sentence that was current at the beginning of the nineteenth century ran something like this perhaps: 'The grandeur of their works was an argument with them, not to stop short, but to proceed. They could have no higher excitement or satisfaction than in the exercise of their art and endless generation of truth and beauty. Success prompts to exertion; and habit facilitate success.' That is a man's sentence; behind it one can see Johnson, Gibbon, and the rest. It was a sentence that was unsuited for woman's use. (ibid:77)

Consequently, she encourages the new generation of women writers to reshape the literary form and provide new vehicles of expression (ibid:76-77). Woolf explains that Dorothy Richardson has invented the 'sentence of the feminine gender', a psychological sentence that disregards the story and privileges the description of frames of mind: 'It is of a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the frailest shapes' (Woolf 1919:191).

Woolf criticizes male discourse for being based on a single standard order that privileges the speaking subject (the phallic 'I'). The 'I' of her own discourse, she explains, is only a convenient term for someone who has no real being (1928:6). She refers to the 'unity of the mind' as a 'natural fusion' that yields a 'heterogeneous wholeness'. According to Woolf, women's 'split consciousness' can 'think back through its fathers or through its mothers' and helps them trespass and transgress the boundaries that delimit the outside and the inside of their selves (ibid:76). This last point is considered by some feminist writers as one of the essential traits of female thinking and female writing: the 'suspended' and fluid nature of female consciousness and writing that allows women to escape the borders and limitations posed by the rigid structures of male dominated western thought. The main traits of female discourse that Woolf identifies in her critical writings are: non-linearity; openness; suspension; dissolution of subjectivity.

After Woolf, feminist writers such as Julia Kristeva (1974), Helen Cixous (1997) and Luce Irigaray (1991) showed a concern with the existence of a kind of writing that represents the feminine subjectivity and gives voice to the maternal in language, which came to be known as *écriture féminine*. Kristeva (1984:27-30) describes it as a transgressive language recalling the pre-oedipal rhythms that the child experiences in the womb, the maternal space. She describes the maternal space (the semiotic *chora*) as a 'nonespressive totality' of a polymorphous nature that is not governed by any conceptual hierarchies and is associated with feminine nature (the Semiotic). Kristeva maintains that the Semiotic is potentially transgressive because it threatens to destabilize the social order that she calls the 'Symbolic order', regulated by the Law of the Father. The language system is an example of symbolic order. The Semiotic breaks through the Symbolic under the form of rhythm, intonation, disruption of language. *Écriture féminine* is therefore a challenge to male logocentrism and to its binary logic (Guild 1992:75) and is very close to Woolf's notion of *female sentence*. Indeed, Woolf is considered by contemporary critics to be the forerunner in the process of deconstruction of phallogentric discourse and in the representation of female identity (Beer 1979; Moi 1985; Lidoff 1986; Raitt 1990; Roe 1990).

Cixous (1997:102) argues that women can 'break the line' of syntax, whereas men need syntax as a substitute for the umbilical cord. This reassures them by making them feel that the mother is always behind them 'watching them play phallus'. Instead, in speaking as well as in writing, woman 'breaks with explanation, interpretation, and all the authorities pinpointing localisation. She forgets. She proceeds by leaps and bounds. She flies/steals'. Cixous (1981:54) encourages women to deconstruct the binary oppositions that are inherent in patriarchal logocentrism and are responsible for having shaped Western culture and Western thought. She argues that the binary logic creates false 'hierarchical oppositions', such as the prejudice that men are 'active-positive-coherent and thus superior', whereas women are 'absent-feminine-passive-negative-incoherent', hence inferior to men.

According to Irigaray (1991:126-127), female discourse should dismantle any dichotomies, such as horizontality versus verticality or right versus wrong, that form the basis of the phallogentric order. She explains that a text written by a woman has a circular rather than a linear structure, whereby each sentence, word and phoneme has a retroactive effect that brings the reader back to what has been mentioned before.

The notions of 'fluidity' and 'suspension' used by critics to describe the *female sentence* and the Woolfian language indicate that female writing is dynamic and tends to avoid – or resolve – opposite extremes (binarisms) and individual standpoints (the Woolfian 'I'). James Naremore describes the experience of reading *To the Lighthouse* as 'being immersed so deeply in moving liquid that one can get only muffled impressions of people and things' (1973:2).

Although most criticism on Virginia Woolf to date is content-based, recently more attention has been paid to the investigation of the experimental nature of her writings (Moi 1985; Burns 1998). Minow-Pinkney (1987) associates Woolf's feminism to her modernism: 'For Woolf, the feminist and modernist aesthetics converge, at least initially, in this attempt to challenge phallogentrism'. Toril Moi (1985:13-16) believes that Woolf's feminism is a consequence rather than a cause of her writing practice and claims that her feminist politics is located precisely in the text. It is to the text and to textual strategies that I now turn for my discussion on how Woolf's female sentence is translated into Italian by Nadia Fusini.

Semicolons: Multiple Viewpoint vs. Binary Oppositions

The semicolon is one of the most idiosyncratic features in Woolf's narrative style and one of the most striking patterns of shift in the TT. Some critics of Woolf (Lodge 1993; Raitt 1990; Parkes 1992) point to some syntactic and pragmatic functions of this punctuation mark that are consistent with the notion of *female sentence* outlined above: semicolons form paratactic structures that erase syntactical and conceptual hierarchies; this results in a 'multiple viewpoint' effect whereby individual narrative voices are merged into a unified collective consciousness. In addition, they convey the effect of 'suspension': the narrative voice refrains from taking specific standpoints and opts instead for in-between positions that blur the borders between the interior and the exterior, the self and the other. David Lodge (1993:26) suggests that Woolf is inclined to use semicolons rather than full stops in order to postpone the moment when the sentence commits itself to a final ending. Some early critics of Woolf criticize the equalizing tendency (typical of the paratactic structures of semicolons) on the ground that it reflects the woman's refusal or inability to take sides and express personal opinions. Bradbrook (1932:22), for example, suggested that 'Everything receives the same slightly strained attention: the effect is not unlike that of tempera painting, where there is exquisite delicacy of colour, but no light and shade'; and he continues 'To demand "thinking" from Mrs Woolf is clearly illegitimate: but such a deliberate repudiation of it and such a smoke screen of feminine charm is surely to be deprecated' (ibid:25).

According to the principle of the 'hierarchy of strength' of punctuation marks, semicolon occupies an in-between position between the full stop, a strong mark, and the comma, a weak mark (Garavelli 2003:82). In outlining the use of punctuation in contemporary Italian texts, Garavelli points out that semicolons are often interchangeable with commas, full stops or colons, and that it is the level of flexibility or rigidity of the texture that determines their use. Semicolons are more common in controlled kinds of writing (e.g. legal texts), where the author is concerned with the duration of the pauses and with the syntactical hierarchies established between them (ibid:73-69). Lodge (1993:26), on the other hand, suggests that the frequent use of semicolons in Woolf sustains a paratactic syntax, whereby clauses are joined together in a loose fashion. Lodge and Garavelli seem to highlight two apparently contradictory functions of semicolons. Whereas Lodge relates them to the 'loose sentence' that has no ending, Garavelli relates them to a rigid and precise syntactical organization.

Although these two functions of semicolons are apparently contradictory, critics of Woolf highlight both aspects in her writings: continuity and incompleteness on the one hand, rigidity and control on the other. Sue Roe (1990) describes Woolf's style as rather constrained in self-expression (although she does not explicitly refer to semicolons), often over-structured, and non-spontaneous, rather 'veiled or glassy'. Row explains that this narrative strategy is evidence of the self-censorship of female desire and the marginalization of the subject (ibid:1-8; 22). Parkes (1992:94) refers explicitly to how the two functions of semicolons described above are fulfilled in Woolf's writing. On the one hand, they exercise control over the readers' response – for example by distinguishing Narrative Report (NR) from Free Indirect Speech (FIS), as in: 'She could see their mind so clearly (NR); why wouldn't they just look and see hers instead of waiting for some impossible pronouncement' (FIS). On the other, semicolons guarantee continuity in the narrative because they allow the gradual transition between different kinds of speech in a sentence. According to Parkes, semicolons have an anaphoric function because they create unusual pauses that arrest the readers' attention and encourage them to relate back to something previously mentioned in the text. In Woolf's

novels, the anaphoric co-referencing function of semicolons contributes to represent the characters' stream of consciousness as a continuous thinking process.

Without referring specifically to semicolons, Lidoff (1986) points out that the linguistic and semantic structures of *To the Lighthouse* paradoxically sustain two opposite views of the world: the female view (vague and personal, represented by Mrs Ramsay) and the male view (logical and abstract, represented by Mr Ramsay). This male/female dualism seems to be inherent in the syntactic and pragmatic functions of semicolons. On the one hand, they set hierarchical borders within the sentence (male), and on the other, guarantee continuity and fluidity in the narrative (female).

In translating Woolf, Fusini prefers more extreme punctuation to the semicolon. In the example below, Fusini eliminates semicolons and replaces them with more distinctive marks (commas, full stops) or marks that have a clear illocutionary meaning, such as exclamation marks. The passage is from the first page of *Mrs Dalloway* (MD) and is representative of the translator's strategies because it contains most of the shifts that occur in other translations by Fusini.

Example 1

ST (Source Text)

Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; (1) Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway. What a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; (2) like the flap of a wave; (3) the kiss of a wave; (4) chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; (5) looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; (6) standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, 'Musing among the vegetables?' – was that it? – 'I prefer men to cauliflowers' – 'was that it?' – He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace – Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; (7) it was his sayings one remembered; (8) his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished – how strange it was! – a few sayings like about cabbages. (MD, p. 5)

TT (Target Text)

La signora Dalloway disse che i fiori li avrebbe comprati lei.

Quanto a Lucy aveva già il suo daffare. Si dovevano togliere le porte dai cardini; (1) gli uomini di Rumpelmayer sarebbero arrivati tra poco. E poi, pensò Clarissa Dalloway, che mattina – fresca come se fosse stata appena creata per i bambini su una spiaggia.

Che gioia! Che terrore! Sempre aveva avuto questa impressione, quando con un leggero cigolio dei cardini, lo stesso che senti proprio ora, a Bourton spalancava le persiane e si tuffava nell'aria aperta. Com'era fresca, calma, più ferma di qui, naturalmente, l'aria la mattina presto, (2) pareva il tocco di un'onda, (3) il bacio di un'onda; (4) fredda e pungente, e (per una diciottenne com'era lei allora) solenne, perchè in piedi di fronte alla finestra aperta, lei aveva allora la sensazione che sarebbe successo qualcosa di tremendo, (5) mentre continuava a fissare i fiori, e gli alberi che emergevano dalla nebbia che a cerchi si sollevava fra le cornacchie in volo. (6) E stava lì e guardava, quando Peter Walsh disse: 'In meditazione tra le verze?' Disse così? O disse: 'Io preferisco gli uomini ai cavoli?' Doveva averlo detto a colazione una mattina che lei era uscita sul terrazzo – Peter Walsh. Stava per tornare dall'India, sì uno di questi giorni, in giugno o a luglio forse, non ricordava bene, perchè le sue lettere erano così noiose; (7) ma certe sue espressioni rimanevano impresse, (8) gli occhi, il temperino, il sorriso, quel suo modo di fare scontroso, e tra milioni di cose ormai del tutto svanite – com'era strano! – alcune espressioni, come questa dei cavoli. (SD, p. 1)

There are 8 semicolons in the ST, which are translated with 3 semicolons, 4 commas and 1 full stop. Here is a brief description of their functions in ST and TT:

(1) marks a change of topic, from ‘the doors’ to ‘Rumpelmayer’s men’. It has a strong demarcative function and is replaced by a semicolon in the TT.

(2) and (3) have a serial function, separating very short nominal phrases that depend on the same head clause ‘How fresh, how calm [...] the air was’. In the TT they are replaced by commas.

(4) marks a change of topic. It has a strong demarcative function because it introduces a complex sentence and a change of topic from ‘air’ to ‘she’. In the TT, it is retained as a semicolon.

(5) and (6) introduce a series of adjuncts referring to ‘she’ (‘looking at the flowers, standing’). In the TT, (5) is replaced by a comma followed by the coordinating conjunction *mentre* (‘while’) that establishes a logical link of simultaneity between the actions. (6) is replaced by a full stop that creates a new sentence. In the ST, the focus on ‘standing’ is reinforced in the TT by topicalization the addition of *lì* (‘there’) and of *e* (‘and’): *E stava lì* (‘And she was there’). The topicalization (placing in front position) of spatial determinants is a recurring pattern of shift in Fusini’s translations and highlights the importance of spatial and temporal deixis as elements of textual cohesion.

(7) has a strong demarcative function; like (1), it is retained in the TT, and it is reinforced by the addition of *ma* (‘but’): this makes the contrastive relation between the two clauses more explicit.

(8) has a weak serial function. In the TT, it is replaced with a comma.

The semicolons that are retained in the TT are those with a clearly demarcative function: marking a change of topic and separating independent units of thought. The semicolons with a weakly demarcative function are either downgraded to the level of commas or reinforced by the addition of connectives. This example shows Woolf’s tendency to choose in-between positions and, by contrast, the translator’s tendency to polarize by choosing strong and weak marks. In the TT, weak marks are often accompanied by explicit logical links. In comparison with another contemporary Italian translation of the same novel,¹ this translation is particularly rich in explicit links that fill the logical ellipses of the ST and provide the reader with clear-cut, unambiguous meanings.

The tendency to clarify ambiguous meanings and create conceptual hierarchies and binary oppositions, as I show later, is typical of the argumentative narrative. Tim Parks (1998) has found that this strategy is commonly used by most Italian translators of English modernist writers. He criticises the tendency of translators to simplify texts by adding explicit connectives and argues that ‘what is not easily comprehensible must mean more than what could easily be said’ (1998:68). Shoshana Blum-Kulka (1986) argues that explicitation is widespread among both professional and non-professional translators. The simplification of elements of cohesion when there is no syntactical correspondence between L1 and L2 has also been described as a typical trait of *traduzione* (Beretta 1982),² which may modify drastically the narrative and semantic structure of the ST. The elimination of syntactic and

lexical ambiguity facilitates the processing of information by the reader and his/her interpretation of the text.

One of the main functions attributed to semicolons in Woolf's writings is the creation of a multiple viewpoint: semicolons allow a shift of point of view from the characters to the external narrator and vice-versa. These shifts create an effect of multiple consciousness intervening in the narration that disorientate the readers because they eliminate fixed points of reference against which the readers can measure their own opinions on the text (Torsello 1991). The translator tends to establish clarity and a sense of order in the point of view by keeping the narrator's voice separated from the characters' voices and making them both 'speak louder' than in the ST. Polarization and disambiguation are forms of binarism that erase the sense of merging and inclusion that are typical of Woolf's narrative and her female sentence.

Exclamation marks

Exclamation marks, argues Garavelli, are the graphical representation of emotional reactions, feelings and sensations (2003:97). Fusini tends to substitute semicolons with exclamation marks which has the effect of making the characters' voices 'speak louder' and which adds an element of directness to the reported speech. Garavelli (1993:398-99) suggests that the introduction of elements of direct speech (such as exclamation marks) in direct discourse is indicative of the trend widespread in contemporary narrative to shorten the gap between written and spoken language.³

In the following example from *Mrs Dalloway* (MD), the exclamation mark is introduced in the Narrative Report expressing directly Lucrezia's despair at the sight of her husband's (Septimus) madness:

Example 2

ST: Far rather would she [Reiza] that he were dead! (1) She could not sit beside him [Septimus] when he started so and did not see her and made everything terrible; (2) (MD:26)

TT: Piuttosto lei s'augurava che fosse morto! (1) Non ce la faceva a stare seduta accanto a lui, quando si fissava a quel modo e non la vedeva neppure! (2) (SD, p. 19)

In the ST, Lucrezia's outburst is gradually toned down and the second clause assumes the tone of a lament by the effect of the reiterated 'and', and by the use of a semicolon at the end of the clause. Whereas the exclamation mark (1) foregrounds the character's voice, the semicolon (2) promotes the intervention of the external narrator turning the speech into a form of standard Narrative Report (3rd person narration). In the TT, on the other hand, the two exclamation marks (1) and (2) sustain the excited tone of the character's voice throughout both sentences concealing the external narrator's voice.

Dashes, Adjunctive and Contrastive Links

It is typical of Fusini's translation to add dashes or adversative links often to replace commas, semicolons or the adjunct *and*. Parkes (1993:94-95) maintains that the dash may indicate changes from one speaker to another one, changes in the direction of thoughts or interruptions of the interior monologue. According to Lynn Truss (2003), the dash is an informal and

colloquial punctuation mark and is often preferred by contemporary writers to the semicolon. Truss points out that, whereas the semicolon suggests a connection between two sentences, the dash acts as a bridge between ‘bits of fractured sense’ (ibid:122). Functioning as a bridge, the dash breaks the continuity between sentences suggesting that there is a logical gap the reader needs to fill (Garavelli 2003:108). A text where clauses are connected by dashes appears therefore to be more fragmentary and elliptic than a text where semicolons, commas or ‘ands’ are used as inter-clause or intersential linkage. Garavelli (1993:393) and Dardano (1999:219) point out that contemporary Italian writers make use of dashes as iconic devices to single out images or thoughts.

In the following example, the dash in the TT isolates the reporting clause *continuò Lily* (‘Lily continued’) from the rest of the sentence, foregrounding that these are the character’s words and her opinions being reported. The reporting clause is also moved to final position. In the ST, instead, *she continued* blends in smoothly with the rest of the sentence appearing in parenthetical position between two commas:

Example 3

ST: ‘You have greatness, **she continued**, but Mr Ramsay has none.’ (TL:29)

TT: ‘In lei, Bankes, c’è grandezza, ma in Ramsay no – **continuò Lily**.’ (AF:52).

BT: ‘In her, Bankes, there is greatness, but in Ramsay there isn’t.’ – *Lily continued*.

In example 4, the dash introduced by the translator has the effect of foregrounding the visual impact of key images:

Example 4

ST: And with a painful effort of concentration, she focused her mind [...] upon a phantom kitchen table, one of those scrubbed board tables, grained and knotted, whose virtue seems to have been laid bare by years of muscular integrity, **which stuck there, its four legs in the air**. (TL:28)

TT: Con un penoso sforzo di concentrazione, fissò la mente [...] su un tavolo di cucina fantasma, la cui integra muscolatura è virtù che si mostra negli anni – **che ora stava lì con le quattro zampe all’aria**.’ (AF:50)

BT: *With a painful effort of concentration, she focused her mind [...] on a phantom kitchen table, whose integral musculature is a virtue laid bare by the years – which stood there with its four legs in the air.*

The kitchen table is a key image in the novel, as it is used to represent Mr Ramsay’s philosophical concept of the difference between the subject and the object. This is the way Andrew, the Ramsays’ eldest son, explains to Lily Briscoe Mr Ramsay’s philosophical thought: ‘Subject and object and the nature of reality’ Andrew said. And when she said Heavens, she had no notion what that meant, ‘Think of a kitchen table then’, he told her, ‘when you’re not there.’ (TL:28).

Roe (1990:106) claims that the frequent use of distal indefinite deictics (‘that’, ‘there’, ‘that thing’) in Woolf’s narrative indicates that female subjectivity rejects the solidity of objects that, men take as starting points for the description of reality (eg. Mr Ramsay’s philosophy exemplified by a ‘the kitchen table’). In the TT, the discrepancy between a male and a female way of conceptualizing reality is emphasized by the ironic effect created by *zampe* that is a hyponym of *gambe* (‘legs’) but relates to the semantic field of animals.

Dashes and adversative adjuncts may be introduced to substitute the reiterated *and* that is frequently used by Woolf, often preceded by a comma or even by a full stop. As Beaugrande

(1981:71-72) says conjunctions such as *and* ‘can carry across the boundaries of the sentence’, which seems to explain very well the effect that the reiterated *and* has in Woolf’s writing, namely of transgressing the borders of the closed sentence. Moreover, conjunctions (such as *and*) are used to ‘link things which have the same status, e.g. both true in the textual world’, whereas contrajunctions (such as *but*) are used to ‘ease problematic transitions at points where seemingly improbable combinations of events or situations arise’ (ibid:71-73). Hatim and Mason (1990:207-209) point out that *and* in English is a polysemantic connective and can be used to signal different kinds of relationships (e.g. additive, temporal, adversative, consequential). Its meaning may be implicit and the reader may be asked to retrieve unstated assumptions. This, Hatim and Mason claim, enhances the reader’s participation in the text. They suggest that translators should try and strike a balance between preserving the original style and providing the connectives required by the target language; they conclude that ‘it is motivation which will be the deciding factor in the conflict between, on one hand, the desire to improve the cohesion of the target text in conformity with TL norms and, on the other, the duty to reflect the “style” of the source text’ (ibid:208).

The following extract from *To the Lighthouse* (TL) illustrates the translator’s strategy of substituting implicit *ands* with a more explicit cohesive marker (*but*) and a dash. The text refers to the voice of Lily Briscoe, who is the main female character in the novel (together with Mrs Ramsay).

Example 5

ST: *and* to follow her thought was like following a voice which speaks too quickly to be taken down by one’s pencil, **and the voice was her own voice** saying without prompting undeniable, everlasting, contradictory **things**. (TL:29)

TT: *ma* seguire quei pensieri era come inseguire una voce che parli troppo in fretta per trascriverla a penna – **quella voce era la sua**, e diceva senza suggerimenti **verità** innegabili, eterne, contraddittorie. (AF:51).

BT: but to follow those thoughts was like following a voice which speaks too quickly to be written down – that voice was her own voice and said without prompting undeniable, everlasting, contradictory truths.

In the ST, the two clauses are introduced by *and*, which suggests that the thinking process of Lily is slow and continuous. In the translation, the two *ands* are replaced by the adversative *ma* (‘but’) and the dash. *Ma* introduces an evaluative relationship of contrast with the preceding sentence, indicating the external narrator’s voice clarify the meaning of *and*. The dash, on the other hand, reinforces the character’s voice. Indeed, the graphic iconicity of the dash marks a visual break that helps the reader focalize on the possessive determinant: – *quella voce era la sua* (‘that voice was her own voice’). This strategy may be read as compensatory because it transfers the function of *her own* onto the dash. However, the overall effect of the introduction of the dash in the TT is that the individuality and singularity of Lily’s voice are amplified.

It is worth noticing that Lily’s thoughts are translated as *verità* ‘truths’ rather than *cose* ‘things’. *Verità* is a much more specific noun and charges the words attributed to Lily’s voice with symbolic and absolute values. In the translations of *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* (TL), there is evidence of a rigid symbolic over-structure that limits the open-ended meaning of Woolf’s images and metaphors. On this occasion, I limit myself to one example from the translation of TL: *the symbols of marriage, husband and wife* (TL:80) translated as *simboli del matrimonio, la moglie e il marito assoluti* (‘the absolute wife and husband’) (AF:93). The

emphasis on the ‘absolute’ value of the social construct of marriage is coherent with the translator’s tendency to mark clear-cut points of reference, provide definite unambiguous statement – or *truths* – and, generally speaking, close the ‘open sentence’.

This next example shows that even dashes, at times, are eliminated and substituted by more explicitly cohesive forms.

Example 6

ST: ‘Musing among the vegetables?’ – was that it? – ‘I prefer men to cauliflowers’ – was that it?’ (MD:5).

TT: ‘In meditazione tra le verze?’ **Disse** così? **O disse:** ‘Io preferisco gli uomini ai cavoli?’ (SD:1).

BT: ‘Musing among the vegetables? Did she say so? Or did she say: ‘I prefer men to cauliflowers?’

In Example 6, the dashes in the ST introduce free direct thought – ‘*was that it?*’ – embedded within a form of direct speech.⁴ This use of the dash was a common practice among other modernist writers such as Joyce, who employed dashes to introduce Direct Thought and Free Direct Thought (Short 1982:188). Fusini has eliminated the dashes and introduced a reporting verb *disse* (‘said’) instead. In the ST, the sense of difficulty of the recalling process is reinforced by the reiteration of “– *was that it?* –”, which has an anaphoric function that induces the reader to go back and re-read the first part of the sentence. As Parkes (1992:95) suggests, one of the functions of the dash is to show the fragmentation of a remembered dialogue and the character’s efforts to recollect it. This process of going backward and forward in the reading process reflects the fluctuations of the characters’ thought processes, which are constantly moving from the present to the past and vice-versa. The translator eliminates the repetition and introduces the cataphoric link *o* (‘or’). Beaugrande (1981:72) explains that the disjunction ‘or’ is used to ‘link things which have alternative status, e.g. two things of which only one can be true in the textual world’. Simone (1990:419-20) points out that the function of connectives is not only to link clauses and sentences but also to move the discourse forward and contribute to the communicative dynamism of a text. Hence, the introduction of *o* (‘or’) pushes the discourse forward enhancing communicative dynamism and anticipating a counter argument. This modification affects the way the character’s thoughts are presented: rather than being loosely connected as in a form of ‘stream of consciousness’, they are structured around the opposition ‘either/or’. The limitations posed by the binary opposition counters comprehensiveness and inclusion that are said to be typical of the female discourse.

Sidiropolou’s (1995) research into the translation of press writing from English into Greek shows that Greek translators tend to introduce adversative connectives in the TT in order to clarify ambiguous or unclear links. Sidiropolou concludes that Greek translators show awareness of their audience, an audience that often assumes oppositional stances towards the official views presented by the media. In other words, the Greek audience seems to appreciate, more than the English one, a type of argumentative narrative. However, it should be noted that Western philosophical and scientific thought in general are based on binarism and that binary logic is taught to children through oppositions (night/day, big/small) in order to facilitate their learning process (Cameron 1992:86-87). Structuring the argumentation according to conceptual oppositions may therefore be interpreted as the translator’s attempt to simplify the processing of the reader’s information (*traduzionesese*).

Full stops

The tendency to complete and close the unfinished Woolfian sentence is achieved through the modification of punctuation marks (e.g. using full stops instead of semicolons) and of lexical items. The totalizing role of the full stop has been clearly explained by the Italian linguist Angela Ferrari (1997-98:54): ‘The intuitive value of the full stop consists of asking the reader to totalize the results of the interpretative process so far achieved [forcing him/her] to conclude and re-start the interpretative process after each single unit of information’ (my translation).⁵ In other words, the full stop marks a sharp break conveying a sense of conclusion and satisfaction for the attainment of a final goal. In the TT they are used to: (i) separate independent sentences/units of thought; and (ii) create a double focalization on the elements immediately preceding and following it. In the following example, four semicolons are replaced by full stops, thus breaking the flow of Lily’s thoughts:

Example 7

ST: ‘He is petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; (1) he is spoilt; (2) he is a tyrant; (3) he wears Mrs Ramsay to death; (4) but he has what you (she addressed Mr Bankes) have not; (5) a fiery unworldliness; he knows nothing; he loves dogs and his children. He has eight. You have none.’ (TL:29-30)

TT: ‘Ramsay è meschino, egoista, vanitoso, egocentrico. (1) È viziato. (2) È un tiranno. (3) Farà morire la moglie. (4) Ma ha ciò che lei non ha (si rivolgeva sempre in silenzio a Bankes): (5) un fiero disprezzo delle cose mondane, non si cura delle sciocchezze, ama i cani e i bambini. Ne ha otto. Lei invece non ne ha nemmeno uno.’ (AF:52)

In the TT, the full stops and the colon (5) enclose Lily’s thoughts within a tighter discursive structure marked by conceptual and syntactic hierarchies. Closing the sentences with the full stop is indicative of the translator’s tendency to conclude what was left ‘suspended’ in Woolf’s sentence.

The last example shows that the translator modifies the Woolfian concept of a unified whole by introducing an element of consequentiality that puts the emphasis on the beginning and the end of the event rather than, as in the ST, on its cyclical nature.

Example 8

ST: He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death. (MD:96)

TT: Aveva partecipato a tutto lo spettacolo **dall’inizio alla fine**; aveva conosciuto l’amicizia, la Guerra, la morte. (SD:77)

BT: She had taken part to the whole show from the beginning to the end; she had known friendship, war, death.

The addition of *dall’inizio alla fine* (‘from the beginning to the end’) implies that a whole is a linear construct, with clearly delimited beginning and end. This is at odds with Woolf’s effective deconstruction of patriarchal linear thought. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf mocks the male need to proceed ‘from A to Z’ that is typical of the dominant western philosophy as represented by the character of Mr. Ramsay. As I have mentioned above, the emphasis on the conclusion of a process is exemplified by the frequent use of the full stop.

Conclusion

The translator’s strategies as regards punctuation can be summarized as follows:

- (1) elimination of in-between ambiguous positions through the use of punctuation marks that have a clearly demarcated function;
- (2) erosion of the multiple perspective and emphasis on the characters' voice by the use of exclamation marks or dashes;
- (3) creation of binary constructions by the introduction of adversative conjunctions;
- (4) tendency to close the Woolfian open sentence through the frequent use of full stops.

The effects of these strategies are twofold and apparently contradictory. On the one hand, disambiguation and a better definition of the narrative voices liberate the rather constrained syntax of the original. Breaking away from the idea of a multiple consciousness and affirming the singularity of the individual may be viewed as the textualization of a new liberated form of female voice and a more assertive female sentence. On the other hand, binary constructions and logical thinking pose limitations to the free and open-ended female discourse of Woolf's narrative. The pragmatic function shared by these two strategies is that they both foster effective communication by simplifying the message and facilitating the processing of information by the reader. This is condemned by some feminist critics as a landmark of a patriarchal system centered on efficiency and goal-directed actions. Cixous claims that the logic of communication requires an economy both of signs and subjectivity, but 'whereas the orator has to be dry and taut, women like to 'waste' words and make oneself reverberate' (1997:98).

My analysis of punctuation strategies reveals that Fusini seems to assume what Rachel May calls the 'editorial role', whereby punctuation is used to resolve incomplete phrases or separate ambiguous intertwined narrative voices. According to May, French and Russian translators use the editorial approach in translating Woolf's novels (1997:5). Fusini's de-textualization of the *female sentence* betrays the Woolfian concept of femininity; she seems to turn to the logic of patriarchal discourse by modernizing, simplifying and disambiguating the Woolfian text.

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Notes

¹ *La signora Dalloway*, trans. by Alessandra Scalero, Milano: Oscar Mondadori, 1989.

² Beretta suggests that *traduzione*, by analogy with *motherese*, is a kind of simplified language like 'baby-talk', 'mother talk' or 'foreigner talk' (1982:248-49).

³ On the inflection of spoken language in Free Direct/Indirect Speech see also Dardano (1999:217-226).

⁴ Michael H. Short (1982:181-192) identifies a similar strategy in James Joyce, where the dash is used to mark the introduction of Direct Thought or Free Direct Thought.

⁵ 'Il valore intrinseco del [0]punto consiste nel richiedere di totalizzare i risultati dell'operazione interpretativa eseguita sino a quel momento. Il punto [...] costringe chi legge a concludere e ricominciare il conto interpretativo dopo ogni minima informazione' (Ferrari 1997-98:54)

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