

Women journalists, writers and translators in southern Italy from the early twentieth century to the second post-war period*

Annarita Taronna

Università degli studi di Bari Aldo Moro

Dipartimento Di Scienze Della Formazione, Psicologia, Comunicazione

Piazza Umberto I

70121 Bari

annarita.taronna@uniba.it

ORCID: 0000-0002-6974-4484



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Abstract

This contribution retraces the map of those women who collaborated with some of the most significant Apulian newspapers and periodicals by starting with the reconstruction of the main journalistic writings that spread throughout Apulia and then examining them from a synchronic perspective. In more concrete terms, the selected texts were classified under the name of the author, of whom a brief biographical profile is given, and examined in order to interrogate some key-issues. Among them, the contribution explores the trajectories of three female journalists and translators as case-studies (Emilia Bernardini Macor, Elvira Catello, Teresa Labriola), along with writing, journalism and translation as a means for education and emancipation. Against this background, translating proves to be a minor and invisible activity mostly used to support and enrich journalism; it stands as a complementary and intellectual activity, not experienced or practised as a profession in and of itself.

Keywords: gender; translation; ideology; censorship

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Abstract. *Giornaliste, scrittrici e traduttrici nell'Italia meridionale dall'inizio del xx secolo al secondo dopoguerra*

Questo contributo ripercorre la cartografia delle donne che hanno collaborato con alcuni dei più importanti quotidiani e periodici pugliesi, partendo dalla ricostruzione dei principali scritti giornalistici diffusi in Puglia e analizzandoli poi da una prospettiva sincronica. Più concretamente, i testi selezionati sono stati classificati in base al nome dell'autrice, di cui viene fornito un breve profilo biografico, ed esaminati al fine di interrogarsi su alcune questioni chiave. Tra queste, il contributo esplora le traiettorie di tre giornaliste e traduttrici come casi di studio (Emilia Bernardini Macor, Elvira Catello, Teresa Labriola), focalizzando sul rapporto tra scrittura, giornalismo e traduzione come mezzi di istruzione ed emancipazione. In questo contesto, la traduzione si rivela un'attività minore e invisibile, utilizzata principalmente per sostenere e arricchire il giornalismo; essa si configura come un'attività complementare e intellettuale piuttosto che come professione a sé stante.

Parole chiavi: genere; traduzione; ideologia; censura

Summary

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1. Introduction

Accordingly, this paper aims at examining the role of women journalists in a sample of Apulian newspapers from the early twentieth century to the second post-war period. More specifically, it aims at analysing the relationship between gender identity and journalism as a profession and at tracing the map of those women who collaborated with some of the most significant Apulian general newspapers and periodicals by starting with the reconstruction of the main journalistic writings that spread throughout Apulia and then examining them from a synchronic perspective.¹ To this end, both physical archives and digital catalogues (i.e. library OPACs, manuscript or archival databases, digital repositories and institutional collections) have been consulted and a specific methodology has

1. The complex research activities on the sources and archival materials benefited from the competent support of Dr. Marco Lavopa (historian of the contemporary age and associate at Umr-Sirice, Paris1-Paris4-Cnrs), Dr. Antonietta De Felice (Director of the Biblioteca Nazionale Sagarriga Visconti Volpi Bari), Dr. Felice Miscioscia (Librarian at the Biblioteca Nazionale Sagarriga Visconti Volpi) and Dr. Daniela Raimondi (Librarian at the Biblioteca Ricchetti).

been adopted by resorting to keyword searching, author/title/identifier searches (especially for known items) and cross-reference across multiple catalogues.

The portraits have been classified in the form of bio-bibliographical sketches, from which some challenging issues emerge: most of the women journalists were linked to influential family ties; most of them were conventionally allowed to write on such topics as fashion, costume, arts and literary writing rather than scientific, political, administrative or economic ones; some of them were Apulian but living and writing from other regions and from other countries working for Apulian newspapers; other women writers were non-Apulian but moved to the South for some family reasons; and the eclectic nature of their contributions as journalists was enriched, in some specific cases, by the excellent knowledge of one or more foreign languages.

Women have been important, and yet overlooked, actors in the history of both journalism and translation despite the so-called feminization of the profession that affected Italy in the 1930s. Accordingly, the social and historical context in which such activities were embedded has become a primary field of study particularly in relation to how the women portrayed in this study have often been victims of a double invisibility, as both journalists and translators. To borrow Santoyo Medievilla's metaphor, "if we think of the history of translation as a mosaic", we must admit that silenced or marginalized female voices² make up "many small pieces or missing tesserae" (Santoyo 2006: 13).

To this end, this contribution draws on what has been defined as the "archival turn" in translation studies (Munday 2013; Cordingley & Hersant 2021). This approach can in fact be extended to women's writing more broadly, as it has fostered the valorization of micro-histories of women writers, journalists, and translators. In doing so, it contributes to the recognition of their intellectual profiles and female subjectivity by uncovering lost traces and bringing these women out of the shadows. In more concrete terms, the retrieval and collection of sources of bio-bibliographical information was carried out from November 2022 to June 2023 through the consultation of local catalogues³ (both printed and digital) accessible through very substantial archives such as the Cultural Internet.⁴ The collected texts were classified under the name of the author, of whom a brief biographical profile is given, and examined in order to interrogate such issues as the trajectories of female journalists and translators, along with writing, journalism and translation as a means for education and emancipation. Yet, these bio-biblio-

2. Among the scholars who have more contributed to these issues, it is worth mentioning Donato & Martin (2024); and Alvstad et al. (2017).
3. Among these, the "digital collection" project on the Salento Feminine deserves to be mentioned. This digital collection is part of the Archive of Salento Women's Writing project, coordinated by Rosanna Basso and Marisa Forcina, which aims to identify and enhance writings, publications, funds and documentary material that can open up a glimpse of the Salento Feminine and contribute to increasing knowledge of it.
4. *Internet culturale* is a web portal of the National Library Service providing access to digital resources and catalogues of Italian libraries, archives and cultural institutions. See <<https://www.internetculturale.it/>>.

graphical profiles are sometimes very scant due to the collaborations of women who, for various reasons, were unable to give continuity to their journalistic and translation activity.

2. The Apulian women's press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

At the end of the nineteenth century, Italy was pervaded by a series of changes that also affected the role of women in society and cultural processes that were a reflection of what was happening in Europe. In England, as in France, women increasingly gained access to external help for managing the household, as well as to consumer goods such as sewing machines and products for personal hygiene, home care, and clothing. These tangible signs of growing economic well-being and social progress enabled many women to redefine their place in society, devote more time to raising their children, and choose how to occupy their free time (Anderson & Zinsser 1993). These same changes brought about the proliferation of costume and fashion columns published in numerous European magazines that favoured women as their editorial target and were particularly interested in influencing their opinion and tastes.

In Italy, this new trend has Milan as its propelling centre, from where various editorial initiatives originated involving both the upper middle class and the middle class. Among these initiatives, to name but a few, family, pedagogical and literary magazines saw the collaboration and direction of some women, including the first female graduates, a sign of the changes linked to the emancipationist movement. Accordingly, in the long and complex path of women's literacy in southern Italy from Unification to Fascism, school and education assumed a fundamental importance as witnessed by the proliferation of pedagogical magazines aimed at teachers and educators⁵. Women who collaborated with these magazines were able to engage in a dialogue with female readers, providing advice, suggestions and information on vacancies, thereby creating a network that appeared to be functional and functioning. In addition, in the first post-unification decades, this new impetus gave some daring women the opportunity to enter the publishing industry with paid work, initially as authors of articles, translators of short stories and plays by foreign authors, and later as founders and editors of newspapers.

Such a process fuelled the "vulgarization" of fashion, along with the dissemination of sentimental novels, promoted by the periodical press along with that of its "feminization",⁶ which had, however, excluded politics from its content. Considering that the proliferation of news and political newspapers was one of the first signs of the restoration of civil liberties, it is legitimate to wonder how it intersected with gender issues, given that with a few notable exceptions (e.g., Matilde Serao), southern journalism was not "a thing for women". This is evident

5. See, for example, Fabio Guidali's contribution on the *rotocalchi* of Italian women's *rotocalchi* that was published in Fólica, Roig-Sanz & Caristia (2020).

6. Cf. Pellegrino and Bernardini Macor (DATI, 2019).

from the all-male composition of the editorial staff of Apulian newspapers and periodicals.

In the liberal age (1861-1922), if we exclude Apulian writer Emilia Bernardini Macor, women interacting with printed communication venues were sporadic and privileged themes of domestic economy and etiquette, as well as columns or reviews of literary works aimed at broadening the female public and addressing its interests and inclinations. This construction both reflected the objective of nationalizing women's culture and witnessed a social process through which women's writing showed the cultural sedimentation and innovative thrusts taking place at the end of the nineteenth century.

However, the process of feminization of newspapers developed in terms of readership, women journalists, and the inclusion of topics and themes aimed at "women", did not consolidate homogeneously on the territory, since the readership on a national scale was marked by different geographical and social features. Apulia, for example, featured the emergence of many newspapers expressing the different political and cultural currents run by a class of male humanists, mainly lawyers, and, thus, a declared female presence was not conceivable, also because of the high rate of female illiteracy. Although, around 1883, thirty-six newspapers and magazines were present in the region, at the end of the nineteenth century, there were no newspapers or magazines explicitly dedicated to women or directed by women. However, columns aimed at a female audience and dedicated to fashion, etiquette and society news began to appear in the most relevant newspapers of a political-administrative nature, including *La Provincia di Lecce* (1896-1926), the *Corriere meridionale* (1890-1967), and the *Gazzetta delle Puglie* (1881-1918). Such columns were often published anonymously or under pseudonyms, thus concealing the gender of the writer.

Women's names and pseudonyms become much more frequent, and the editors of the various columns – then recognized thanks to particular biographical contingencies or archival excavations – adopt a friendly and confidential tone in order to share news, information and advice with the female readership. Female collaborators who signed their articles with pseudonyms are also found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Apulian newspapers and periodicals, as evidenced by the bio-bibliographical profiles reconstructed for Emilia Bernardini Macor, Elvira Catello, Teresa Labriola. What emerges from these women journalists' profiles is that journalism and translation are two key cultural practices that played significant roles in shaping gender identity and public discourse, in influencing perceptions, and in fostering understanding across different cultures and communities.

Crucially, in the early twentieth century, women journalists' knowledge of foreign languages was an important resource for cultural dissemination and translation. In a period marked by profound political, social and cultural changes, women journalists were tasked not only with informing, but also with interpreting and communicating the complexity of national and international reality. Speaking, reading and writing in foreign languages gave them access to a wider range of information sources, from newspaper articles from other countries to

new cultural rituals and trends, literary works and institutional documents. This not only broadened the cultural horizon of Emilia Bernardini Macor, as well as of her contemporary women journalists, but also allowed them to bring the voices and experiences of other peoples to a broader audience. Due to their overlapping roles, these women can be maybe better categorized as cultural mediators⁷ who translated information and sensibilities from different realities into a language that local audiences could understand. Through their publications, these women not only informed, but also helped to form a more critical and open-minded public opinion about the world. Thus, the knowledge of foreign languages constituted an invaluable tool not only for accessing information, but also for translating and sharing different cultures, emphasizing the importance of writing for journalism as a means of cross-cultural dialogue and understanding (Lefevere 1992; Young Yun 2017).

Among the most influential women journalists, Emilia Bernardini Macor (Lecce, 1865-1926) is worth mentioning for encompassing all the features mentioned above, that is multilingualism and overlapping roles. She used to sign under the pseudonym Ermacora her column “Corriere della moda,” along with two other columns on news, costume and fashion, and worldliness that from 1902 appeared in the liberal newspaper *La Provincia di Lecce*, founded and edited by her husband, Lecce lawyer Nicola Bernardini. Although there is a lack of documentation useful to reconstruct Emilia Macor’s cultural background and professional path in depth, some elements of her biography contribute to some extent to the understanding of her personality and of the patronage from which she could have benefitted. Emilia Bernardini Macor embodied a new female model for the younger generations by overcoming the stereotypes with which the female presence in southern society was usually connoted. Through her two columns “Punti, appunti e puntini...” (Dots, Notes and Dots...) and “Farfalle erranti” (Wandering Butterflies), Macor became a forerunner of women’s inclusion in civil society by devoting her writing to such topics as those that privileged local customs and fashion tips addressed to the ladies of Lecce’s fine society. Yet, she did not neglect her interests in current political events that concerned, among other things, the relationship between morality, fashion and feminism, as exemplified by the titles of some of her articles (e.g., “Woman’s True Mission”, “For and Against Divorce”, “Down with Feminism, Woman and the Vote”, and “The Sunset of Tight Dresses”). Although the two aforementioned columns did not reflect overtly political ambitions because they were formally aligned with the editorial vision dictated by Macor’s husband and the all-male editorial staff itself, the rest of her journalistic production spread much more open and progressive ideas relating precisely to women’s position in society.

Yet, there are also articles that inform the reader of her personal interests in foreign countries, cultures and fashions, including the five o’clock tea ritual and smoking green tea, both rituals prevalent across the Channel that Macor learned from reading *The Saturday Magazine*, as well as several later nineteenth-century

7. In order to better frame these issues, a key-reading is suggested: Roig-Sanz & Meylaerts (2018).

and early twentieth-century English writers.⁸ Thanks to a good knowledge of some foreign languages, like English and French, that reecho the idea of translation as a “reading in the foreign” (Taronna 2011), she could draw on news and current events published in news outlets from France and England, in particular, thus expanding her cultural horizon. She never published official translations of foreign literary works.

The lack of official translations by Macor and other women journalists highlights a significant gap in literary recognition and cultural preservation. This situation can be problematized in several ways, particularly regarding issues of power, ownership and gender identity within the field of translation, literature and journalism (Flotow 1997; Bassnett & Lefevere 1990; Lefevere 1992; Simon 1996; Tymoczko 2003; Castro 2009; Baumgarten 2012; Brevet 2019). First, it underscores the historical marginalization of women journalists, writers and translators, whose contributions have often been overshadowed or rendered invisible. In many cases, women in the literary world faced both systemic barriers and societal prejudices that limited their opportunities for recognition. Moreover, the role of the translator, particularly a female translator during this historical period, is often seen as secondary or less significant compared to that of the writer. The invisibility of these translators can contribute to reinforcing gender biases within the literary canon (Ramalhete Gomes 2017), where male authors and translators are often highlighted while female contributions remain obscured. Filling this gap is what many feminist translation scholars (Castro & Ergun 2017) have been undertaking as a sort of activist and political act by enriching the literary landscape and diversifying the narratives that are available to readers.

3. The Apulian women’s press and the rise of Fascism: Elvira Catello as a case-study

The history of the Apulian press is also marked by the contribution of some influential voices raised from Apulia in support of the regional women’s movement, which stood out for its autonomous positions with respect to political parties’ directives and to the rejection of war. Their political and ideological positions are also the result of the fact that they spoke foreign languages and had contacts and experiences of militancy and activism abroad. Even in these selected cases, the activity of translation stands in the shadow of their professional lives, and their translations were never circulated or officially published.

Among the most influential women journalists and translators of that time, it is worth mentioning Elvira Catello. Moving from Locorotondo to New York in the early twentieth century, she was a leading figure in one of the most important political-cultural groups of libertarian and anarchist tendencies in New York City

8. Among them, it is worth mentioning the English writer Elizabeth Gaskell, who devoted several of her works to the theme of tea: the novel *Cranford*, which initially appeared between 1851 and 1853 in the magazine *Household Words*, edited by Charles Dickens, and the short stories “Company Manners” (1854) and “North and South” (1855).

and she wrote in Apulian journals from there. Specifically, Catello's biographical, emancipatory and bibliographical journey evolves around both the social and political context of Apulia (profoundly marked by the first workers' and peasants' demonstrations in which a strong presence of women is evident),⁹ and the configuration of Little Italy and the Bronx as the center of Italian-American migrant communities. At the end of the nineteenth century, she was part of socialist groups in Locorotondo, where the workers' protests spread like wildfire and were also characterized by the massive presence of women. In those years, the effects of the agrarian crisis emerged, and between 1906 and 1907, several young people undertook the journey to America. Among them, Catello and her husband, Elio Perrini, sought acceptable living and working conditions overseas, escaping the repressive national and local attitude towards women. They moved to New York City, and their house became the Lux bookstore, namely, a laboratory of "subversivism" in its own right, a "den" of anarchists but also prominent figures. During the war, control activities against the publishing house-bookstore Lux intensified, which aroused the interest of the Italian Consulate. The latter, in a dispatch dated March 25, 1914, wrote to the Ministry of the Interior to request information about the couple:

For some time now, writes the Consul General in New York, certain Elvira Catello, about 25 years old, who runs a small subversive bookstore, with a newspaper kiosk, at 1946 First Avenue, has been noted here for her activity in subversive propaganda, by means of press releases, dramatic performances and proletarian parties. She would live with a certain Paolo Perrini, not better known, a native of Bari or the province. Catello should be well known at the Caffè Antonietta or at the *Libero Pensiero* printing house in Locorotondo (Bari), having had one of her dramas printed there, "Il Trionfo della Verità," that is supposed to be written by her lover, Paolo Perrini mentioned above.¹⁰

At the end of the nineteenth century, a visionary movement led by those living on the margins (i.e., immigrant, poor, semi-literate Italian women from Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, Russia, Ireland, Germany, Holland, Belgium, England, China, India, Spain, Turkey, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Jamaica, and Trinidad and exploited in the many factories scattered throughout the industrial areas) began to take shape in the area between the states of New York and New Jersey. Resorting to newspapers, as well as to pamphlets, plays, festivals and large rallies, this revolutionary workers' movement, transcending place, language, ethnicity, religion, race and gender, exposed the economic exploitation to which they were subjected

9. This reconstruction is also based on the studies conducted on US documentary material by Jennifer Guglielmo, one of the best-known scholars of radical women's movements in America. Her study, promoted by Ipsaic and the Apulia Region's Welfare Department, *Servizio Pugliesi nel Mondo*, is part of a broader research project on the phenomenon of Apulian migration in the twentieth century. See Gianfrate, Guglielmo & Leuzzi (2011).

10. This is what has been extensively documented by Gianfrate, Guglielmo & Leuzzi (2011), and by Bencivenni (2011).

within the growing world capitalist system. It was within such a diasporic labor movement that Elvira Catello shaped her New York life, moving within alternative cultural and political spaces that became well-known centers for education, political discussion, union organization and after-work immigrant organizations. She collaborated with the Italian-language anarchist press in New York, including *Il Martello* and other radical/ anarchist small-press periodicals and pamphlet series. She also corresponded and published pieces back in Italy (for example in the Locorotondo socialist paper *Seme*) and her writings were mainly about anarchism, pacifism and anti-militarism, as well as about women's emancipation and feminist themes. In this context, in addition to her documented and intense journalistic activity,¹¹ Catello was also notable for her work as a playwright for a theater company, carrying out a series of plays, staged by women that attracted the attention of the entire American feminist movement.

Due to the spread of intolerance against immigrants and the anti-fascist activities of Lux, Catello was also forced to cease operations as a result of the 1929 crisis, which resulted in the collapse of stock exchanges around the world. The restrictions on personal freedom against anarchists enforced by the US government and "the witch-hunt climate" that ensued also marked a turning point in her life. Still being hunted down until 1943, the eve of the fall of Fascism and Mussolini, the Prefect could only inform the Ministry that Catello «did not return to her homeland and she was supposed to be still in the United States of America». Elvira Catello, a strong activist for freedom, social justice and women's emancipation, passed away in 1979, in Florida, at the age of 91.

Drawing on such a challenging biographical sketch, the multifaceted nature of translation theory and practice and its reconceptualization in many cultures and research fields clearly emerges. In her specific case, the boundaries between translation and other kinds of writing like journalism reflect the assertion of dissident voices and of gendered relationships in mainstream historiography and literature. Unfortunately, due to the lack of elements that may have strongly impacted her translation practice, we cannot trace the extent to which translation became the means for the expression of her gender awareness and political ideology. We can only say that in the case of Elvira Catello, travelling from southern Italy to New York becomes essential to her literary and political activity as she moves between these two worlds, seeking to build bridges – of dialogue, friendship and poetry – between local realities and international spaces where she can take root and find a new life by engaging with political struggle and activism.

4. The Apulian women's press between the Fascist period and the post-World War II era

The national and local contexts under Fascism in Italy shared core ideological elements and practices of censorship, but regional dynamics significantly influ-

11.

enced their manifestation. In Apulia, local identity, culture, and economic conditions played a vital role in shaping how Fascist ideology and censorship were experienced and resisted, leading to variations that highlighted the complexities of implementing a uniform regime across diverse Italian regions. Geographical and economic conditions in Apulia, such as the agricultural economy and rural society, shaped the local experience of Fascism differently from urban centers like Rome or Milan, where industrial workers and urban intellectual movements were more prominent.

To maintain its grip on power, the Fascist regime implemented strict measures to control the press. This included licensing of newspapers (e.g., the government required that all publications be licensed, leading to a concentration of media outlets that adhered to Fascist ideology), pre-publication censorship (e.g., articles were often screened before publication to eliminate any content deemed critical of the regime) and propaganda promotion (e.g., the regime promoted its own newspapers and media outlets that disseminated pro-Fascist content).¹²

With respect to the cultural debate on the role of women in society under Fascism, it was enriched by the editorial contribution of a network of women who have made the Apulian press marked by exchanges of journalistic practices and feminist visions such as those developed by Teresa Labriola. She was the daughter of the well-known Marxist philosopher Antonio Labriola and Rosalia Carolina von Sprenger, of German origin, a family full of interests and intellectual and political passions. Her educational path was brilliant and complex from the very beginning: she graduated in law, and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, she held the position of lecturer in the philosophy of law, the first woman at the University of Rome, but in fact her university career did not take the form of a tenured position since her job applications never went beyond admission to the final exam. After this disappointment, she struggled to practise as a lawyer and be registered as a barrister. In July 1912, the Bar Council accepted her registration on the grounds that a professor of law could not be denied the right to practise as a lawyer, but less than a month later, first the Court of Appeal, and then the Supreme Court of Appeal in Rome, denied her admission on the grounds that she could not be admitted to the bar simply for being a woman.

From this moment on, she devoted herself with great enthusiasm to political commitment and, without following the family tradition, subscribed to the nationalist doctrine, interventionism and later fascism. At the same time, she shared many of the struggles coming from the Italian emancipationist movement by playing leading roles in women's associations for the acquisition of civil and political rights. Thanks to her multilingual education – she knew French and German, as well as the classical languages, Greek and Latin – she often represented the world of women's associations abroad, for which she made her legal skills available to undertake the revision of the civil and penal codes, especially in relation to the reform of the so-called family institution and the abolition of the regu-

12. Literature on Mussolini, censorship and periodicals is very large. However, some key-readings are here recommended: Bonsaver (2007); Rundle (2018: 29-47).

lation of prostitution – always present in feminist demands – and the claim of the right to vote and stand for election.

Her political commitments developed alongside her journalistic activity, which had begun in 1898 with the publication of an article on the limits of “the woman question” in *Il Giornale degli Economisti*, Italy’s leading economics journal. From that moment on, her articles, as well as her 1917 book on *Feminism as a Vision of Life*, became part of a broader ideological debate, laying the foundations for the analysis of contemporary Italian and European feminist theories to be interpreted as a tool to fight privilege and to achieve gender equality.

The First World War represented a personal and political turning point, since in those years she had developed a critique of Marxism that became increasingly intense. Due to her interventionist positions, she resigned from the National Council of Italian Women and supported most of the women’s initiatives aimed at supporting the war effort. She was very critical of pacifist feminism, accused of not understanding that the long separation between private and public life would be radically transformed by the war, as can be seen in the analysis conducted in the article “Men and Women in the Social Struggle,” published in the column *La pagina femminile* of the *Gazzetta di Puglia* (no. 5, year 1, March 3, 1922): “Feminism, the feminism that was supposed to be a new form of struggle, an original, heroic and ingenious way of affirmation, that one for which we struggled, and tolerated militia disciplines, ended up in vanity”.

Her nationalist feminism markedly forecast a pivotal point in fascist ideology by identifying the woman-mother as the most sensitive part of the family, who had to take an active role in the life of the state and align herself with its will. Her relationship with fascism was complex, controversial, and not without its disappointments. Although she shared the Regime’s great concern for motherhood, supported by a careful social policy, she found herself greatly embarrassed by the condemnation of birth control and the fascist pressure to expel women from the world of work, of which she herself had been a victim when she was prevented from entering the Bar. Unmarried all her life, she died alone and in less than prosperous financial circumstances in 1941. She had authored around seventy monographs and essays and more than one hundred articles, as well as several reviews, prefaces and introductions.

The last years in which prominent female reporters such Teresa Labriola were active in Apulian journalism were marked by recovering the freedom of the press thanks to the publication of new independent newspapers on the initiative of the democratic parties authorized by Badoglio. This liveliness was due to the exceptional political situation that made Bari, in those first months of freedom, an active centre of propaganda by different forces: the anti-fascist parties, the Badoglians, the monarchists and the espionage and counterespionage services. In this setting, *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* stood out as the main daily newspaper in Apulia and managed the dramatic transitions from the fascist regime to the Badoglian and then to the armistice.

5. Concluding remarks

The analysis conducted so far on Apulian women writers, translators and journalists, has privileged the period from the Unification of Italy to the post-World War II era because the gap in the existing literature and historiography mainly concerns the time span under analysis. If, on the one hand, archival research has brought to light the fragmentary nature of the stories and contributions of Apulian women reporters to journalistic and translation activity in the region, then, on the other, it has brought back voices that have sometimes never been mentioned or deservedly recognized. In those years, as the bio-bibliographical sketches presented in this contribution point out, the presence of women in the editorial staff was underrepresented, especially in terms of positions of responsibility, and was restricted to a more precarious and occasional collaboration and to an autonomous space of writing.

More specifically, the archival activity conducted has contributed to the following research outcomes with regard to issues of gender, writing for journalism, translating, ideology and censorship. First, the identification of some common thematic links features both the private and public lives of the women journalists under scrutiny (i.e., being of middle-class and/or upper-class origins; belonging to a high cultural family background marked by the knowledge of foreign languages and literatures; being married with outstanding men working in the field of national and local business, politics, law and administration; networking with other women writers (i.e. Evelina Cattermole, Tommasina Guida, Beatrice Speraz, Eva de Vincetis and Lina Asparra) who collaborated with the same newspapers or who were active within the same social setting, and married to influential husbands as well. Second, anonymous signatures and pseudonyms were used by many women journalists to publish and circulate their articles and analysis of its symbolic and political value. This means that the profession was not fully established and the same holds true with the fact that women were not fully considered in the public sphere. Although female journalists were frequently relegated to reporting on domestic issues or cultural topics, most of the articles written by the women journalists under discussion tackled such gender issues as the role of education for women, women's right to vote, women's fashion, costume, arts and domestic economy. Third, such anonymous signatures and pseudonyms can be interpreted as discursive and political strategies performed by the women journalists to allow their writing to circulate within a male-dominated profession and the male-centered context of journalism from the early twentieth century to the second post-war period. They also stand as an enactment of protection from repression, that is, as a way to conceal the woman's identity (but not only) and avoid authoritarian control over information and suppression of dissent, thus protecting themselves from state persecution, and as a way to subvert censorship. In fact, anonymity could sometimes allow journalists to bypass fascist restrictions, writing articles that would otherwise be banned or heavily censored. This covert resistance was vital for the circulation of alternative ideas and information.

Against this background, translating proves to be a minor and invisible activity mostly used to support and enrich journalism; it stands as a complementary and intellectual activity, not experienced or practised as a profession in and of itself. In such a light, translation reflects what Sherry Simon noted in her seminal work *Gender in Translation*, both a “mode of engagement with literature” and “a kind of literary activism” (1996: IX). Seemingly, these research findings may be partial and provisional in the way that no significant elements that may refer to translation as a professional and remunerated activity have been found throughout such archival research (along with the fact that no paratextual documents like translators’ notes or prefaces have yet emerged). Yet, in spite of such an overt and tangible research limit, critical attention and more archival work is still needed to fully acknowledge the enormous cultural impact of women journalists and more invisible translators and to rescue most of them from historical oblivion. Finally, this accounts for the fact that while other cultural fields have been extensively studied and women’s work is beginning to be recognized (Di Nicola 2021, Cesana, Piazzoni 2022), the history of women’s translation is still largely unwritten although many efforts have been done in this direction.

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