



FRANCESCA VIGO

*The Bewildering Role of Censorship:  
Gender Narratives and Other Stories in TV Series Translation*

The «phenomenology of the relationship between censorship and translation» requires an in-depth investigation, which, as it will be argued, should ideally start from the awareness that Translation Studies scholars have recently insisted upon, as regards the need to connect linguistic or translation studies to other extra-textual discourses. Censorship is one of the possible factors that characterise a context or a society and it can be endorsed through translation, which thus acquires political value. The aim of this article is to investigate the link that binds censorship to translation, focussing specifically on the gender related domain.

The analysis I will present concerns TV series and more specifically *Will & Grace*. TV series are among the most popular kinds of text, and they can greatly affect people's knowledge construction. For this reason, they play a social role and are an interesting domain of investigation.

The study aims at identifying if censorship is at play in TV series translation, as regards gender-related issues on TV series and, consequently, at exploring the stories told. As is widely known, Italy imports many American TV series, which undergo processes of choice and translation. In TV series translation, these procedures are even more significant given the wide reach of these texts, which may turn the translators' choices into more substantial social actions. Studies show how the general trend of TV series translation in Italy frequently encompasses omission, deletion or downgrading of certain items especially when they concern sexuality, religion, or bad language. As I will argue, a new topic or domain needs to be added to the more 'traditional' ones, namely that of family.

### *1. Introduction*

Amongst the various features and power(s) usually ascribed to translation, not enough light has been shed on its role as a form of censorship outside a political domain. Every act of translation implies making choices. In the same way, it also implies a project/plan within which those choices are made. The choices made and the changes carried out are not always required by language or cultural differences but frequently stem from different levels of the meaning making process, which might be of a more ideological nature. Hence, every act of translation bears a wider meaning than the mere linguistic one. Studying and describing translation thus entails considering the existing link between translation and its context and, more specifically, the link between it and censorship. As Billiani<sup>1</sup> maintains, political and cultural discourses and narratives are greatly influenced by writers, whose works might reach larger contexts because of the role played by translation in reducing, if not deleting, distances and language problems. The «phenomenology of the relationship between censorship and translation»<sup>2</sup> requires an in-depth investigation which, as it will be argued, should ideally start from the awareness that Translation Studies scholars have recently insisted upon, as regards the need to connect linguistic or translation studies to other extra-textual discourses, the latter often specifically linked to the media and to institutions.<sup>3</sup> Censorship is one of the possible factors that characterise a context or a society. Censorship can be endorsed through translation, which thus



acquires political value. The aim of this article is to investigate the link, which binds censorship to translation, focussing specifically on the gender related domain. The research here presented is part of a wider project and focuses on the analysis of the translation of the renowned TV series *Will & Grace*, and namely on how some gender-related topics are dealt with as far as censorship and its political role are concerned.

## 2. For a definition of censorship

There is no single definition of censorship. Starting from this supposition, I carried out a small-scale survey on facebook in an initial phase of my research. I administered a questionnaire to nearly 500 facebook users. The sample included some of my facebook 'friends' but, to avoid personal involvement, mostly other people's 'friends'. Addressees were asked to answer some questions or tasks as part of an on-going research project.

The questions I asked were:

1. Please explain the meaning of the word 'censorship';
2. Please describe what censorship is for you;
3. Please provide examples of censorship;
4. Please provide examples of censorship of our current times.

The answers to the questions will be analysed in depth and presented in another paper, however some more general remarks are to be recounted here.

As stated, the aim of the small-scale survey was to acquire some knowledge about what is normally understood as censorship. From the answers to all four questions, it emerges that censorship bears mainly a negative and disapproving meaning. It is always linked to repression and it is often described as linked to political contexts. Seldom have respondents connected censorship to anything other than the political domain.

As an answer to the first and more general question, 95% of respondents described censorship by means of negative lexical items, among the most frequently used there are: restriction, obstacle, suppression, hinder, imposition, destruction. 75% of answers also referred to some people's actions, which limited other people's freedom of expression and behaviour. The 'oppressors' were often identified as belonging to political or institutional spheres. Concerning the second question, unsurprisingly, 100% of respondents provided more personal considerations with some examples from outside the political domain as in those regarding professional spheres and, to a lesser extent, more personal and familiar ones. Nonetheless, they were still related to the concepts of suppression and limitations of freedom. Common to the answers to questions 1 and 2 was the awareness that censorship is imposed to achieve some 'secret' aims pursued by a reduced number of people (politicians, managers, and also family). The most frequent modifiers used to qualify censorship (such as bad, terrible, dangerous, harmful, shameful, awful, dreadful, endless, risky) were of a negative quality.<sup>4</sup>

As regards the third and fourth questions, 85% respondents provided examples mainly referring to widely known dictatorships and oppressive regimes: fascism, communism, the Russian experience, and to some degree China. This may unveil a bias in the composition of the sample, namely its euro-centricity. Conversely, 20% of respondents provided examples that did not refer to political contexts but to professional ones, such as big companies with strict rules and procedures. Regarding my fourth and last question, 85% of respondents reported examples concerning contemporary events, belonging either to



the political or to the social domain. A small percentage, nearly 15%, touched upon the issue of a sort of socially triggered kind of censorship, as in «*considero censura quando vorrei parlare bene di una persona e invece non posso perché è considerata cattiva da tutti e quindi tutti ci adeguiamo*» [literally: I think it is a case of censorship when I would like to say something nice about a person but I cannot because the person is not well seen by the group and I feel obliged to follow the shared attitude] or in «*Mi sembra censura quando non posso dire che una persona omosessuale non è strana oppure che è normale*» [I feel it to be censorship when I cannot say that a homosexual person is not strange or that s/he is normal]. This latter issue is extremely noteworthy and worth investigating in further studies, since it seems to describe censorship as a bottom-up phenomenon.

From this very preliminary attempt to define what censorship is, it follows that it is perceived as having a malign nature, that it is imposed from above (be it an institution, a political party or society as a whole), that it is frequently related to politics and, most of all, that it is perceived as limiting people's freedom of action and speech. This implies a modifying effort on behalf of people, who will be forced to behave not according to their individual attitudes but complying with some rules. Censorship, then, entails change. Nevertheless, alteration is not deletion, it involves a variation and, in the case of texts, a rewriting or a manipulation, as Translation Studies scholars often maintain: «from the point of view of the target literature all translation implies a degree of manipulation of the source text for a certain purpose». <sup>5</sup> For the Manipulation School every act of translation is a rewriting of texts, often in compliance with target culture norms. Contrary to common belief, however, not all changes or shifts can be considered manipulation, neither is every single manipulative act a conscious one. <sup>6</sup>

«Censorship is a form of manipulative rewriting of discourses by one agent or structure over another agent or structure, aiming at filtering the stream of information from one source to another». <sup>7</sup> Censorship, therefore, occurs within a social and cultural context as a coercive tool, as a filter. It leads to concealing some information in order to enhance other. In the case of translation, there is another layer to pay attention to.

As is widely known, translation allows otherness and difference to enter some contexts. Besides, it might simplify the acquisition or the expansion of knowledge; however this might be not smoothly accepted in all contexts and may also trigger a censorial counter-action. For this reason, translation tends somehow to attract censorship, due to the power it has to display otherness and difference. Investigating how censorship and translation are linked means also looking at how power relations and discourses are created and maintained.

In addition to the enormous wealth of literature on translation and censorship that has adopted historical approaches to the phenomenon, <sup>8</sup> works on censorship usually focus on its repressive nature analysing the textual and linguistic level only, thus neglecting the strong cultural and political bond a translated text frequently has with the target culture. However, this bond is worth studying because it may shed light on how discourses are hierarchically placed, how they circulate and how power is enacted by means of censorship of the translated texts.

Following the cultural and critical turn that occurred in Translation Studies in the '90s, <sup>9</sup> increasing attention has been devoted to the target culture and to the impact translated texts may have on it. Scholars like Munday <sup>10</sup> or Spivak <sup>11</sup> consider culture to include the role translated texts play, as well as how they are chosen. <sup>12</sup> This perspective has been further developed following Bourdieu's works on the habitus and its relationship with censorship. <sup>13</sup> Referring to Inghilleri, <sup>14</sup> Billiani highlights that she demonstrated how the



«Bourdesian approach allows researchers to move beyond the static view offered by the notion of norm and instead adopt a more dynamic one in response to the ever-changing positions of the agent in every relational social practice».<sup>15</sup> Besides, the dynamic view accounts for the influence of social taste in the construction of social and aesthetic conventions, which, ultimately, generate censorious behaviours. Censorship represents social control, it affects the texts that circulate and the place where the texts circulate. Censorship is determined by the 'habitus' of the people belonging to one place, and it is more related to unwritten behavioural habits than to clear and written norms.<sup>16</sup> If the rules censorship stems from are not written, i.e. fixed, but «shaped both by the current habitus and by the symbolic capital a text enjoys in a certain field»,<sup>17</sup> then investigating the relationship between censorship and translation includes a shift from a mere linguistic level to a wider one comprising the more fluid context and the awareness of dealing with a multi-faceted phenomenon. As already stated, censorship implies a change in texts. The manipulation a text undergoes in translation derives from a sort of 'negotiation' between the context (institutions, etc.) and the unwritten norms (the readership's taste among others), between the institutional and the individual domain from which censorship may originate.<sup>18</sup> In this regard, we can consider manipulation as a sort of creative activity. This does not mean turning censorship into a positive issue but involves not trying to frame it into *a priori* defined patterns.<sup>19</sup>

Censorship comes greatly into play when something cannot be accepted or rejected, when something disturbs order. There can be a preventive or punitive type of censorship (which can also be defined as initial and final in the light of their relation with time),<sup>20</sup> as well as external and internal ones. The former is executed over the product by an external agency for non-compliance with the rules, whereas the latter is performed during the process to adapt the translated text to shared ideology and norms.

Foreign items are often perceived as disturbing, and thus translation is frequently used to annul their upsetting force, thus acquiring a censorious force. Difference in general is perceived as threatening and, for this reason, avoided. Avoidance, however, is not always the only option available. It might be the easiest and most straightforward option, but not the only one, because translation might satisfy another function of a more 'political' nature. Very often, in fact, when it comes to challenging topics, such as gender-related ones, translation might play a social role beyond what it is normally called to perform, and become a tool of censorship.

Contrary to common belief, censorship is not a feature of autocracies, dictatorships or regimes; it is equally part of democracies and liberal governments and, at times, it is exercised in the form of self-censorship. The difference lies in the way censorship is achieved and enacted. As already mentioned, censorship is normally believed to be the deletion of material considered unacceptable or dangerous by the authorities. However, this perspective overlooks a very frequent mode of censorship, i.e. voluntary and self-imposed censorship, which, at times, coincides with an imposed mode.

As for censorship exercised in translation, Keratsa suggests «manipulatory mechanisms used as an assault on original texts in order to alter their meaning and exclude the reader from the choices made in the source language».<sup>21</sup> Her definition contains some problematic issues: the assumption that manipulation is always negative, hence avoidable, while being somehow part of the process, and the concept of 'original text', which contrasts with some post-modern assumptions. Trying to understand what censorship is and, more importantly, how it is related to translation is of greatest importance.<sup>22</sup>

For their restrictive policies, autocracies, dictatorships and regimes make translators' lives bitterly 'easier' usually by fixing clear and explicit norms to govern censorship and translation with regards to some subjects such as identity building, political matters and socially meaningful domains. On the other hand, democracies and liberal governments provide no equally explicit norms and force translators to 'guess' what they have to delete from a text. Translators refer to socio-cultural frameworks and behave accordingly.

The theoretical framework briefly outlined here is the background against which this research project is being carried out. Given the breadth of the topic, I decided to focus on gender-related topics and my research questions are: is censorship at play in TV series translation into Italian? If so, is it a 'national and cultural' kind of censorship, or rather a sort of self-censorship which stems from individual translators?

### 3. *Censorship, translation and TV series*

The analysis I will present in this article concerns *Will & Grace* and is part of a wider project for which I collected a corpus of four TV series (*TVmC/TV main Corpus*),<sup>23</sup> two explicitly dealing with gender-related issues: *Modern Family* and *Will & Grace*, and two less overtly focused on gender-related issues: *Grey's Anatomy* and *How to Get away with Murder (Le regole del delitto perfetto)* and I carried out a contrastive analysis of translators attitudes to unveil examples of cultural stances.

For research aims, my main corpus *TVmC* has also been subdivided into four smaller sub-corpora, and namely: *Modern Family (C1MF)*, *Will & Grace (C2WG)*, *Grey's Anatomy (C3GA)* and *How to get away with murder (C4M)*.

In this paper I will focus on *Will & Grace*, i.e. *C2WG* only.

Since we live within narratives and construct our knowledge according to what stories we are told, as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie claims,<sup>24</sup> providing as many stories as possible for the same issue, especially as far as some sensitive matters are concerned, is of the utmost importance.<sup>25</sup>

TV series are among the most popular kinds of text, and they can greatly affect people's knowledge construction. For this reason, they play a social role and are an interesting domain of investigation.<sup>26</sup>

My wider research project and the one here presented aim at identifying if censorship is at play in TV series translation, as regards gender-related issues on TV series and, consequently, at exploring the stories told.

Present-day TV series are characterised by a mixed-genre and a very complex mode of story-telling, which blends structures and narrative patterns belonging to different TV genres.<sup>27</sup> The heterogeneity of such textual constructions is *per se* disturbing since it deviates from more traditional and familiar types of TV texts. Spectators, just like readers, might not enjoy being puzzled by mixed genres, due to the effort required. Similarly, they might not appreciate having to face topics and issues of a more challenging nature. The new mixed nature of TV texts makes it difficult to predict what they will involve. Until recently, choosing a genre meant choosing topics and images, since the homogeneity of the texts guaranteed their content. In that context, the audience's expectations were constantly satisfied. When the audience chose what kind of show it wanted to watch, topics and images followed accordingly.<sup>28</sup> Nowadays, this is no longer the case since the way TV texts are constructed can no longer guarantee their verbal and visual contents. For this reason, it is quite frequent to find examples of violence in TV series mainly devoted to



romance, or, conversely, love scenes in TV series dedicated to adventures and discoveries. This might prove disturbing for the audience, especially when it concerns themes related to death, violence and sexuality or when some themes are not treated as expected. These themes have always been taboo topics. They were until lately featured in TV series but were traditionally present in those series that explicitly dealt with related topics.

As is widely known, Italy imports many American TV series. As with every other text entering a new culture, they undergo the same processes of choice and translation. Just like any other texts, they need to be accepted to survive. Given the mixed nature of these new TV series texts, it is licit to wonder how and to what extent they are welcome especially when they deal with problematic topics, such as those mentioned above, which might contrast with the Italian general cultural beliefs. The presence of taboo topics proves challenging in TV series translation, as occurs for every text in approaching entry into a new culture. The translator<sup>29</sup> is responsible for the message they decide to convey, what they decide to translate, change or not to translate. In TV series translation these options are even more significant given the wide reach of these texts, which may turn the translator's choices into more substantial social actions.

Studies show how the general trend of TV series translation in Italy frequently encompasses omission, deletion or downgrading of certain items especially when they concern sexuality, religion, or bad language.<sup>30</sup> As I will argue, a new topic or domain needs to be added to the more 'traditional' ones, namely that of family. The concept that lies behind the idea of family, or in this case of the Italian family, has seldom been tackled. However, in TV series it seems relevant and strictly linked to gender-related domain. For all these themes, manipulation and censorship seem to be variously at play.

In the case of gender-related themes, censorship, as well as translation, might play a social role. As I have already stated, censorious behaviours are prompted when something disturbs the general harmony of a context (or of a place, of a culture etc.); in some cases and in relation to some topics, institutions or governments fix rules of preventive censorship while, in other cases, translators are freer to choose. On some occasions, and for some specific semantic domains, their linguistic choices might acquire social value; they can decide whether they want to try to modify the target culture's behaviour with respect to some problematic issues. I believe TV series translators can be considered powerful social agents due to the role TV series play in spreading knowledge and in building people's beliefs.

#### 4. TV series and censorship: some data

As I have tried to explain in the introduction, censorship and translation are strictly connected, as are audio-visual texts and censorship<sup>31</sup> due to the strong bond existing between translation and the target context, and between censorship and the target context. Censorship implies the manipulation of a text and I believe it to be of a creative nature, since it manages to find an acceptable solution for the 'necessary' deviations imposed by the target culture.

As explained above, for the purpose of my wider research, namely analysing TV series translation with respect to censorship and gender related topics, I collected a corpus of TV series, two explicitly dealing with gender-related issues (*Modern Family* and *Will & Grace*), and two less overtly focused on gender related issues: *Grey's Anatomy* and *How to get away with murder* (*Le regole del delitto perfetto*). The first two were selected to inves-



tigate the issue diachronically and contrastively. They both deal overtly with gender-related matters but *Will & Grace* had already been on air for a decade when *Modern Family* started,<sup>32</sup> besides unlike *Will & Grace*, *Modern Family* presents a high degree of diversity from a multicultural point of view. As for what concerns *Grey's Anatomy* and *How to get away with murder* they were selected for the same reasons explained above and for their being characterised by professional settings (medical and legal ones) which might imply a different kind of language. Given the popularity of all these TV series, introducing them in detail to the readership could be redundant. If needed, the reader may retrieve information and facts from the series official websites.

In this paper, as specified previously, I will focus on the sub-corpus *C2WG/ Will & Grace* and on a comparative analysis of the American and the Italian versions I carried out, also considering the tape scripts. This means that, despite their being multimodal texts, my focus was on the verbal and linguistic level only. This choice does not stem from a miss consideration of the multi-modal quality of the text nor from considering the other semiotic systems at play in the text irrelevant as meaning-making factors. It derives from the need to concentrate on the verbal layer, since mine is mostly an analysis dedicated to translation and censorship at the linguistic level of signification. Seldom can censorship intervene on the visual level in TV series translation, even though it can influence the way visuals are perceived or understood (or misunderstood) when verbal and visual do not match as a consequence of censorious actions.

As for the texts analysed, my main concern was investigating to what extent censorship is present and what strategies were at play. As mentioned, I have highlighted the mismatches or discrepancies between the two versions. My main focus was on gender-related issues and among them I pinpointed those that could trigger rejection on behalf of the Italian culture.<sup>33</sup> I consciously decided not to focus only on the more frequent issues concerning sexuality and desire. The Italian audience is better equipped now than it was (not so long ago) to face homosexual desire when overtly displayed and is becoming more confident at dealing with transgender issues.<sup>34</sup> It is not equally ready, however, to take on the 'traditional' role of women in the 'traditional' Italian family. The role of women within the family has evolved in the Italian culture but even so, some roles or beliefs are hard to uproot or weaken. More specifically, I refer to the maternal role or to maternal love. Italian culture<sup>35</sup> does not seem to be ready to accept the image of a woman who does not prioritise her role as a mother. The most widespread attitude is judgemental and critical. Of all the roles women can give up, their role as mothers is among the less frequently accepted. It goes without saying that this is an issue included in the wider gender scope, since it does not necessarily deal with sexuality. Judging and blaming women for this 'non-conforming' behaviour is to be linked to the more general attitude a culture shares with regard to women and their role or the priorities they should have. Like those people who are discriminated because they do not conform with respect to gender and sexuality, women are marginalised for their diverging from shared expectations in relation to their 'traditional' roles.

I consider this issue, i.e. how the role of women in TV series is conveyed through translation, extremely relevant and as it has not been researched in depth, I will attempt to show the power of censorship in disrupting (or not disrupting) social behaviours and attitudes. Following Bourdieu, and considering the target context and habitus, this theme is very likely to prompt censorious actions since it is extremely controversial.<sup>36</sup>



### 5. *Translating motherhood?*

Contrastive analysis of some episodes of *Will & Grace* provides some examples of how censorship comes into play and corroborates its creative force, when supporting a specific, widely (and conveniently) shared point of view.

The controversial maternal role I focused on is Karen's, following Battles and Hilton-Morrow's research.<sup>37</sup> Karen is a multi-millionaire through marriage; Grace (the other woman character) describes her as «a spoiled, shrill, gold-digging socialite who would sooner chew off her own foot than do an honest day's work» (Season 2, episode 6). Karen refers to the people who work for her by their jobs and not their names: Driver, Cleaner, etc. She is a slight alcoholic with no morals. She is also characterised by her high-pitched tone of voice.

In episode 12, season 3, entitled *Swimming pools... Movie stars / Divi e fans* (literally: *Movie stars and fans*), Karen is watching her son's races at the swimming pool and she shouts:



Karen Walker

(1a) Go! Go! Honey, Swim! Swim! I know you can do it. Hey! Hey, if you win, tonight I'll let you watch the Spice Channel! [to another mother] «That lit a fire under the horny little monkey!»

(1b) *Vai! Vai! Nuota! Nuota! so che lo puoi fare! Dai, se vinci ti lascio vedere Spice Channel!* [rivolgendosi ad un'altra mamma] «Fai vedere chisei a tutte queste lumache!» (literally: «Show who you are to all those snails! »)

The clear sexual reference contained in the original version is not translated. Maybe, it has not been translated since the sexualisation of a son, even in particularly exciting situations like a race, would be greatly disturbing for the Italian culture.



Season 3, episode 12 (18'47")



Season 3, episode 12 (19'00")

For the traditional values of Italian culture, a mother cannot have, nor express, such ideas with reference to her son. Listening to them would be, probably, embarrassing. In no cases can a mother be overtly non-maternal or sexualise her children verbally. Motherhood and sex/sexuality are seldom convergent in Italian. Censorship intervenes to modulate the statement and make it acceptable for the Italian audience.

From a multimodal perspective, the Italian version proves even more problematic for the reaction of the addressee's mother. She is obviously puzzled and surprised by Karen's statement; her face shows a slight disgust, which is totally inconsistent with the Italian version.

In episode 4, season 3 *Brothers, a love story / Mai dire gay* (literally: *Never say gay*), Karen goes to collect her jewels from a safe and touching them says:

(2a) Looking at all of these jewels. Stan has been so good to me, honey. [taking the jewels one by one] On my knees in Belize. On my back in Iraq. Oh, and then there was that time in Nantucket. [both laugh] Oh, good times... Well, good jewels anyway.

(2b) *Guarda tutti questi gioielli. Stan è stato così buono con me, tesoro. [prendendo i gioielli uno ad uno] In Ungheria alla missionaria, oh dentro un porcile in Cile, in barca a vela smorza candela!*

(literally: Look at all these jewels. Stan has been so good to me, honey. [taking the jewels one by one] In Hungary as a missionary, in a pigsty in Chile, on a sailboat as a cow-girl)

This extract proves even more complex for the different layers it displays. The title itself seems already problematic. It suggests a connection between the terms 'Brothers' and 'a love story' that might prove difficult to accept for the possible link to sex it may entail.

As for the interaction, first of all, stylistically it follows a rhyming pattern, which is always *per se* difficult to translate/transfer. Secondly, semantically, the sexual allusions are quite direct with the references to Karen's body. In addition, on another level, there is a mother speaking about the presents her husband and the child's father gave her. From what she says, their marriage, or marriage in general, emerges as nothing more than a material exchange, in this case of sex for money. Once again, Karen challenges the dominant idea of marriage and of a woman in a marriage.

The Italian translation deletes the reference to brothers and opts for a more neutral phrase modelled on a renowned 007 movie title, namely *Never Say Never Again*.

The Italian version exploits the adaptation strategy, the rhyme pattern is partly maintained, the allusion to sexual practices is also present, however it is not directly comprehensible but, instead, intelligible by means of a shared knowledge, which is language or cul-



Season 3, episode 14 (11'23'')



Season 3, episode 14 (11'32'')



Season 3, episode 14 (11'40'')



ture-specific. In this case, censorious changes seem to aim at making comprehension more demanding and selective.

In episode 9, season 2 *I never promised you an olive garden / Le bugie hanno le gambe corte* (literally: *Lies have short legs*) Karen is called by Mason's (her stepson) dean and reluctantly she goes to meet him with Jack (Will's best friend). As they come out, she says:

(3a) Jack, all this maternal crap is making me thirsty.

(3b) *Senti, Jack, tutte queste sciocchezze irrilevanti mi hanno messo sete.*

The reference to motherhood is explicit, as is the reference to her over-riding desire for alcohol. In the Italian version, motherhood is not present; it was totally deleted. The grammatical function of 'maternal' as modifier of 'crap' is taken by *irrilevanti* ('irrelevant'), a sort of over translation of the word itself.

The outcome is clear shift in register which can also be considered an instance of sanitisation to make the text 'more proper'.



Season 2, episode 9 (22'40'')

The last example is taken from the *Will & Grace* pilot in which Karen reacts to Will's remark, saying:

(4a) Grace, tell Will to redirect his anger at his mother where it belongs. Whoops!

(4b) *Grace, di' a Will di riversare la sua rabbia in quel posto dove lui sa. Oops!* (literally: Grace, tell Will to redirect his anger to 'that place' he knows. Oops!)

The reference to 'his mother' is omitted and substituted with a colloquial and vulgar Italian expression: 'that place' is in fact a quite neutral and frequent phrase used to substitute taboo language or more vulgar expressions. In this case Karen invites Will to 'fuck off', which in turn may acquire a twofold meaning considering Will's sexuality.

Unsurprisingly, there are a number of examples more related to the gay/homosexual domain, which challenge some cultural issues. From my point of view, and for my specific interest in the role of censorship concerning family roles in translation, they are less interesting. Despite this, I would like to quote at least one to corroborate my claim regarding the relevance of censorious choices on translation.

In episode 4, Jack tells Grace about his new lover:

(5a) JACK: I've had two dates this week with a bear who clogged my drain.

GRACE: Since when are bears your thing? I thought you were into twinks, twunks, and everything else Dr. Seuss didn't write about.

(5b) JACK: *La mia nuova fiamma è un orsacchiotto che mi ha intasato lo scarico.* (literally: My sweetheart is a teddy bear, who clogged my drain)

GRACE: *E da quando ti piacciono gli orsacchiotti? Pensavo preferissi levolpi, i pulcini*

*e ogni tipo di animale da compagnia...*(literally: since when do you like bears? I thought you'd rather have foxes, chicks or other kinds of pets)

In this interaction, the clear reference to the gay culture carried by words like 'twink' and 'twunk' is omitted, as is the reference to Dr. Seuss. If the latter change is a comprehensible omission since it refers to something the Italian audience may not grasp, the former are less understandable unless considered within a wider censorious ambit, which may aim to reduce references to the gay domain. In this specific case, 'twink' and 'twunk' refer to some 'gay types' that mirror some stereotypical 'girl types' thus making the 'gay context' similar to the non-gay one.

A similar censorious behavior is at play in episode 18 when Karen defines her pastry chef a 'cook-teaser' (6a) on the basis of how he behaves with her cook. The reference to the more vulgar and direct 'cock-teaser' is immediate. The Italian version proposes: «*quell'uomo è proprio una civetta*» (literally: 'that man is a real owl') relying on the figurative meaning of 'owl'/*civetta*, which in Italian means 'coquette' or 'flirt'.

## 6. Concluding remarks

The original idea of this study stems from an interest in the social role translation may have within society. As is widely known, translation implies changes, choices and manipulation. The reasons why translators choose strategies, which imply changes and manipulation, are not always linked to linguistic problems. My claim is that more often than not changes are linked to a wider epistemological framework or to a conscious (or unconscious) social plan, which exploits translation to restore or maintain social balance. As studies on censorship, translation and society show, censorious behaviors often come into play when something disturbs the target culture and its established order.

Gender-related topics are always thorny issues to deal with, especially when they are part of widespread texts such as in TV series. The impact TV series have on the audience, i.e. on society, makes them perfect *loci* of investigation. In this research, which is part of a wider one, a TV series has been analyzed to investigate the role censorship may have as a manipulative tool within a social context. More specifically, the role of women and gender-related items were selected in order to be analyzed contrastively. Contrary to common belief, gender-related issues are relevant not only with regard to the more thoroughly researched debates concerning sexuality but also, and at times more importantly, regarding the possible disruption of traditional and patriarchal issues such as the prescriptivism of women's roles in society, they may trigger. In this case, my research focused on one specific character, namely Karen, who is overtly non maternal, if not anti-maternal. Motherhood has always been an issue strongly connected to the role women have been ascribed in patriarchal societies. Besides, it is also extremely difficult to criticize and contrast, especially in some social contexts like the Italian one. *Will & Grace* provides a special opportunity to investigate this issue, so scantily investigated. The outcomes of the research carried out on the sub-corpus *C2WG* presented in this paper show how censorship is deeply at play when motherhood and the imagery related to it are present, even when the statements to be translated seemingly pose no linguistic problems. This leads us to conclude that censorship, as well as translation, play a social role in uprooting or fixing beliefs and attitudes. This power needs to be further analyzed for a better understanding of our current times and, perhaps, it should also feed into pedagogical perspectives on discourse and translation, which could be investigated in future research.



- 
- <sup>1</sup> F. BILLIANI (ed.), *Modes of Censorship and Translation: National Contexts and Diverse Media*, Manchester (UK)/Kinderhook (NY), St. Jerome Publishing, 2007.
- <sup>2</sup> Ivi, p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> L. VENUTI (ed.), 'Translation and Minority', *The Translator*, 4, 2 (special issue) (1998), pp. 135-144; L. VENUTI, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, London/New York, Routledge, 1998; M. TYMOCZKO, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation*, Manchester, St. Jerome, 1999; S. SIMON, P. ST-PIERRE (eds.), *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Post-colonial Era*, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 2000; K. HARVEY, *Intercultural Movements: American Gay in French Translation*, Manchester, St. Jerome, 2003; G. C. SPIVAK, 'Translating into English', in S. BERMANN, M. WOOD (eds.), *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, Princeton/Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 93-110; M. BAYNHARN, A. DE FINA (eds.), *Dislocations/Relocations*, Manchester, St. Jerome, 2005; S. BERMANN, M. WOOD (eds.), *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, Princeton/Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2005; M. BAKER, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*, London/New York, Routledge, 2006.
- <sup>4</sup> Some of the respondents spoke Italian and their answers were in Italian. Their answers were translated for the purpose of the research, since language was not in focus. Discussing the answers, I will refer to these as a linguistically homogeneous whole.
- <sup>5</sup> T. HERMANS, *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*, London/Sydney, Croom Helm, 1985, p. 249.
- <sup>6</sup> F. FARAHZAD, T. ALLAMEH, *A Gestalt Approach to Manipulation*, University of Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press, 1999.
- <sup>7</sup> F. BILLIANI (ed.), *Modes of Censorship and Translation*, p. 3.
- <sup>8</sup> D. MERKLE, C. O'SULLIVAN, L. VAN DOORSLAER, M. WOLF (eds.), *The power of the pen. Translation and censorship in nineteenth-century Europe*, Wien, Lit Verlag, 2010; C. RUNDLE, K. STURGE (eds.), *Translation under fascism*, London, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010; E. NI'CHUILLEANA'IN, C. O'CUILLEANA'IN, D. PARRIS (eds.), *Translation and censorship*, Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2009; B. MÜLLER (ed.), *Censorship and cultural regulation in the modern age*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2004.
- <sup>9</sup> G. TOURY, *Descriptive Translation Studies and beyond*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Co, 1995.
- <sup>10</sup> J. MUNDAY, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*, London/New York, Routledge, 2001.
- <sup>11</sup> G. C. SPIVAK, 'Translating into English'.
- <sup>12</sup> T. NIRANJANA, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1992; M. BAKER, *Translation and Conflict*.
- <sup>13</sup> P. BOURDIEU, 'Censure et mise en forme', in *Ce que parler veut dire*, Paris, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1982, pp. 167-205; P. BOURDIEU, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [1979], trans. by Richard Nice, London/ Melbourne/Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984.
- <sup>14</sup> M. INGHILLERI (ed.), 'Bourdieu and the Sociology of Translation and Interpreting', *The Translator*, 11, 2 (special issue) (2005).
- <sup>15</sup> F. BILLIANI (ed.), *Modes of Censorship and Translation*, p. 6.
- <sup>16</sup> P. BOURDIEU, 'Censure et mise en forme'.
- <sup>17</sup> F. BILLIANI (ed.), *Modes of Censorship and Translation*, p. 8.
- <sup>18</sup> P. BOURDIEU, 'Censure et mise en forme'.
- <sup>19</sup> J. A. HURTLEY, 'Tailoring the Tale Inquisitorial Discourses and Resistance in the Early Franco Period (1940-1950)', in F. BILLIANI (ed.), *Modes of Censorship and Translation*, pp. 61-93; N. SAMMELLS, 'Writing and censorship: an introduction', in P. HYLAND, N. SAMMELLS (eds.), *Writing and Censorship in Britain*, London/New York, Routledge, 1992, pp. 7-8; D. SAUNDERS, 'Victorian Obscenity Law: Negative Censorship or Positive Administration?', in P. HYLAND, N. SAMMELLS (eds.), *Writing and Censorship in Britain*, pp. 164-167.
- <sup>20</sup> N. BEN-ARI, 'When Literary Censorship Is Not Strictly Enforced, Self-Censorship Rushes', *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, 23, 2 (2010), pp. 133-166.
- <sup>21</sup> A. KERATSA, 'Translation and Censorship in European Environments', *Translation Journal*, (2005), p. 1 <<http://accurapid.com/Journal/33censorship.htm>> [accessed March 2019].
- <sup>22</sup> T. SERUYA, 'Foreword', in T. SERUYA, J.M. L. MONIZ (eds.), *Translation and Censorship in Different Times and Landscapes*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars, 2008, pp. XI-XIX.
- <sup>23</sup> More specifically, given the difference of broadcasting time, I collected one every two seasons of *Grey's Anatomy* and the whole series of *Will & Grace*, *Modern Family* and *How to get away with murder*. The cor-



pus *TVmC* is being analysed also from a diachronic perspective and the outcomes will be presented in the near future.

- <sup>24</sup>C. N. ADICHIE, *The Danger of a Single Story*, TED-talk, (2009) <[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)> [accessed March 2019].
- <sup>25</sup>F. VIGO, *Stories that matter. A socio-semiotic approach to contemporary narratives of migration*, Napoli, Loffredo Iniziative Editoriali, 2018.
- <sup>26</sup>C. LEAPER, I. REEDL, A. OFFMANA, C. A. PERLAM, 'Variations in the Gender-Stereotyped Content of Children's Television Cartoons Across Genres', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32, 8 (2002), pp. 1653-1662.
- <sup>27</sup>C. BUCARIA, 'Translation and censorship on Italian TV: an inevitable love affair?', *VIAL*, 6 (2009), pp. 13-32.
- <sup>28</sup>D. S. DIFFRIENT, H.S. CHUNG, 'TV Hybridity: Genre Mixing and Narrative Complexity in M\*A\*S\*H', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 29, 4 (2012), pp. 285-302; J. MAST, 'New directions in hybrid popular television: a reassessment of television mock-documentary', *Media, Culture & Society*, 31, 2 (2009), pp. 231-250; J. MITTEL, *Genre and television. From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture*, New York-London, Routledge, 2004.
- <sup>29</sup>In this paper, 'translator' is consciously used as a shorthand for the many different actors involved in the subtitling/dubbing process.
- <sup>30</sup>C. BUCARIA, 'The perception of humour in dubbing vs subtitling: The case of Six Feet Under', *ESP Across Cultures*, 2 (2005), pp. 34-46; C. BUCARIA, 'Humour and other catastrophes: Dealing with the translation of mixed-genre TV series', *LinguisticaAntverpiensia, New Series*, 6 (2007), pp. 235-254; C. BUCARIA, 'Manipulation and creativity in the adaptation of humour: The case of Will & Grace', *Textus*, 21, 1 (2008), pp. 47-64; D. CHIARO, 'Not in front of the children? An analysis of sex on screen in Italy', *LinguisticaAntverpiensia, New Series*, 6 (2007), pp. 255-276; D. BIANCHI, 'Taming teen-language. The adaptation of *Buffy-speak* into Italian', in D. CHIARO, C. HEISS, AND C. BUCARIA (eds.), *Between Text and Image. Updating Research in Screen Translation*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2008, pp. 183-195.
- <sup>31</sup>T. D. MATHEWS, *Censored. The Story of Film Censorship in Britain*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1994; L. GRIEVESON, *Policing Cinema. Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2004.
- <sup>32</sup>*Will & Grace* started in 1998 and *Modern Family* in 2009.
- <sup>33</sup>Gender-related issues have never entered the Italian culture smoothly. Examples are the harsh debate that emerged around the proposal, and then approval, of the law that supported homosexual partnerships in Italy, and the long-lasting opposition to the introduction of gender-related topics into Italian schools. S. GARBAGNOLI, M. PREARO, *La Crociata "anti-genere" dal Vaticano alle manif pour tous*, Torino, Kaplan, 2017; S. GARBAGNOLI, "'L'ideologia del genere": l'irresistibile ascesa di un'invenzione retorica vaticana contro la denaturalizzazione dell'ordine sessuale', *AG About Gender*, 3, 6 (2014), pp. 250-263; A. DONÀ, 'La Questione di Genere in Italia', *AS Aggiornamenti Sociali*, novembre 2010.
- <sup>34</sup>L. MALICI, 'Queer TV Moments and Family Viewing in Italy', *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 10 (2014), pp. 188-210.
- <sup>35</sup>I am perfectly aware that it is not possible to talk about culture in monolithic terms as if it were a homogeneous whole. Nonetheless, despite its great internal variety, for the purpose of this research I refer to the Italian culture as sharing common values and attitudes.
- <sup>36</sup>L. BARRA, 'The mediation is the message Italian regionalization of US TV series as co-creational work', *INTERNATIONAL Journal of CULTURAL studies*, 12, 5 (2009), pp. 509-525; A. SANDRELLI, 'The Dubbing of Gay-Themed TV Series in Italy: Corpus-Based Evidence of Manipulation and Censorship', *AltreModernità*, febbraio 2016, pp. 124-143; D. TAGER, G. E. GOOD, 'Italian and American Masculinities: A Comparison of Masculine Gender Role Norms', *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 6, 4 (2005), pp. 264-274.
- <sup>37</sup>K. BATTLES, W. HILTON-MORROW, 'Gay Characters in Conventional Spaces: *Will and Grace* and the Situation Comedy Genre', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19, 1 (2002), pp. 87-105.