

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI GENOVA
SCUOLA DI SCIENZE UMANISTICHE
DIPARTIMENTO DI LINGUE E CULTURE MODERNE
Corso di laurea magistrale in Traduzione e Interpretariato



TESI DI LAUREA MAGISTRALE

Helen Lewis: *Difficult Women* and journalism.
Translation and comparative analysis of book excerpts
and some articles on *The Atlantic*

Relatrice:
Prof.ssa Laura Santini

Correlatrice:
Prof.ssa Elisabetta Zurru

Candidata:
Eleonora Rubicini

Anno accademico 2022-2023

Helen Lewis: *Difficult Women* and journalism.

Translation and comparative analysis of book excerpts and
some articles on *The Atlantic*

**Traduzione e analisi di estratti dal volume “Difficult Women”
e di alcuni articoli pubblicati su “The Atlantic”**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ENGLISH ABSTRACT.....	1
ITALIAN ABSTRACT.....	2
INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1 - Difficult Women: Source Text Analysis of an Excerpt.....	4
1.1 The author and the book excerpt	4
1.2 Situational features	4
1.3 Intratextual features	6
CHAPTER 2 - <i>The Atlantic</i> : Source Text Analysis of Two Articles.....	23
2.1 The Atlantic: an overview	23
2.2 Situational features	24
2.3 Intratextual features	26
CHAPTER 3 - Source Texts	43
3.1 <i>Difficult Women</i>: two excerpts	43
3.2 <i>The Atlantic</i>: two articles	51
CHAPTER 4 - Target Texts.....	60
4.1 <i>Donne difficili</i>: due estratti	60
4.2 <i>The Atlantic</i>: due articoli	69
CHAPTER 5 - Lewis as a columnist. Lewis as a non-fiction writer	79
5.1 Columns: an introduction	79
5.2 Non-fiction. An introduction	81
5.3 Compare & Contrast	82
CHAPTER 6 - Comment to the translation	84
6.1 Excerpts from the book <i>Difficult Women</i>	86
6.2 Articles from <i>The Atlantic</i>	93
CONCLUSIONS.....	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY	105

ENGLISH ABSTRACT

The present dissertation is an original translation and comparative analysis of two distinct literary works by the British journalist and writer Helen Lewis: some selected excerpts from her first book *Difficult Women – A History of Feminism in 11 Fights* and two articles published on the American magazine *The Atlantic* about the impact of the Covid pandemic on women's lives.

A source text analysis allowed to identify the most interesting intratextual features and their function within the book and in the two selected articles. Examining the two literary works from an analytical perspective was paramount to lay the groundwork for the translation task, as well as allowing informed translation choices to effectively tackle the challenges that translating Lewis's work brought about. The translation task required, nonetheless, further research not only to fully understand a vast array of culture-bound terms and idiomatic expressions, but also to take into account ever-pressing issues such as gender neutrality, and stylistic differences between Lewis as a literary non-fiction writer and Lewis as a columnist. Techniques and strategies used in the translation process were described and further discussed in the final chapter of the dissertation, where all the main lexical and stylistic challenges have been gathered, along with the choices made to tackle the existing linguistic discrepancies between English and Italian for what concerns gender neutrality.

The present dissertation has the main aim of proposing itself as a starting point for possible future investigation and research on Lewis' work as a literary non-fiction writer and as a columnist, as well as a work that could possibly be integrated by comparing the techniques and strategies used for this translation task with those that were used in the official Italian translation of the book *Difficult Women*.

ITALIAN ABSTRACT

Questo lavoro di tesi consiste nella traduzione originale e analisi comparativa di due differenti tipologie di testo a cura della giornalista inglese Helen Lewis: alcuni estratti dal suo primo libro “Donne Difficili”, una raccolta di saggi che indagano temi cari al movimento transfemminista, e due articoli pubblicati dalla rivista americana “The Atlantic” in merito all’impatto della pandemia del Coronavirus sulla vita delle donne.

Mediante l’analisi del testo di partenza sono state identificate le caratteristiche intratestuali di maggior interesse e la funzione da esse svolta nel libro e nei due articoli scelti. La disamina di questi due tipi di testo è stata fondamentale per la realizzazione della traduzione, poiché ha permesso di fare scelte consapevoli ed efficaci per affrontare le sfide poste dal compito di tradurre Helen Lewis. Tuttavia, per svolgere il lavoro di traduzione è stato necessario, attraverso ulteriori ricerche, non solo comprendere a pieno il significato di una serie di *realia* ed espressioni idiomatiche, ma anche prendere in considerazione questioni sempre più urgenti, quali l’utilizzo di un linguaggio *gender-neutral*, e le differenze tra lo stile di Lewis come scrittrice di saggistica e come editorialista. Le tecniche e strategie impiegate nel processo di traduzione sono state successivamente descritte e ulteriormente elaborate nel capitolo finale della tesi, in cui sono raccolte tutte le principali sfide a livello lessicale e stilistico e le scelte messe in atto per far fronte alla discrepanza sul piano linguistico tra l’inglese e l’italiano in materia di *gender neutrality*.

Questa tesi si pone come obiettivo principale quello di offrire un punto di partenza per eventuali future analisi e studi sul lavoro di Lewis come scrittrice di saggistica e come editorialista, nonché come lavoro da integrare confrontando tecniche e strategie utilizzate per questo lavoro di traduzione con quelle usate nella traduzione ufficiale italiana di “Donne Difficili”.

INTRODUCTION

Initially, the present work aimed at providing a detailed analysis and original translation of the book *Difficult Women: A History of Feminism in 11 Fights*, written by the British writer and journalist Helen Lewis. When I selected and started working on it, the aforementioned book had not yet been translated into Italian, but, as I was going through the source text analysis and translation process, I found out that an official Italian translation had been published by the publishing house Blackie on October 14th, 2021.

Therefore, a new arrangement was required. The previously analysed and translated excerpts from the book were kept and a new source text analysis and original translation of two articles selected from *The Atlantic* was added. The articles from the renowned American magazine to which Lewis has been contributing for several years, were selected among those that dealt with topics that are closely linked with the issues discussed in the book *Difficult Women*. I have also integrated a compare & contrast section on Lewis's style as a columnist and as a non-fiction writer, before moving forward to the translation and the translation analysis sections.

CHAPTER 1 - Difficult Women: Source Text Analysis of an Excerpt

1.1 The author and the book excerpt

Helen Lewis is a British journalist and a staff writer at the American magazine The Atlantic. During her career, she has been writing about and discussing issues related to gender equality and feminism, such as gender pay gap, online harassment, domestic violence and many more. Her first book “Difficult Women – A History of Feminism in 11 Fights” from which I selected an excerpt was published in hardcover edition at the end of February 2020, in the middle of the first outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hardcover edition was published in London by the publishing house Jonathan Cape, while the paperback edition was published later on, in March 2021. There are no specific temporal references within the text, except for a postscript to the paperback edition, where the pandemic is briefly mentioned at the end of the essay on abortion rights.

1.2 Situational features

According to Bühler’s classification (Newmark 1987, 39), the three main functions of language are the expressive, the informative and the vocative function. As Newmark claims, the expressive function has its core in the writer’s mind, the informative function on the reality, the external situation, and the vocative function on the readership’s perception. In the book excerpt here discussed, all the three functions are present and can be identified in several different passages.

The expressive function is employed in a host of fragments, in which the author directly refers to personal experiences and expresses feelings (emphasis is mine).

[...] I came to feminism through a pervasive feeling of wrongness with aspects of my life that I couldn’t quite articulate.
It made me angry for all the women whose potential was lost [...]
[...] my hope is that the gaps do not look like deficiencies [...]
I bitterly regretted my chicken burger [...]
I walked out into the August sunshine thinking : this is it, this is the lesson.

By now, that doesn't surprise me.
[...] boys feel peer pressure to be disruptive at school.
I would prefer to focus on equality of opportunity.
There's no shame in positive discrimination.

As for the informative function – providing information and reporting news which can be perceived either as true or false – is the prevailing one and can be identified in a wide range of passages. By way of example, here is a selection:

[...] the University of London had become the first in the world to admit women as undergraduate students [...]
The most famous, Clue, reached a million monthly users in 2015, two years after launching.
One of the opponents of greater female education was Queen Victoria.
In 1874, Jex-Blake helped to establish a medical school for women in London.

Lastly, the vocative function – causing the reader to react or take action – can be found in the following passages (emphasis is mine):

This approach is pathetic and childish, and it should be resisted.
You must accept the size of the mountain ahead of you, and start climbing it anyway.
Medicine cannot be something that is done to women. It has to be done by them, too.
Fix the inequality of opportunity, and the outcomes will improve.
Of course, there should be bursaries to get men into primary school teaching [...]

For what concerns the motive, the author does not mention any particular event that prompted the production of this book.

According to Nida's classification (Nida 1964, 158), which includes four levels of understanding of any language by the readership – namely «the capacity of children», «the double standard capacity of new literates», «the capacity of the average literate adult» and «the unusually high capacity of specialists») – it can be claimed that the ST taken into consideration is received by an audience of average literate adults.

According to Newmark's classification (Newmark 1987, 15), which determines three types of reader – the expert, the educated layperson and the uninformed – it can be stated that the ST is received by an audience of educated laypeople. As a matter of fact, the selected excerpts, apart from few specialised terms pertaining to the medical field – whose meanings, however, are always clarified within the co-text or can easily be inferred from the context – do not feature any formal or specific lexis nor fixed structures or formulae typical of specialized texts. However, the text as a whole would be more easily understood by a readership who at least has a basic knowledge of feminist issues and the recurrent jargon related to them – i.e. the phrase “second sex” coined by Simone De Beauvoir, the concept of “second shift” explained by Arlie Hochschild, the phrase “gender pay gap”.

With regard to the genre, Ann M. Johns presents Grabe's macro-genre classification into expository and narrative texts. According to Johns, «informational (expository) texts as opposed to narrative texts, are usually seen as the primary input for learning new information in social sciences, science, math, and history». Following her claim that such texts are used when the readers do not have «a high level of prior topical knowledge but are expected to increase this knowledge as a result of encounters with these informational texts» (Johns 2001, 254), it can be assumed that the ST can be classified within the informational (expository) macro-genre.

Moreover, the book can be included in the category of literary non-fiction, which is «a type of prose that employs literary techniques to report on persons, places and events in the real world without altering facts» (Richard Nordquist, 2019). Indeed, it is a collection of essays presenting Lewis's personal view on a series of topics, as well as narrating stories and providing information.

Lastly, the book's text type, following Bühler's aforementioned classification of language functions, is expressive, informative and vocative.

1.3 Intratextual features

As we move forward in the source text analysis, it is essential to mention some key elements about the subject matter of the book. In this regard, the author of the ST addresses a range of feminist issues, from the most apparent and historically acknowledged ones, such as divorce and the right to vote, to

seemingly less recognized ones, though still having a very strong impact on women's lives depending on the country they live in – for instance, how sports are still conceived in a strongly gendered perspective or how society shapes the perception of our free time throughout our lives depending on our gender, age and social class.

While the book is subdivided into eleven essays – each of which deals with a specific issue by presenting a female pioneer of the past who fought for that cause – the selected excerpt just includes the introduction and a section of the essay about education and Sophia Jex-Blake, which was the part I had already analysed and translated by the time I found out that an Italian translation had already been published.

At the end of the introduction, Helen Lewis specifically states that she chose to focus on British pioneers, although she believes that «many of the patterns, arguments and controversies are universal» (Lewis 2020, 8). The pioneers chosen and analysed by Lewis are several: Caroline Norton, who fought for the right to divorce; Christabel Pankhurst, Constance Lytton and Annie Kenney, who, despite having very different social backgrounds, all partook in the suffragist movement; Marie Stopes, who, for the first time in history, made female pleasure a public issue by publishing her sex diary in the form of a book called *Married Love*; Lily Parr, who played as a winger for the Dick, Kerr's Ladies football team during WWI; Jayaben Desai, who led the «strikers in saris» and defied stereotypes about Asian women being demure and passive in the workplace; Erin Pizzey, founder of the first women's refuge in Britain, that is the largest charity to this day supporting women out of abusive relationships; Maureen Colquhoun and Jackie Forster, who fought for the recognition of homosexual love and the fact that women «are not worthy of notice only when our lives intersect with those of men» (Lewis 2020, 193); Sophia Jex-Blake, who led the Edinburgh Seven, a group of women who campaigned to insert university education for women in the national political agenda and eventually obtained the UK Medical Act 1876, allowing women to study medicine; Arlie Hochschild, who coined the phrase “second shift” to define the struggle facing women who juggle between paid work and housework responsibilities; Kitty O' Kane, Colette Devlin, Diana King, three women who challenged the prohibitive Northern Irish abortion law.

Nonetheless, the author's purpose is to raise awareness in her readership about the fact that these accomplishments are still valid and need to be acknowledged and valued despite the complexity of those who worked to get there and regardless of the means they used, as she claims in the introduction to the book (Lewis 2020, 3):

I want to restore the complexity to feminist pioneers. Their legacies might be contested, they might have made terrible strategic choices and they might not have lived up to the ideals they preached. But they mattered. Their difficulty is part of the story.

Overall, no special terminology is required to fully understand the ST, even though being familiar with culture-bound elements, such as British educational institutions and civil rights, and having a background on legal language might be helpful.

Regarding the structure, the text is organised in eleven chapters, plus an introduction and an epilogue. Each chapter is divided into smaller paragraphs. The book doesn't feature any type of non-verbal elements – i.e., pictures.

In the selected sections there is a vast array of words and phrases which are relevant to the present analysis. They will be classified and analysed in context as follows:

- **KEYWORDS**

The Macmillan Dictionary provides two definitions of the noun «keyword»:

- 1) a word that represents the main feature or idea of something;
- 2) a word that you type on a computer keyboard in order to find information about a subject.

Working with the corpus linguistic tool AntConc, it is possible to extract keywords based on the word frequency in the selected excerpt by using the “Wordlist” function.

The extracted list of keywords with the pertaining number of occurrences is presented as follows:

the [207]	feminism [13]
to [146]	history [12]
[...]	students [12]
women [64]	[...]
[...]	difficult [10]
men [24]	[...]
[...]	university [9]

As we can see, the words showing the utmost number of occurrences in the excerpts are the definite article «the» and the particle «to». Moving on, we can notice that all the other selected keywords pertain either to gender or education, which are the main topics on which the excerpts are focused.

- **COLLOCATIONS**

The concept of collocation is a complex one and it has been best adapted to translation studies and needs by Mona Baker.

Before giving a definition of collocation, Baker presents a distinction between propositional and expressive meaning, which was drawn by the linguist D. A. Cruse (1986), whereas propositional meaning derives from the relation between a certain word or utterance and «what it refers to or describes in a real or imaginary world, as conceived by the speakers of the particular language to which the word or utterance belongs», hence providing evidence on whether such word or utterance is true or not. Expressive meaning, instead, «relates to the speaker’s feelings or attitude rather than to what words and utterances refer to» (Baker 2018, 12).

On the other hand, presupposed meaning is presented as arising from two types of restrictions on «what other words or expressions we expect to see before or after a particular lexical unit» (Baker 2018, 13): selectional restrictions – linked to propositional meaning: e.g., the adjective “courageous” cannot be associated to an inanimate subject; and collocational restrictions – «semantically arbitrary restrictions which do not follow logically from the propositional meaning of a word» (Baker 2018, 14): e.g., while in English “support” is “won”, in Italian and in Russian it is “obtained”.

Both types of restriction are relevant for the purposes of the present ST analysis and will be discussed.

Further on in her discussion, Baker refers to collocation also «in terms of the tendency of certain words to co-occur regularly in a given language» (Baker 2018, 54).

- **GRAMMATICAL COLLOCATIONS**

A grammatical collocation is «a phrase that consists of a noun, an adjective, or a verb plus a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or clause» (Benson et al. 2010, 19).

Some examples are shown in the following chart (emphasis is mine).

Women’s history should not be a shallow hunt for heroines.	hunt <u>for</u> something/somebody
‘The child survived, but unfortunately she [i.e. the mother] died twenty minutes later from blood loss. ’	to die <u>from</u> something
Did they choose the baby’s life <u>over</u> hers?	to choose something <u>over</u> something

[...] the surgeon who operated <u>on</u> her [...]	to operate <u>on</u> somebody
[...] receiving the kind of extra help previously reserved for women and minorities.	reserved <u>for</u> somebody

When comparing the emphasized grammatical collocations with their Italian equivalents, it is worth discussing how these prepositional verbs change in structure or word class.

For example, in some cases – i.e. «die **from** blood loss» = «morire **per** un'emorragia», «**morire a causa di** un'emorragia» – there is a shift in the verb structure, as two different prepositions are used in English and in Italian; in some others – i.e. «who operated **on her**» = «che l'ha operata» – the English sentence features a prepositional verb while its Italian equivalent doesn't, presenting instead an SVO structure (subject + verb + object).

- **LEXICAL COLLOCATIONS**

In contrast, a lexical collocation is a phrase that does not include grammatical elements, hence «prepositions, infinitives, or clauses» (Benson et al. 2010, 31).

Possible types of lexical collocations are:

- 1) verb + noun
- 2) adjective + noun
- 3) adverb + adjective
- 4) verb + adverb

Only the first type will be presented and discussed as follows (emphasis is mine):

That argument won broad support .	to <u>win</u> support
[...] before all British universities started awarding degrees to women.	to <u>award</u> a degree
[...] Simon Kuper and Emma Jacobs addressed the problem .	to <u>address</u> a problem

Comparing the aforementioned lexical collocations in English and in Italian, it can be claimed that, while a degree (or a prize) is «awarded» in both English and Italian – «award a degree » = «conferire un diploma/una laurea» – the collocation for «support» changes from one language to another.

As a matter of fact, while support in English is «won», in Italian it is «obtained».

As for the verb «to address», it is a frequent – though not exclusive – collocate for the noun «problem»: a problem can also be «faced», «dealt with» or «tackled» - in Italian «affrontare».

• **IDIOMS AND FIXED EXPRESSIONS**

According to Baker, while collocations are «fairly flexible patterns of language which allow several variations in form», idioms and fixed expressions are at the extreme end of the scale from collocations in the areas of «flexibility of patterning and transparency of meaning. They are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and, in the case of idioms, often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components» (Baker 2018, 69).

• **IDIOMS**

An idiom is «a group of words whose meaning considered as a unit is different from the meanings of each word considered separately». (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021)

A selection of examples relevant to the present analysis are shown as follows (emphasis is mine):

<p>A history of feminism should not try to sand off the sharp corners of the movement’s pioneers – or write them out of the story entirely [...]</p>	<p>to write somebody out = to change the story of a regular television or radio programme so that a particular character is not in it anymore (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)</p>
<p>The pale version of her boiled down to a feminist saint is not.</p>	<p>to boil sth/sb down to sth/sb = to reduce sth/sb to sth/sb else – generally simpler, more basic, more superficial (Collins Dictionary, 2022)</p>
<p>I want to take feminism apart and examine the machinery that makes it so powerful.</p>	<p>to take something apart = to show what the weaknesses of an article or idea are, usually by analysing it carefully (Collins Dictionary, 2022)</p>
<p>All she wanted, she said, was a ‘fair field and no favour’.</p>	<p>a fair field and no favour =</p>

	<p>This idiom is explained in Robert C. Kennedy’s article about a cartoon – which was first published on November 18th, 1899 – featuring Uncle Sam and based on the facts that followed the formulation of Open Door policy to denounce trade barriers erected in China by European Great Powers.</p> <p>As a matter of fact, the US administration was claiming the right to access trade with China to the same extent as European countries.</p>
Women were locked out of the profession again.	to lock somebody out of something = to prevent somebody from taking part in something (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)
[...] women were staking a claim to higher education [...]	to stake a claim to something = to assert one's possession of or right to something (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
The starkness with which the caption set out the known facts [...].	to set out = to present – i.e. facts, beliefs, arguments (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
Sophia Jex-Blake has been anointed a pioneer.	to anoint = to choose someone or something for a particular job or purpose; to designate (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)
However, men still have the edge in research degrees.	to have the edge = to have a slight advantage or superiority (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
[...] children who dare not say a word out of edgeways or put a foot wrong [...]	to put a foot wrong = to make a mistake (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
The underachievement of boys has fallen prey to the opposite problem [...]	to fall prey to something = to be taken over or affected by something (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
‘From the earliest age, it’s locked in that boys are boisterous [...].’	to lock in = to commit unalterably (Collins Dictionary, 2022)

It is important to note that the aforementioned selection of idioms also includes a host of phrasal verbs – whereas a phrasal verb is «a phrase that consists of a verb with a preposition or adverb or both, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its separate parts» (Cambridge Dictionary) – such as «to write somebody out», «to take something apart», «to set out» and «to lock in».

Some of the examples prove very helpful to understand whether and how English and Italian structures differ when comparing idioms in the source language (SL) and their equivalents in the target language (TL).

Indeed, in the presented context the idiom «to have the edge» would be best translated into Italian with the phrase «essere in vantaggio», as using the phrase «avere un vantaggio» would require a further clarification – which is not provided in the ST – on what type of advantage men have.

On the other hand, the idiom «to put a foot wrong» would be best translated with the equivalent Italian idiom «fare un passo falso»: the two idioms feature the same level of opacity, as well as a reference to the semantic field of movement.

Lastly, an accurate equivalent for the idiom «to fall prey to» would be the phrase «cadere vittima di»: both imply the idea of falling, but two different prepositions are used.

• **FIXED EXPRESSIONS**

A fixed expression is a phrase that allows «little or no variation in form», but, unlike an idiom, it features a high level of transparency and «evokes in the mind of the reader or hearer a range of associations connected with the typical contexts in which the expression is used». Baker also claims that it encapsulates «stereotypical aspects of experience», therefore performing «a stabilizing function in communication» (Baker 2018, 70).

By way of example (emphasis is mine):

Jex-Blake speculates that the women’s success turned the other students against them [...]	to turn somebody against somebody = to make somebody become hostile to somebody
The idea that women are innately stupid certainly had a good run .	to have a good run = to be successful for a small amount of time

«To turn somebody against somebody» can be expressed in Italian with the phrase «mettere contro»

- i.e. «il successo delle donne aveva messo contro loro gli altri studenti» - as it conveys the idea of contrast between two individuals or groups of people.

For what concerns the expression «to have a good run», it has no equivalent fixed expression in Italian: therefore, a periphrasis such as «avere successo per un certo periodo» might be used to convey the same meaning as in the English phrase.

- **METAPHORS AND METAPHORICAL ITEMS**

In his essay, Lakoff claims that, according to classical theory, a metaphor «was defined as a novel or poetic linguistic expression where one or more words for a concept are used outside of their normal conventional meaning to express a “similar” concept» (Lakoff 1993, 202).

However, the scholar highlights the fact that in contemporary theory a metaphor pertains not only to the poetic field, but also to ordinary everyday language: indeed, Lakoff claims that «the locus of metaphor is [...] in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another» and that «everyday abstract concepts like time, states, change, causation, and purpose also turn out to be metaphorical» (1993, 203). Hence, metaphor is described as «the main mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning», therefore allowing us «to understand a relatively abstract or inherently unstructured subject matter in terms of a more concrete, or at least more highly structured subject matter» (Lakoff 1993, 244-245).

According to Newmark, a metaphor has a referential and a pragmatic purpose. He states that «its referential purpose is to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language» while «its pragmatic purpose [...] is to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify 'graphically', to please, to delight, to surprise» (Newmark 1987, 104).

Two examples of metaphor are listed in the chart below (emphasis is mine).

<p>If modern feminism feels toothless, it is because it has retreated into two modes [...]</p>	<p>toothless =</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. having no teeth 2. used to describe an organization or a rule that has no power <p>(Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)</p>
---	---

<p>She also sensed that apathy would curdle to antipathy if she carried on.</p>	<p>to curdle = 1. to spoil, turn sour 2. to go wrong, turn bad or fail (Collins Dictionary, 2022)</p>
--	---

As mentioned above, both examples present a literal and a metaphorical meaning: both meanings have been explained with the definitions provided by Cambridge and Collins Dictionaries.

Neither the adjective «toothless» nor the verb «to curdle» have an Italian equivalent which features the same ambivalence: therefore, it might be necessary to translate them with an adjective or verb while also using compensation as a translation strategy to convey their metaphorical meaning.

- **TERMINOLOGY**

Terminology can be defined as «the words and phrases used in a particular business, science, or profession» (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022).

In this regard, the essay about education features a range of terms and phrases relevant to the present analysis, as they pertain to the medical field.

By way of example (emphasis is mine):

<p>It dates back to 1800 and belonged, according to the caption, to a woman with osteomalacia, a softening of the bones caused by vitamin D deficiency.</p>	<p>osteomalacia = a bone disease in adults marked by bone demineralization caused by impaired metabolism or deficiency of vitamin D or phosphorus (Collins Dictionary, 2022)</p>
<p>The bone disorder affected the woman's pelvis [...]</p>	<p>pelvis = the bones that form a bowl-shaped structure in the area below the waist at the top of the legs, and to which the leg bones and spine are joined (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)</p>
<p>. Women are more likely to become GPs, a career associated with part-time work and fixed hours [...]</p>	<p>GP (general practitioner) = a doctor who provides general medical treatment for people who live in a particular area (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)</p>

Medical terminology uses several words deriving from Greek or Latin, as we can see from the first two examples: «osteomalacia» – in Italian «osteomalacia» – derives from the Greek words «osteo» (bone) + «malacia» (softness), while «pelvis» – in Italian «pelvi» or «bacino» – is a Latin word, which means «basin», as the pelvis has a basin-like shape.

On the other hand, the term «general practitioner» was originally used to indicate «someone who practices both medicine and surgery». The term in its modern meaning has two Italian equivalents: «medico di base» and «medico di famiglia».

- **LOANWORDS**

A loanword (or loan) is «a word from one language that is used in another language without being changed» (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022).

Some examples are shown as follows (emphasis is mine):

<p>[...] with the proviso that lecturers did not have to teach them alongside the men. [...]</p>	<p>proviso → From Latin <i>proviso</i> (“it being provided”), ablative singular neuter of <i>provisus</i></p> <p>proviso = a condition that must be accepted before an agreement can be made (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)</p>
<p>Or Tess Gill being told that ordering a drink from the bar was ‘de minimis’ – not important enough to bother a court.</p>	<p>de minimis → From Latin, <i>de</i> + <i>minimis</i>, ablative of <i>minimus</i> (“smallest, least”)</p> <p>de minimis = the principle that the law does not bother with small and insignificant matters (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)</p>
<p>[...] as I contemplated a huge, hairy bezoar [...]</p>	<p>bezoar → From Persian <i>pad-zahr</i> "counter-poison," from <i>pad</i> "protecting, guardian, master" + <i>zahr</i> "poison"</p> <p>bezoar = a solid mass of material that cannot be digested, that remains in the body in the digestive system (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)</p>

For what concerns the aforementioned examples, it is worth highlighting that, while the noun «bezoar» and the phrase «de minimis» are used in Italian as well as in English, the noun «proviso» is not. As a matter of fact, «proviso» in Italian is best translated as «clausola condizionale».

• **COLLOQUIALISMS AND SLANG WORDS**

According to Martin Joos and Strevens’s scale of formality presented by Peter Newmark (1987, 14) colloquialisms and slang words belong in the lower part of the scale, between the informal and the taboo level as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1) <i>Officialese</i> | 5) <i>Informal</i> |
| 2) <i>Official</i> | 6) <i>Colloquial</i> |
| 3) <i>Formal</i> | 7) <i>Slang</i> |
| 4) <i>Neutral</i> | 8) <i>Taboo</i> |

Taking into consideration the scale of emotional tone by Newmark (1987, 14):

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) <i>Intense</i> | 3) <i>Factual</i> |
| 2) <i>Warm</i> | 4) <i>Understatement</i> |

and noting that it is clearly correlated with the scale of formality, Newmark claims that «colloquialisms and slang tend to be emotive», while an official style is often factual» (1987, 15).

By way of example (emphasis is mine):

The Medical Act of 1858 had been designed to discourage quacks [...]	quack → <i>noun (slang)</i> If you call someone a quack or a quack doctor , you mean that they claim to be skilled in medicine but are not. (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
I bitterly regretted my chicken burger as I contemplated a huge, hairy bezoar extracted from some luckless sod .	sod → <i>noun (slang, vulgar) (BrE)</i> sod = a word for someone who you dislike or who annoys you (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)
Does the fact that there are more female students than male ones today prove that men were thickos all along?	thicko → <i>noun (slang, pejorative) (BrE)</i> thicko = a person lacking in intelligence (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
Are the recruitment criteria skewed towards People Like Us, privileging eloquent bullshitters ?	bullshitter → <i>noun (slang, vulgar)</i>

	<p>bullshitter = a person who tries to persuade someone or to get their admiration by saying things that are not true (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)</p>
--	---

Taking into account some of the presented examples, we can claim that the selected English words do not always match their possible Italian equivalents as far as the scale of formality is concerned.

As a matter of fact, the noun «quack» is used in an informal/colloquial context, while in Italian the noun «impostore» is neutral. Furthermore, «quack» is generally – though not exclusively – used to indicate a person who pretends to be a doctor, while «impostore» can be used to indicate any person who pretends to be someone they are not.

On the other hand, in the second example «luckless sod» is not used in a vulgar sense, but more as an expression of pity towards the person in question. Hence, it would be appropriate to choose «povero cristo» – which is used in a colloquial/slang context as well as «luckless sod» – as a possible Italian equivalent.

- SYNTAX

The text features a quite elaborate sentence structure, as it presents a host of complex (main clause + one or more subordinate clauses) and compound (main clause + one or more coordinate clauses) sentences.

Some examples of compound sentences can be found in the chart below (emphasis is mine):

[...] difficult means complicated, <u>and</u> <i>this book contains a host of complicated women.</i>
The idea of role models is not necessarily a bad one, <u>but</u> <i>the way they are used in feminism can dilute a radical political movement [...]</i>
I want to take feminism apart <u>and</u> <i>examine the machinery</i> that makes it so powerful.
Women could be nurses, of course, <u>but</u> <i>that was a caring role [...]</i>
Cameron was delighted to arrive at Oxford University <u>and</u> <i>discover its ‘gender-free language’ policy, <u>but</u></i> <i>less delighted to discover she was one of ‘only two and a half women in her department’.</i>
She should have won a scholarship, <u>but</u> <i>it was instead given to the next best student [...]</i>

Looking at compound sentences in the analysed sections from a contrastive standpoint, it can be claimed that English and Italian structures match, as both languages use a SVO (subject + verb + object) sentence organization.

However, an issue worth mentioning is whether and in what cases it is appropriate to omit the subject in both languages. As a matter of fact, Italian is very flexible about omitting subjects and in some cases omission is even preferable in order to make a sentence sound more natural; on the other hand, omitting the subject in English is only allowed in few particular instances – i.e. in compound conjunctive or disjunctive clauses whereas they share the same subject as the main clause.

For instance, in the fifth example, we can see that Cameron is the subject of both the main and the disjunctive clause, so in this case subject and verb can be omitted, as they are the same as in the main clause.

Another example worth discussing is the last one: indeed, the subject “she” could be easily omitted in Italian or there could be a switch in the sentence structure – e.g. «avrebbe dovuto vincere lei una borsa di studio».

For what concerns complex sentences, some examples have been listed as follows (emphasis is mine):

<p>The criticism reflects a desperate desire to pretend <u>that</u> <i>thorny issues are actually straightforward.</i></p>
<p>[...] the University of London had become the first in the world to admit women as undergraduate students, <u>although</u> <i>they were awarded a ‘certificate of proficiency’ rather than a degree.</i></p>
<p>She chose Edinburgh, <u>because</u> <i>the city was considered to be forward-thinking [...]</i></p>
<p>‘Every September, I get a bunch of wide-eyed buggy-tailed children <u>who</u> <i>dare not say a word out of edgeways or put a foot wrong,</i>’ [...]</p>
<p><u>When</u> <i>I spoke to other male primary school teachers, they told similar stories.</i></p>
<p>No wonder boys struggle at school, <u>if</u> <i>they are receiving such mixed messages about what is expected of them.</i></p>

Looking at the presented examples, we can again claim that the English structures match their Italian equivalents with regard to the basic sentence organization.

- **STYLE**

Another significant aspect to examine is style.

The concept of style is closely linked to the concepts of markedness and thematic structure. Baker draws from Halliday’s systemic functional grammar and understands a clause as consisting of two segments: a theme – «what the clause is about» – and a rheme – «what the speaker says about the theme» (Baker 2018, 136).

The notions of theme and rheme prove extremely helpful when assessing whether the thematic structure of a text is marked or not. Speakers and writers make the so called “thematic choices” when selecting a clause element – i.e., subject, predicator, object, complement, adjunct – as a theme. Different thematic choices carry along different meanings and have a certain degree of markedness.

In Baker’s words, «the degree of markedness involved will depend on the frequency with which the element in question generally occurs in theme position and the extent to which it is normally mobile within the clause» (2018, 145). This implies that a certain type of clause will have one unmarked thematic structure, which is selected by the speaker or writer by default, and several marked options deriving from word order variations.

The choice of a marked option over an unmarked one is grounded in the intention to «foreground a particular element as the topic of the clause or its point of departure» (Baker 2018, 146).

Considering the selected excerpts, it can be claimed that, overall, the thematic structure of the text is not marked, even though it includes a few exceptions worth highlighting (emphasis is mine).

^(T) By looking at a series of fights [...] ^(R) I hope to show how change happens [...]
^(T) It’s the sheep ^(R) that makes the protest feel really insulting.
^(T) Fascinating though the insides of human beings are, ^(R) they are best seen on an empty [...] stomach.
[...] ^(T) where women lag behind, ^(R) it’s because of innate biological differences between the sexes.

For what concerns syntax and morphological processes, we can argue that Italian is an inflected (or synthetic) language – hence it «changes the form or ending of some words when the way in which they are used in sentences changes» (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022) – whereas English generally uses supplemental words and context to create meaning, rather than inflection and verbal conjugation. This implies that meaning and markedness are strictly linked with sentence construction in English.

The presented examples all feature a high degree of markedness, as the theme results from a word order variation – e.g. «fascinating though the insides [...]» instead of «(though the insides [...] are fascinating)» – or would normally be expected to be in rheme position n – e.g. in the first example, where the author’s intention is to make a point on what she will do to show how change happens.

The punchiness in the ST is a typical characteristic of the journalistic writing style, as well as its language, which is strongly idiomatic and eloquent.

Following Nida’s classification, in which the author identifies four types of literary or non-literary texts – narrative, description, discussion, dialogue (Newmark 1987, 13), it can be claimed that the ST is characterised by a style which is mainly aimed at discussion (a treatment of ideas, with emphasis on abstract nouns, verbs of thought, mental activity, logical argument and connectives).

In fact, a wide range of examples including verb of thoughts along with connectives can be identified in the ST. By way of example (emphasis is mine):

[...] the twenty-nine-year-old Sophia Jex-Blake argued <u>that</u> women were naturally suited to a career in medicine [...]
She points out <u>that</u> her brother Tom earns a living as a lawyer, after all.
[...] think back to Millicent Fawcett being told <u>that</u> the militant suffragettes were off putting [...]
She also sensed <u>that</u> apathy would curdle to antipathy if she carried on.
In her memoir, Jex-Blake speculates <u>that</u> the women’s success turned the other students against them [...]
Davies thought <u>that</u> it would be harder to refuse young women entry to universities [...]
I strongly believe <u>that</u> you cannot be what you cannot see.

When analysing register, instead, we ought to consider the aforementioned scales proposed by Peter Newmark (1987).

As a matter of fact, taking into account the scale of formality, it can be argued that the language used by the author sets a register which is mainly informal and neutral, even though the text also includes a few colloquialisms and some slang phrases and expressions.

As neutrality is used to convey facts and narrate events, several examples of neutral writing can be retrieved within the text, especially in the excerpt from the essay about education. By way of example (emphasis is mine):

<u>Two years earlier</u> , the University of London had become the first in the world to admit women as undergraduate students [...]
<u>In 1860</u> , Elizabeth Garrett Anderson found a loophole after being rejected by all the regular colleges.
The Medical Act <u>of 1858</u> had been designed to discourage quacks and charlatans [...]

On the other hand, informality is conveyed through a series of strategies, such as contractions and abbreviations, conversational tone and use of conjunctions – i.e. addressing the audience in second person, using first person pronouns, starting a sentence with the adversative conjunction “but”.

Some examples are included in the chart below (emphasis is mine):

<u>I’m</u> not talking about being rude, thoughtless, obnoxious or a diva.
Do <u>you</u> find Chanel’s wartime collaboration with the Nazis ‘empowering’? <u>I don’t</u> [...]
<u>But</u> I’m not a historian, and this is not a conventional history.
<u>We</u> will also see the tawdry compromises, the personality clashes and the backlash [...]
<u>Here’s</u> the paragraph that stayed with me, though.

Considering the scale of generality:

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) <i>Simple</i> | 3) <i>Neutral</i> | 5) <i>Technical</i> |
| 2) <i>Popular</i> | 4) <i>Educated</i> | 6) <i>Opaquely technical</i> |

the ST can be placed between the neutral and the popular level, as it does not include words, structures and phrases with a level of complexity that pertains to specialized texts.

Finally, for what concerns the emotional tone, the author adopted a mixture of warm and factual tone in the present ST. As a matter of fact, she reports her personal experience and add some of her opinions to her narration – i.e. in the essay about education, where she reports historical facts, but she does that in a way that is not neutral.

CHAPTER 2 - *The Atlantic*: Source Text Analysis of Two Articles

2.1 The Atlantic: an overview

As we move forward to the second section of the source text analysis, it's important to give a brief overview on the source from which the two articles in question have been selected: the American magazine *The Atlantic*.

The Atlantic was founded in Boston in the spring of 1857, with a mission which was clearly stated in its very first issue:

« [...] each number will contain articles of an abstract and permanent value, it will also be found that the healthy appetite of the mind for entertainment in its various forms of Narrative, Wit, and Humor, will not go uncared for.»

« [...] make this critical department a true and fearless representative of Art, in all its various branches, without any regard to prejudice [...] »

« In Politics, *The Atlantic* will be the organ of no party or clique, but will honestly endeavor to be the exponent of what its conductors believe to be the American idea. »

The Atlantic's main focus is on literature and art, as well as on politics, as it seeks to pursue factual information rather than support one political party. Nowadays, *The Atlantic* also cares very deeply about diversity, making inclusion a priority and a tool for enrichment, as they state in the "Career" website section.

Helen Lewis became a staff writer for *The Atlantic* in July 2019 and, since then, she has been dealing with a wide range of issues related to social justice, human rights, gender equality and feminism.

Two Lewis' articles were chosen, both directly linked to one another: the first one, "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism", was published on March 19th, 2020, while the second one, "The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage", was published almost a year later, on March 10th, 2021.

Both articles address the current and ever-pressing issue of the worldwide Coronavirus crisis from a gendered perspective: in fact, they predict and analyse how the pandemic would impact and eventually impacted on women's lives.

Pairing up these two specific articles has been deemed particularly relevant to the present analysis for a number of reasons: first of all, as the subject matter is the same, it is interesting to note that there is much common ground between the two articles as far as vocabulary, key words and sentence structure are concerned; secondly, they both feature relevant culture-bound elements which required research to be fully understood and might be worth mentioning within the present analysis; lastly, with regard to the content, while in “The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism” Lewis predicted a series of problems that would come as a result of the outbreak, “The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage” is indeed a follow-up article to the previous one, where the author takes stock of what has actually changed throughout the first year of the Coronavirus pandemic and reassesses future perspectives based on the data she has collected since the beginning of 2020.

2.2 Situational features

Following Bühler’s three main functions of language (Newmark 1987, 39) it can be claimed that the informative and vocative functions are present in the two articles taken into consideration and can be identified in several different passages, even though the prevalent one is the informative function.

- ***Informative function***

- ***The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism***

Purely as a physical illness, the coronavirus <i>appears to affect</i> women less severely.
Academics who studied these episodes <i>found that</i> they had deep, long-lasting effects on gender equality.
<i>According to</i> the British government’s figures, 40 percent of employed women work part-time, compared with only 13 percent of men.
That <i>can have an effect</i> on maternal mortality, or access to contraception.

- ***The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage***

Women <i>are more likely to</i> be single parents, and when they’re in straight couples, they’re <i>more likely to</i> be the lower earner.
Spikes in domestic violence <i>have been recorded</i> in countries as varied as Sweden and Nigeria [...]

A recent study <i>found that</i> fewer than 5 percent of nearly 2,500 registered COVID-19 clinical trials planned to disaggregate their data by sex [...]
More women than men <i>appear to suffer</i> from “long COVID.”

The selected examples (emphasis is mine) are representative of the informative function, as all of them present a host of verbs and phrases which express certainty or likelihood for what concerns the presented data, figures and statistics. As a matter of fact, the author is providing evidence to prove the point she is trying to make in the two selected articles.

However, a key aspect to point out is that she also uses the verb «to appear» as a hedging language technique whenever any of her claims are not objectively true and might be proven wrong – e.g. the last example from the second article. The use of such verb is a typical feature of journalistic style.

- *Vocative function*

- *The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism*

We <i>shouldn't make</i> that mistake again.
[...] further epidemics are inevitable, and the temptation to argue that gender is a side issue, a distraction from the real crisis, <i>must be resisted</i> .
This pandemic <i>should remind</i> of the true scale of that distortion.

- *The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage*

The pandemic will have a long tail in which anger <i>can turn</i> into action.
[...] while women are divided by race, class, nationality, and plenty else, we still <i>can and should talk</i> about women's issues.

For what concerns the aforementioned examples (emphasis is mine), we can see that they represent the vocative function, as they convey a message and communicate with the audience by calling them to action. In this regard, Lewis uses modal verbs – e.g. could, should, must – to fulfil two specific functions: deontic and epistemic.

According to Brogaard and Gatzia, «epistemic modals mark the necessity or possibility of a preajacent proposition relative to a body of evidence or knowledge» (2016, 127); hence, they express a

possibility. On the other hand, modal verbs used with a deontic function express «what may or must be so in the sense of permission or obligation» (Brogaard, Gatzia 2016, 130).

According to Nida's classification (1964, 158), it can be claimed that the STs taken into consideration are received by an audience of average literature adults, who can handle both oral and written messages with relative ease.

Following Newmark's classification (1987, 15), we can again claim that the author's target audience for these two articles – as well as for the book *Difficult Women* – is arguably a readership of educated laypeople. As a matter of fact, neither of the two articles – except for three terms pertaining to the fields of gender studies and feminism, which will be discussed in detail further on in the present analysis – include any formal or specific lexis nor fixed structures or formulae typical of specialized texts.

For what concerns the genre, we will keep referring to Grabe's macro-genre classification into expository and narrative texts presented by the scholar Ann M. Johns. As Johns notes, «informational (expository) texts as opposed to narrative texts, are usually seen as the primary input for learning new information» (2001, 254). Following her claim that such texts are used when the readers do not have «a high level of prior topical knowledge but are expected to increase this knowledge as a result of encounters with these informational texts» (Johns 2001, 254), both STs can assumingly be placed within the informational (expository) macro-genre.

2.3 Intratextual features

The subject matter of both articles is the current global Coronavirus crisis, explored from two different standpoints.

“The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism” dates back to March 2020, at the very beginning of the Covid pandemic, while “The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage” was written almost a year later. While the first article is more focused on data and expected results of the outbreak, the second one analyses the actual outcomes, offers an update on the most current situation, and even elaborates on a positive future prospect on what could and should be done to tackle this «huge setback for all the gains of the last 50 years», as the author defines it in the second article,

In the first article, Lewis investigates on two important aspects: how does childcare impact on women's lives? And how does such impact change as a consequence of an outbreak? Lewis presents these concerns by comparing Coronavirus's effect with those resulting from Ebola and Zika outbreaks in the past, supporting her claims with data on job loss as a strongly gendered phenomenon and by

relying on the perspectives offered by several researchers, such as Clare Wenham, Rachel Patzer and Susannah Hares.

She predicts that the Coronavirus pandemic will bring many families back to the 1950s, with the reintroduction of the patriarchal breadwinner/homemaker dichotomy and its long-lasting consequences will affect both the economic and the health system. Moreover, there will be an increase in domestic violence and the imposed restrictions will shut down all possible paths to safety for abused partners and children. Nevertheless, the author claims that this pandemic could be an opportunity for researchers to retrieve more accurate data and for policy makers to finally take gender into account and rethink a different approach to future outbreaks.

Likewise, in the second article, Lewis starts by mentioning an episode happened to Clare Wenham in July 2020 when her daughter Scarlett burst into the room while she was giving an interview for the BBC. This video went viral because it was so relatable for many parents struggling to juggle work and childcare during the Covid pandemic.

Lewis reflects on the fact that, while women are divided by race, social class, sexual orientation and many other factors, there is still much common ground to look at when it comes to inequality: according to the data collected by academic researchers and international organizations, every woman and girl from very diverse countries has been facing similar struggles within the past two years.

The author stresses the greatest paradox of feminism, which is an ever-present struggle: when you are busy dealing with housework, your job and childcare, there is no time left to campaign against inequality.

In conclusion, Lewis mentions that, according to Susannah Hares, a senior policy fellow for the Centre for Global Development, the Coronavirus pandemic might actually benefit women on the long run – as it had already happened after the medieval Black Death pandemic – and eventually accelerate the trend towards flexible work.

In the selected articles there is a vast array of words and phrases which are relevant to the present analysis. They will be classified and analysed in context as follows:

- **KEY WORDS**

As already mentioned in the previous section, all the keywords included in the present analysis have been extracted by using the Wordlist function on the computational linguistic tool AntConc.

The keywords which have been selected based on their relevance to the present analysis are listed in the chart below:

The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism

the [102]	crisis [9]
and [51]	children [8]
of [51]	outbreak [8]
[...]	[...]
women [23]	care [6]
[...]	pandemic [6]
coronavirus [9]	[...]

The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage

the [107]	[...]
of [53]	children [7]
to [52]	parents [7]
[...]	[...]
women [21]	Covid [6]
[...]	feminism [6]
pandemic [12]	[...]

Looking at the above-mentioned keywords, it can be noted that they all pertain to gender, family or the Covid-19 pandemic, which are indeed the focal points of both articles.

• **COLLOCATIONS**

The concept of collocation and the distinction between propositional and expressive meaning presented by Mona Baker have been examined in depth in the previous section of the present work when dealing with the Source Text Analysis of excerpts selected from the book *Difficult Women*.

Moreover, when discussing the concept of presupposed meaning, it has been claimed that it arises from two types of restrictions: selectional restrictions and collocational restrictions. Both types will be analysed and discussed in this chapter as well as in the previous one.

- **GRAMMATICAL COLLOCATIONS**

As previously mentioned, grammatical collocation is «a phrase that consists of a noun, an adjective, or a verb plus a preposition or grammatical structure such as an infinitive or clause» (Benson 2010, 19). By way of example (emphasis is mine):

When people try to be cheerful about social distancing and working from home [...]	cheerful <u>about</u> (doing) something
Academics who studied these episodes found that they had deep, long-lasting effects on gender equality.	to have an effect <u>on</u> someone/something
[...] the temptation to argue that gender is a side issue, a distraction from the real crisis [...]	distraction <u>from</u> something
Spikes in domestic violence have been recorded in countries as varied as Sweden and Nigeria [...]	a spike <u>in</u> something
I'm still incredibly disappointed with our culture and our leadership in allowing for the opening of bars [...]	disappointed <u>with</u> someone/something
More women than men appear to suffer from “long COVID”.	to suffer <u>from</u> something
Hares believes that the switch to working from home could benefit women in professional roles [...]	a switch <u>to</u> something

Looking at the presented examples and comparing them with their Italian equivalents, it is worth mentioning that there is a shift in the grammar structure – especially for prepositional verbs, which represent the majority of the selected examples.

For example, we can point out that in some cases a different preposition is used in the two languages – i.e. «cheerful **about** social distancing» would be «felice **per** il distanziamento sociale» or, whenever a verb is included, «felice **di** fare qualcosa»; «spikes **in** domestic violence» would be «picchi **di** violenza domestica»; «suffer **from** “long COVID”» would be «soffrire **di** “long COVID”».

Nevertheless, there are also cases when there is no change in the preposition used in either languages – i.e. «a distraction **from** the real crisis» would be translated as «una distrazione **dalla** vera crisi».

- **LEXICAL COLLOCATIONS**

In contrast, a lexical collocation is a phrase that does not include grammatical elements. As previously mentioned, there are several possible types of lexical collocations, but only two of them will be presented and discussed with regard to the two selected articles: verb + noun and verb + adverb.

Some examples are shown in the following chart (emphasis is mine):

It's not just about social norms of women performing care roles [...]	to perform a role
Single parents face even harder decisions : [...]	to face a decision
[...] the "1950s ideal" of Dad returning to a freshly baked dinner and freshly washed children [...]	freshly + adjective
[...] she and two co-authors have stepped into the gap to research the issue .	to research an issue
[...] she was giving an interview to the BBC about Britain's attempts to manage the coronavirus pandemic.	to give an interview
[...] parents with low incomes were nine times more likely to report a risk of losing their jobs [...]	to report a risk

For what concerns the verb + noun type, which is the most recurring one within the ST, it is worth highlighting the main differences we can find when comparing English and Italian lexical collocations.

For example, the collocation «**to research an issue**» would be best translated into Italian by replacing the verb «to research» with the Italian lexical collocation «**condurre una ricerca/delle ricerche**». Moreover, a preposition or phrase introducing the Italian “complemento di argomento” should be added to clarify the object of said research. Therefore, the whole phrase would be translated as «**condurre una ricerca (delle ricerche) su (in merito a) una questione**».

On the other hand, the collocation «**to give an interview**» is an example of how the verb collocating with the word «interview» changes in Italian. As a matter of fact, in Italian an interview is released, whereas in English it is given: hence, the best Italian equivalent for such collocation would be «**rilasciare un'intervista**».

As for the adverb + adjective type, the collocation «**freshly + adjective**» is very commonly used in English to refer to something that has just been made or done. For this reason, the best Italian equivalent has to be chosen depending on the adjective following the adverb «freshly». In the ST we can find two examples: «**freshly baked**» and «**freshly washed**».

In the first example, a dinner that is freshly baked gives us the idea of food that has just been taken out of the oven; hence, a good Italian equivalent might be «**cena appena sfornata**». The second example, instead, could be translated as «**bambini freschi di doccia (bagno)**», as the adjective «freschi» would convey both the meaning and the idiomaticity of the adverb «freshly».

- **IDIOMS AND FIXED EXPRESSIONS**

- **IDIOMS**

As already mentioned in the previous chapter, the words making up an idiom have different meanings when they are seen as a unit or when they are considered as separate words.

Comparing the articles with the excerpts from the book *Difficult Women*, it can be stated that both STs are equally idiomatic, as they very much rely on a host of idioms, phrasal verbs and fixed expressions to shape meaning.

By way of example (emphasis is mine):

But these deaths, like the unnoticed caring labor on which the modern economy runs [...]	to run on something = to continue without interruption (Collins Dictionary, 2022)
These deaths are taken for granted .	to take someone/something for granted = to accept or assume without question (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)
Wenham soldiered on through Scarlett's entreaties [...]	to soldier on = continue to do something although it is difficult or unpleasant (Collins Dictionary, 2022)

[...] school closures would force parents out of the labor market [...]	to force someone out = to make a person lose their job or position (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)
[...] women have borne the brunt of joblessness in 17 of the 24 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries [...]	to bear the brunt = to receive the main force of something unpleasant (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2022)
[...] why pass up the opportunity to learn more and perhaps save men’s lives?	to pass up = to not take advantage (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)
[...] the Women’s Budget Group has called for targeted support of female-dominated sectors [...]	to call for something = to need or deserve a particular action, remark, or quality (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)
“I’ve had to pull out of panels,” she told me.	to pull out of something = to stop being involved in an activity, event, or situation (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)
The pandemic will have a long tail in which anger can turn into action.	to turn into something = to change or develop into something different (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)

Looking at the examples from a contrastive standpoint, the first case worth discussing is the idiom «to take someone/something for granted»: in Italian we use the same preposition as in English, but the verb changes and it is replaced by the verb «dare» - namely «to give»; hence, the Italian equivalent would be «dare qualcuno/qualcosa per scontato».

Another relevant example is the phrasal verb «to force somebody out»: as a matter of fact, in Italian we need to add a second verb in order to clarify the whole meaning of the particle «out» and therefore a feasible equivalent for said phrasal verb would be «costringere qualcuno a uscire».

- **FIXED EXPRESSIONS**

On the other hand, as claimed in the previous chapter, a fixed expression features a higher level of transparency than an idiom and hence the reader or hearer can easily associate such phrase to the typical contexts in which it is used.

By way of example (emphasis is mine):

[...] there was no pot of money ready to go, no governance plan.	pots of something = a lot of something, especially money (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)
In July, Clare Wenham—and her daughter, Scarlett, and Scarlett’s picture of a unicorn— went viral.	to go viral = quickly becoming very popular or well known by being published on the internet or sent from person to person by email, phone, etc. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)
[...] many women are too busy trying to hold everything together to translate this anger into political action.	to hold someone/something together = to keep (a group or organization) complete or in its original state or condition (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)
It has also smashed the idea that the developed world has no more use for feminism [...]	to have no use for something = to have no need of something (Collins Dictionary, 2022)

Looking at the above-mentioned examples, it can be argued that the fixed expression «pot of money» might be translated into Italian as «un mucchio di soldi» or «una barca di soldi». Both are fixed expressions which are often – though not exclusively – used to refer to money.

For what concerns the expression «to go viral», it is used in the field of online contents, and it has recently been widely adopted in Italian colloquial language and slang. However, while in English an online content of any type is said to «have gone viral», in Italian we would say that it «has become viral» – «diventare virale».

- **METAPHORS AND METAPHORICAL ITEMS**

In his essay on the contemporary theory of metaphor, Lakoff defines metaphors as a mechanism through which we are able to understand abstract concepts in a more concrete or more highly structured way (1993, 244-245).

Metaphor, as Newmark claimed, has a referential purpose – hence «to describe a mental process or state, a concept, a person, an object, a quality or an action more comprehensively and concisely than is possible in literal or physical language» – and a pragmatic purpose – which is «to appeal to the senses, to interest, to clarify 'graphically', to please, to delight, to surprise» (Newmark 1987, 104).

By way of example (emphasis is mine):

<p>Instead, couples will have to decide which one of them takes the hit.</p>	<p>to take the hit =</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to accept the blame or punishment for someone else's crime 2. to suffer the consequences of something
<p>[...] she and two co-authors have stepped into the gap to research the issue.</p>	<p>to step into the gap =</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to put one's foot in the gap 2. to enter an incomplete field of knowledge
<p>[...] politicians have assumed that child care and elderly care can be "soaked up" by private citizens [...]</p>	<p>to soak up =</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to absorb 2. to take in or accept something mentally

The three presented verbs have two different meanings: a literal and a metaphorical one. It is clear that in the three examples the verbs only express their metaphorical meaning.

For example, as «to take the hit» doesn't actually imply being physically hit in this case, a good metaphorical Italian equivalent might be the phrase «incassare il colpo», which features the same ambivalence as the selected English metaphor.

- **TERMINOLOGY**

For what concerns terminology, three key examples pertaining to the field of feminism and gender studies can be pointed out in the ST and will be discussed as follows (emphasis is mine):

<p>Despite the mass entry of women into the workforce during the 20th century, the phenomenon of the "second shift" still exists.</p>	<p>second shift =</p> <p>The concept of "second shift" was introduced by the American sociologist Arlie Hochschild in her book "The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home", published in 1989. This term indicates the "household duties that follow a paid workday, typically completed by women".</p>
--	---

<p>At the same time, the movement has long relied on “consciousness raising” as a first step to action.</p>	<p>consciousness raising = The model of consciousness raising was first developed by the activist and radical feminist Carol Hanisch. The process started taking place during structured meetings that helped women to recognize – in Hanisch’s famous words – that “personal is political”. Consciousness raising was a key element of the second wave women’s movement and an essential practice in the development of feminism as a whole.</p>
<p>[...] a huge setback for the gains of the past 50 years, such as the domestic-violence-refuge movement and women’s increased economic independence.</p>	<p>domestic-violence-refuge movement = The domestic-violence movement was boosted by the establishment of the first-ever refuge in the world, set up in 1971 in Chiswick, London, by Erin Pizzey, who is today a man’s rights activist. Thanks to Pizzey’s contribution, nowadays all women, children and men experiencing domestic violence in the UK can call upon the charity Refuge.</p>

These three terms are especially relevant, because they introduce three cultural concepts that required further research for the current analysis; such work of research also proved very helpful as groundwork for the translation process.

Moreover, it’s important to note that these concepts still constitute an active part of our society: for example, the practice of consciousness raising is still widespread within the feminist movement as a powerful tool for political and personal discussion, known with the name of «autocoscienza femminista» or simply «autocoscienza».

- **COLLOQUIALISMS AND SLANG WORDS**

<p>I’m scared for people who actually need to go to the store & feed their fams [...]</p>	<p>fam → <i>noun (colloquial)</i> fam = your family (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022)</p>
--	---

<p>“The truth will set you free. But first it will piss you off.”</p>	<p>to piss off → <i>verb (slang, vulgar)</i> to piss off = to annoy someone very much (Macmillan Dictionary, 2022)</p>
--	--

The case of the noun «fam» is interesting, because in Italian there is no colloquial equivalent to indicate the members of a family. This means that a compensation strategy might be used in the translation process to convey the same level of colloquialism as in the ST.

For what concerns the verb «to piss somebody off», which is commonly used in informal English, it can be claimed that there is a good Italian equivalent which matches the tone and level of colloquialism: «far incazzare qualcuno».

- **CULTURE-BOUND TERMS**

Culture-bound terms (CBTs) are the terms which "**refer to concepts, institutions and personnel which are specific to the SL culture**" (Harvey 2003, 2).

<p>In the United States, where “rage moms” and “wine moms” were credited with influencing the results of the presidential election, having children is held up as the pinnacle of female achievement.</p>	<p>rage mom =</p> <p>The concept of “rage mom” – as Lisa Lerer and Jennifer Medina argue in their article “The ‘Rage Moms’ Democrats Are Counting On” (2020) for the New York Times – has generated in the USA as a consequence of President Trump’s handling of the pandemic during 2020. In fact, all voters across America, but especially women, were extremely angry and vocal about all the problems brought about by the pandemic – above all, struggles with childcare and uncertainty about the future of education.</p> <p>“Rage moms” are mothers who didn’t use to think of themselves as political, until the pandemic hit and they had to face all the problems of a broken system which affects almost every woman now – even middle-class white women, who since then have had the</p>
---	---

privilege to remain unaffected by childcare, health care and school-related issues.

As a consequence, many “rage moms” decided to support the new presidential nominee, Joe Biden, who put these pressing issues in his political agenda and proposed adequate fundings to support families and mothers.

wine mom =

The concept of “wine mom”, according to Ashley Fetters in her article “Who Is a Wine Mom?” (2020) for the Atlantic, represents more than just mothers who love drinking wine.

It is a widespread phenomenon which started with the creation of two important Instagram communities in 2016 and 2018 by Anne Bodenshteyn and Angela Principe.

They gathered many women who felt isolated and helpless while struggling to be good parents and needed advice as well as sharing common experiences and finding the funny and joyful side to them. For these women, wine is just one possible symbol of how they can still be much more than just “Mommy” while facing the struggles of parenting. But the whole point is their need for escape and connection.

The downside of it – as many people claimed – is that this has become or could become a way of glorifying drinking as a self-medication or as a coping mechanism. Principe assured that this is not the case: she is indeed very careful about how often she posts wine-related contents.

	<p>Instead, at a deeper level, this phenomenon reveals how modern parenting has become, now more than ever, a consuming and isolating job, especially for mothers who have to juggle career and parenting responsibilities: childcare costs are progressively higher and traditionally recognized support systems – i.e. grandparents, extended family – are becoming weaker and weaker.</p>
--	--

These two terms deserve a thorough explanation to be fully understood, as their meaning and background is not explained within the co-text nor can be inferred from the context. Moreover, as they are culture-bound elements – hence strictly linked with the SL culture – having more detailed information about them would prove helpful while choosing the best translation strategy to adopt.

Both articles feature a generally complex and elaborate sentence structure – apart from a few independent clauses, i.e., questions, statements – as they present a wide range of compound (main clause + one or more coordinate clauses) and complex (main clause + one or more subordinate clauses) sentences.

Some examples of compound sentences can be found in the chart below (emphasis is mine):

<p>He saw out the Great Plague of 1665–6 on his family’s estate in the east of England, and spent most of his adult life as a fellow at Cambridge University [...]</p>
<p>With the schools closed, many fathers will undoubtedly step up, but that won’t be universal.</p>
<p>The United States already has appalling statistics in this area [...], and black women there are twice as likely to die in childbirth as white women.</p>
<p>[...] 29 million papers were published in more than 15,000 peer-reviewed titles around the time of the Zika and Ebola epidemics, but less than 1 percent explored the gendered impact of the outbreaks.</p>
<p>[...] further epidemics are inevitable, and the temptation to argue that gender is a side issue [...] must be resisted.</p>
<p>Spikes in domestic violence have been recorded in countries as varied as Sweden and Nigeria, and women have borne the brunt of joblessness [...]</p>

By law, British companies are obliged to report their gender pay gap — but they were given a year off in 2020 [...]
The raw statistics are one thing, but what strikes you when talking with parents is their sheer exhaustion [...]
The past year has forced many women to confront the inequality in their own life — and every kid sitting on a lap in a Zoom meeting, or bursting in to show off a unicorn, has forced that knowledge on the rest of us.

Taking into account the aforementioned compound sentences from a contrastive perspective, it can be claimed that English and Italian structures match, as both languages use a SVO (subject + verb + object) sentence organization.

Again, one difference worth pointing out is the level of flexibility in the subject omission. As already stated in the previous chapter, while Italian is fairly flexible about omitting the subject in a sentence, English has more strict rules in this regard. For instance, this is possible when compound conjunctive or disjunctive clauses share the same subject as the main clause.

As a matter of fact, in the first example we can note that the verbs «to see» and «to spend» have the same subject – the personal pronoun «he» – which is indeed omitted in the coordinate clause.

Another important issue to discuss is the presence of gerunds, which in Italian are often expressed either with a past participle – i.e. «sitting on a lap» as «seduto in braccio»; «bursting in» as «irrotto» – or with a relative clause.

For what concerns complex sentences, some examples have been listed as follows (emphasis is mine):

When people try to be cheerful about social distancing and working from home [...], there is an obvious response [...]
We can both work because someone else is looking after our children.
When I called Wenham, she was self-isolating with two small children
As I attempt to home school my kids (alone) with a new baby who screams if she isn't held, I am worried about the health of my spouse and my family.
[...] Caroline Criado Perez notes that 29 million papers were published in more than 15,000 peer-reviewed titles around the time of the Zika and Ebola epidemics [...]
Researchers [...] are frustrated that findings like this have not made it through to policy makers [...]

Zoom meetings have ensured that employers, and the outside world, can't help but see the struggle.
Whereas Kelly's interrupted interview was rare enough in 2017 to be newsworthy, Wenham's went viral for the opposite reason [...]
[...] fewer than 5 percent of nearly 2,500 registered COVID-19 clinical trials planned to disaggregate their data by sex, though men are more likely to be hospitalized with the coronavirus [...]
Last March, I also quoted the Emory University epidemiologist Rachel Patzer, who had to care for a three-week-old baby and two young children [...]
It's hard to find time to campaign against inequality when you're elbow-deep in diapers [...]
Some historians suggest that those women married later and had fewer children [...]

Considering the presented examples, we can claim that the two articles include a host of different types of complex sentences – i.e. causal, relative, temporal, concessive. Some of them are combined with one another or with compound sentences, as in the last case.

- **STYLE**

Regarding the author's stylistic choices, the concepts of markedness and thematic structure – which have already been examined in the previous chapter on *Difficult Women* – will be taken into account in the present chapter as well.

As is known, the degree of markedness of a text will change depending on the “thematic choices” made by the speaker or writer. Following Baker's claim, the choice of a marked option over an unmarked one is grounded in the intention to «foreground a particular element as the topic of the clause or its point of departure» (2018, 146)

Considering the two selected articles, it can be claimed that, overall, the thematic structure of the texts is not marked, even though it includes a few exceptions worth highlighting.

^(T) When people try to be cheerful about social distancing and working from home [...], ^(R) there is an obvious response [...]
^(T) Despite the mass entry of women into the workforce during the 20th century, ^(R) the phenomenon of the “second shift” still exists.

^(T)**Alongside investment in child care and the inclusion of more women in political decision making**,[®] the Women’s Budget Group has called for targeted support of female-dominated sectors [...]

According to Nida’s classification, which defines four different types of literary or non-literary texts (Newmark 1987, 13), we can argue that the two selected articles are mainly aimed at discussion, as there is an emphasis on connectives and a profuse use of logical argument and verbs of thought.

By way of example (emphasis is mine):

Academics who studied these episodes found that they had deep, long-lasting effects on gender equality.
According to the British government’s figures, 40 percent of employed women work part-time [...]
That can have an effect on maternal mortality, or access to contraception.
[...] Caroline Criado Perez notes that 29 million papers were published [...]
In both rich and poor countries, campaigners expect domestic-violence rates to rise during lockdown periods.
They also worry that opportunities to collect high-quality data [...]
This pandemic should remind us of the true scale of that distortion.
[...] her experience suggests that governments are too short-termist and reactive.
Researchers who had studied previous epidemics predicted that school closures would force parents out of the labor market [...]
Wenham, who co-leads the international Gender and COVID-19 project, attributes some of this global trend to the complacency of rich countries [...]
As the British Medical Journal asked in an editorial last year, why pass up [...]
In Britain, the Women’s Budget Group, a collective of independent researchers, has chronicled the pandemic’s unequal impact.
Some historians suggest that those women married later and had fewer children [...]

When discussing the register choice in the two articles, we will consider the previously mentioned scales proposed by Peter Newmark.

Taking into account the scale of formality, it can be argued that the language used by Helen Lewis sets a register which is a mixture of neutral and informal tones.

A neutral register is used to deliver facts and it is not specifically formal nor informal. Lewis uses it to speak about data and statistics, while, when reporting the perspective offered by her interviewees, making a point or drawing conclusions about the topic, she tends to adopt an informal register – characterised by the use of phrasal verbs and idioms, active constructions, contractions and abbreviations – i.e. “it’s” instead of “it is”, “&” instead of “and” – and the use of first-person pronouns.

Some examples of informal register are presented in the following chart (emphasis is mine):

<u>But</u> one of the most striking effects of the coronavirus will be to send many couples back to the 1950s.
“ <u>It’s</u> not just about social norms of women performing care roles; <u>it’s</u> also about practicalities,” [...]
[...] understood to be responsible for household management, rather than, <u>say</u> , Mike and Steve.
We just made the difficult decision for him to isolate <u>&</u> move into our garage apartment [...]
The evidence <u>we</u> do have from the Ebola and Zika outbreaks [...]

Regarding the scale of generality, the ST can be placed between the neutral and the educated level, meaning that the two articles feature a medium level of opacity and can therefore be understood by almost every adult reader, as on the whole they present a basic vocabulary with just some slightly more difficult words and phrases.

Finally, for what concerns emotional tone, the ST generally features warm and factual tones, as Lewis is providing her own opinion about the issue she is discussing, along with a narration of her interviewees’ stories, but she is also using statistics and data – which she presents by using an objective language and verbs such as «to find», «to predict» or «to suggest» – to prove the point she is trying to make.

CHAPTER 3 - Source Texts

3.1 *Difficult Women*: two excerpts

Introduction

What does it mean to be a difficult woman? I'm not talking about being rude, thoughtless, obnoxious or a diva. First of all, difficult means complicated, and this book contains a host of complicated women. A thumbs-up, thumbs-down approach to historical figures is boring and reductive. Most of us are more than one thing; everyone is 'problematic'. In this book, you will meet women with views which are unpalatable to modern feminists. You will meet women with views which were unpalatable to their contemporaries. A history of feminism should not try to sand off the sharp corners of the movement's pioneers – or write them out of the story entirely, if their sins are deemed too great. It must allow them to be just as flawed – just as human – as men. 'Why are girls to be told that they resemble angels,' wrote Mary Wollstonecraft, 'but to sink them below women?' We don't have to be perfect to deserve equal rights. The idea of role models is not necessarily a bad one, but the way they are used in feminism can dilute a radical political movement into feel-good inspiration porn. Holding up a few exceptions is no substitute for questioning the rules themselves, and in our rush to champion historical women, we are distorting the past. Take the wildly successful children's book *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls*, which has sold more than a million copies. It tells a hundred 'empowering, moving and inspirational' stories, promising that 'these are true fairy tales for heroines who definitely don't need rescuing'. Its entry for the fashion designer Coco Chanel mentions that she wanted to start a business, and a 'wealthy friend of hers lent her enough money to make her dream come true'. It does not mention that Chanel was the lover of a Nazi officer and very probably a spy for Hitler's Germany. In the 1930s, she tried to remove that 'wealthy friend' from the company under racist laws which forbade Jews to own businesses. In the name of inspiring little girls living in a male-dominated world, the book doesn't so much airbrush Coco Chanel's story as sandblast it with a high-pressure hose. Do you find Chanel's wartime collaboration with the Nazis 'empowering'? I don't – although admittedly she does sound like a woman who 'didn't need rescuing'. The real Coco Chanel was clever, prejudiced, talented, cynical – and interesting. The pale version of her boiled down to a feminist saint is not. I can excuse that approach in a children's book, but it's alarming to see the same urge in adults. We cannot celebrate women by stripping politics – and therefore conflict – from the narrative. Unfurl the bunting, and don't ask too many questions! It creates a story of feminism where all the opponents are either cartoon baddies or mysteriously absent, where no hard compromises have

to be made, and internal disagreements disappear. The One True Way is obvious, and all Good People follow it. Feminists are on the right side of history, and we just have to wait for the world to catch up. Life does not work like that. It would be much easier if feminist triumphs relied on defeating a few bogeymen, but grotesque sexists like Donald Trump only have power because otherwise decent people voted for them. There were women who opposed female suffrage; women are the biggest consumers of magazines and websites which point out other women's physical flaws; there is no gender gap in support for abortion rights. People are complicated, and making progress is complicated too. If modern feminism feels toothless, it is because it has retreated into two modes: empty celebration or shadow-boxing with outright bastards. Neither deals with difficulty, and so neither can make a difference. Women's history should not be a shallow hunt for heroines. Too often, I see feminists castigating each other for admiring the Pankhursts (autocrats), Andrea Dworkin (too aggressive), Jane Austen (too middle-class), Margaret Atwood (worried about due process in sexual-harassment accusations) and Germaine Greer (where do I start?). I recently read a piece about how I was 'problematic' for having expressed sympathy for the Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh. My crime was to say that his confirmation hearings had been turned into a media circus – and even those accused of sexual assault deserve better. The criticism reflects a desperate desire to pretend that thorny issues are actually straightforward. No more flawed humans struggling inside vast, complicated systems: there are good guys and bad guys, and it's easy to tell which is which. This approach is pathetic and childish, and it should be resisted. I want to restore the complexity to feminist pioneers. Their legacies might be contested, they might have made terrible strategic choices and they might have not lived up to the ideals they preached. But they mattered. Their difficulty is part of the story. Then there's the second meaning of 'difficult'. Any demand for greater rights faces opponents, and any advance creates a backlash. Changing the world is always difficult. At Dublin Castle in May 2018, waiting for the results of the Irish referendum on abortion law, I saw a banner which read: 'If there is no struggle, there is no progress.' Those words come from a speech by Frederick Douglass, who campaigned for the end of the slave trade in the US. He wanted to make clear that 'power concedes nothing without a demand'. In other words, campaigners have to be disruptive. They cannot take No for an answer. 'Those who profess to favour freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground,' said Douglass. 'They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.' Changing the world won't make people like you. It will cause you pain. It will be difficult. It will feel like a struggle. You must accept the size of the mountain ahead of you, and start climbing it anyway. Then there is the difficulty of womanhood itself. In a world built for men, women will always struggle to fit in. We are what Simone de Beauvoir called 'the second sex'. Our bodies are different from the standard (male) human.

Our sexual desires have traditionally been depicted as fluid, hard to read, unpredictable. Our life experiences are mysterious and unknowable; our minds are Freud's 'dark continent'. We are imagined to be on the wrong side of a world divided in two. Men are serious, women are silly. Men are rational, women are emotional. Men are strong, women are weak. Men are steadfast, women are fickle. Men are objective, women are subjective. Men are humanity, women are a subset of it. Men want sex and women grant or withhold it. Women are looked at; men do the looking. When we are victims, it is hard to believe us. [...] When fighting for equal rights, women often face a hurdle of disbelief: does this problem really exist, if only women are talking about it? We know how unreasonable women are, after all. Finally, there is another meaning of 'difficult' which I try to tease out in this book. Any history of feminism has to start by acknowledging that most revolutionaries are not ... nice. And women have always been told to be nice. Girls are instructed to be 'ladylike' to keep them quiet and docile. (They are made of sugar and spice 'and all things nice'.) Motherhood is championed as a journey of endless self-sacrifice. Random men tell us to 'cheer up' in the street, because God forbid our own emotions should impinge on anyone else's day. If we raise our voices, we are 'shrill'. Our ambition is suspicious. Our anger is portrayed as unnatural, horrifying, disfiguring: who needs to listen to the 'nag', the 'hysteric' or the 'angry black woman'? All this is extremely unhelpful if you want to go out and cause trouble – the kind of trouble that leads to legal and cultural change.

[...]

A more conventional history of feminism would probably begin in 1792, with Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. But I'm not a historian, and this is not a conventional history. Like many women, I came to feminism through a pervasive feeling of wrongness with aspects of my life that I couldn't quite articulate. Feminism gave me the words to understand my experiences, and what I saw around me. It reassured me that I was not alone. It made me angry for all the women whose potential was lost and whose lives were restricted by unjust laws and unfair practices. It has introduced me to many of the best and most impressive people I know. I want to take feminism apart and examine the machinery that makes it so powerful. By looking at a series of fights – for the vote, for the right to divorce, for the chance to go to university – I hope to show how change happens, and how much there is left to do. We will also see the tawdry compromises, the personality clashes and the backlash which accompanies any challenge to the status quo. In choosing my fights and my women, I have focused on Britain, where I live, but many of the patterns, arguments and controversies are universal. British feminism has been shaped by our lack of a written constitution, our parliamentary system and our official status as a Christian country, but also by wider currents such

as immigration, declining birth rates and the entry of women into the workforce. I've stayed away from the obsessions of the online hot-take mill, such as arcane debates over vocabulary, because words matter less than actions. And I've chosen an eclectic selection of difficult women, who are all protagonists of the various fights. Each one has something to teach us, without us needing to airbrush the difficult bits out of their biographies. No one can write the definitive history of feminism – there are many histories, and many feminisms. Even so, it feels daring to attempt any type of history at all. This is an exceptionally individualistic era, and women are often frightened to claim the authority to speak about any lives except their own. That might be prudent and safe, but it is also a misuse of privilege by those who have it. We shouldn't talk over other women, but we can't just talk about ourselves either. A million memoirs don't add up to a history. To make political progress, we need to treat women as more than a loose collection of individuals. We are a class, united by common problems as much as we are divided by differences. Feminism must be broad enough to deal with the fact that other identities – lesbian, immigrant, adulterer – might hold women back as much as their sex. There is no one way to be a woman, and no universal pattern for womanhood. Many of the biggest fights still raging are complicated by the differences between women, as much as the differences between us and men. What's missing from this book? It's hard to know where to start – which is the point. This is a partial, imperfect, personal history of feminism and my hope is that the gaps do not look like deficiencies, but invitations. I can't wait to read others.

Education

It's the sheep that makes the protest feel really insulting. On a cold winter afternoon in Edinburgh – is there any other kind? – a group of women were trying to get to their anatomy class. They wanted to become doctors. But there was a sheep on the loose. The day was Friday 18 November 1870. Queen Victoria was halfway through her reign. Earlier that year, married women in England and Wales gained the right to own property, Louis Pasteur established that disease was caused by germs, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti published a collection of poems rescued from the coffin of his wife and muse Elizabeth Siddal. By 4.30 p.m. on a November day in Edinburgh, it's nearly dark, and the women would have been forgiven for being nervous as they walked to Surgeons' Hall, an elegant building in the city's Southside. A group of male medical students and local men were waiting for them outside the gates. Hundreds of spectators, sensing something was about to happen, were already milling around. There were no police present, either through incompetence or quiet sympathy with the protesting men. As the women reached the hall, the gates remained closed. The young men inside

were drinking whisky and smoking cigarettes, and they swore at the women. ‘We waited quietly on the step to see if the rowdies were to have it all their own way,’ wrote Sophia Jex-Blake in her memoir *Medical Women: A Thesis and A History*. Within a minute, one of their fellow students – Mr Sanderson – came out of the hall, opened the gates, and ushered them inside. It was a brave thing to do. The jeers and howls continued, even as the women entered the anatomy classroom. That’s when the sheep got shoved inside the hall. Poor Mailie was named after the ewe in a poem by Robert Burns. Seeing the animal, the university tutor Dr Handyside was withering. ‘Let it remain,’ he said. ‘It has more sense than those who sent it here.’ After the class finished, the women refused to sneak out of the class by the back door. Several sympathetic male students surrounded them, and they made it home ‘with no other injuries than those inflicted on our dresses by the mud hurled at us by our chivalrous foes’, according to Jex-Blake. The next day, fellow students with big sticks kept back the crowd which had gathered to jeer. The intimidation continued for several days, until the ‘rowdies’ realised that their tactics were not working, and gave up. What had provoked such outrage? Sophia and her fellow students wanted to become doctors, a profession which was then open only to men. Women could be nurses, of course, but that was a caring role – soothing and wiping – distinct from the masculine preserve of medical wisdom. Two years earlier, the University of London had become the first in the world to admit women as undergraduate students, although they were awarded a ‘certificate of proficiency’ rather than a degree. Something was shifting: women were staking a claim to higher education, and the middle-class professional jobs which lay beyond it. The cool prose of Sophia Jex-Blake gives little sense of how fraught that Edinburgh day must have been. Her descriptions made me think of the spitting and jeering which greeted the first black students to attend white-only schools in the American South in the 1950s. In both cases, education was being desegregated – opened up to groups who had previously been excluded, or shunted to second-class facilities. It is hard to imagine just how difficult it would be to learn in such a hostile environment. Sophia and her fellow students became known as the ‘Edinburgh Seven’, or ‘Septem contra Edinam’ – Seven against Edinburgh. They were the first women to be full undergraduate students at any British university. The story of the Edinburgh Seven is one of noble failure – and unexpected success. It began with a simple demand.

*

All she wanted, she said, was a ‘fair field and no favour’. In an essay published in 1869, the twenty-nine-year-old Sophia Jex-Blake argued that women were naturally suited to a career in medicine, because of their traditional role in caring for the sick. The daughter of a prosperous lawyer, she had been educated first at home and then at private schools near her family’s house in Hastings. She

studied at Queen's College, London, where she developed what is often referred to as a 'passionate friendship' with the social reformer Octavia Hill, and stayed on to teach mathematics. Sophia features in Virginia Woolf's essay on women's rights, 'Three Guineas', as an example of the 'great Victorian fight between the victims of the patriarchal system and the patriarchs, of the daughters against the fathers'. Her father gave her £40 a year and refused to let her take a salary from her tutoring. Woolf imagines the conversation between them, as Sophia's father says it would be 'quite beneath' her to expect payment for her work. She replies: 'Why should I not take it? You as a man did your work and received your payment, and no one thought it any degradation, but a fair exchange.' She points out that her brother Tom earns a living as a lawyer, after all. Ah, replies her father, but Tom has to support a wife and family. 'How entirely different is my darling's case! You want for nothing, and know that (humanly speaking) you will want for nothing.' Her father expected her to be financially reliant on him, and then on her husband. This was not the generous gesture it might seem: his generosity was conditional on her compliance. But Sophia was stubborn, and decided to disappoint her father rather than submit to his benevolent dictatorship. On a trip to America, she visited a children's hospital in Boston and met the pioneering doctor Lucy Ellen Sewall, who was resident physician at the New England Hospital for Women and Children. This was the life she wanted. There was a problem. To work as a doctor, she needed to qualify in medicine at a recognised university. The Medical Act of 1858 had been designed to discourage quacks and charlatans, but it had an unfortunate side effect: it gave the sole power to certify doctors to British medical schools, which were uniformly opposed to admitting female students. And so, wrote Jex-Blake, the Act 'made an almost insurmountable barrier to the admission of women to the authorised practice of medicine'. That didn't stop them trying. In 1860, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson found a loophole after being rejected by all the regular colleges. She studied instead at the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, a livery company in London, whose founding charter promised to examine any candidate who completed its course. Garrett Anderson had to take (expensive) private tuition, because she was not admitted to all the classes, and struggled to find a hospital placement. When she finally got one at Middlesex Hospital, she took an oral exam alongside the male students and did 'too well', according to Sophia Jex-Blake, 'thus arousing their manly wrath, which showed itself in a request that she should be required to leave the hospital'. Garrett Anderson gained a licence to practise. She was one of seven candidates examined by the Society of Apothecaries in 1865, and she obtained a higher mark than any of the six men. But it was a short-lived triumph. A rule was promptly passed banning medical students from receiving any part of their education privately. Women were locked out of the profession again. This illustrates a common theme in the history of sexism. Insist that women are unable to accomplish something; when one of them nonetheless accomplishes it, change the rules.

The Olympics used to have mixed-sex skeet-shooting, until a twenty-four-year-old Chinese woman, Zhang Shan, won gold in 1992. She was unable to defend her title: at the next games, four years later, the shooting programme was segregated, and skeet shooting became men-only. In 2016, there were nine shooting events for men and six for women. After a woman, Kathrine Switzer, illicitly completed the (men-only) Boston Marathon in 1967 – in defiance of those who said the distance was dangerous for women – the Amateur Athletic Union banned women from competing in all events alongside men. With the loophole used by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson closed to her, Sophia Jex-Blake needed to gain admission to a university. The rules excluding women had to be challenged. She chose Edinburgh, because the city was considered to be forward-thinking, but her initial application was rejected. In the spring of 1869, she placed an advert in the Scotsman newspaper, asking for other women to join her. Four replied, and they all submitted their application in the summer. Another two joined later, completing the Edinburgh Seven. This time, the university allowed them to matriculate. They could formally attend the university and study for degrees, with the proviso that lecturers did not have to teach them alongside the men. That meant separate lectures, which they had to arrange themselves – and, naturally, higher fees. It was very far from the ‘fair field and no favour’ Jex-Blake had requested. At Edinburgh, the seven women faced a range of reactions which will be familiar to anyone who has campaigned for women’s rights. Some (male) professors were sympathetic, and offered their help. A few were outwardly hostile: one told her that he ‘could not imagine any decent woman wishing to study medicine – as for any lady, that was out of the question’. The majority, however, were simply apathetic. ‘They did not wish arbitrarily to stretch their power to exclude women from education, and yet they were alarmed at what seemed to them the magnitude and novelty of the change proposed,’ wrote Jex-Blake. This is the group which often causes campaigners the most trouble: think back to Millicent Fawcett being told that the militant suffragettes were off putting, by a man who had done nothing to advance women’s suffrage himself. Or Tess Gill being told that ordering a drink from the bar was ‘de minimis’ – not important enough to bother a court. When Sophia started her campaign, Dr John Brown, the brother of one of the Edinburgh lecturers, wrote to the Scotsman saying that women should be ‘as free to study and to practise medicine as men are’, although ‘we may differ as to the degree of urgency’. Apathy is often a front for conservatism. If nothing changes, the status quo prevails, which suits those who like the status quo. The question of priorities is also used against feminists, implying that whatever they are currently doing is not the real issue. The real issue is something else (usually something that your opponent has probably done nothing about themselves). One of the most memorable moments in my own development as a feminist was reading Deborah Cameron’s work on language. It showed me just how deep sexism is woven into the words we use, whether it’s gendered descriptions such as ‘shrill’ or ‘bossy’, or the

fact that it took until the 1970s for women to get an honorific – Ms – which didn't indicate their marital status. Individually, these examples can look trivial, but together, they quietly shape our entire construction of reality. Cameron was delighted to arrive at Oxford University and discover its 'gender-free language' policy, but less delighted to discover she was one of 'only two and a half women in her department'. Here's the paragraph that stayed with me, though. 'I would never take the line that language is "trivial" or a "distraction" from more important issues,' she writes in *On Language and Sexual Politics*. 'There probably are more important issues, but political struggle invariably takes place on many fronts at once. No feminist fairy with a magic wand ever comes up and says: "OK, you can have non-sexist language or equal pay; now which is it to be?"' This is why feminists have to be difficult. We face challenges from well-meaning allies, irritating nitpickers and outright opponents. The response to each must be different, but none of them should distract us. John Brown, who was able to qualify as a doctor in the late nineteenth century, might not have felt the urgency to change the system. But Sophia Jex-Blake, who could not, did feel it. She also sensed that apathy would curdle to antipathy if she carried on. She was right.

3.2 *The Atlantic*: two articles

The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism

Pandemics affect men and women differently.

By Helen Lewis

MARCH 19, 2020

Enough already. When people try to be cheerful about social distancing and working from home, noting that William Shakespeare and Isaac Newton did some of their best work while England was ravaged by the plague, there is an obvious response: *Neither of them had child-care responsibilities.*

Shakespeare spent most of his career in London, where the theaters were, while his family lived in Stratford-upon-Avon. During the plague of 1606, the playwright was lucky to be spared from the epidemic—his landlady died at the height of the outbreak—and his wife and two adult daughters stayed safely in the Warwickshire countryside. Newton, meanwhile, never married or had children. He saw out the Great Plague of 1665–6 on his family’s estate in the east of England, and spent most of his adult life as a fellow at Cambridge University, where his meals and housekeeping were provided by the college.

For those with caring responsibilities, an infectious-disease outbreak is unlikely to give them time to write *King Lear* or develop a theory of optics. A pandemic magnifies all existing inequalities (even as politicians insist this is not the time to talk about anything other than the immediate crisis). Working from home in a white-collar job is easier; employees with salaries and benefits will be better protected; self-isolation is less taxing in a spacious house than a cramped apartment. But one of the most striking effects of the coronavirus will be to send many couples back to the 1950s. Across the world, women’s independence will be a silent victim of the pandemic.

Purely as a physical illness, the coronavirus appears to affect women less severely. But in the past few days, the conversation about the pandemic has broadened: We are not just living through a public-health crisis, but an economic one. As much of normal life is suspended for three months or more, job losses are inevitable. At the same time, school closures and household isolation are moving the work of caring for children from the paid economy—nurseries, schools, babysitters—to the unpaid one. The coronavirus smashes up the bargain that so many dual-earner couples have made in the

developed world: We can both work, because someone else is looking after our children. Instead, couples will have to decide which one of them takes the hit.

Many stories of arrogance are related to this pandemic. Among the most exasperating is the West's failure to learn from history: the Ebola crisis in three African countries in 2014; Zika in 2015–6; and recent outbreaks of SARS, swine flu, and bird flu. Academics who studied these episodes found that they had deep, long-lasting effects on gender equality. "Everybody's income was affected by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa," Julia Smith, a health-policy researcher at Simon Fraser University, told *The New York Times* this month, but "men's income returned to what they had made preoutbreak faster than women's income." The distorting effects of an epidemic can last for years, Clare Wenham, an assistant professor of global-health policy at the London School of Economics, told me. "We also saw declining rates of childhood vaccination [during Ebola]." Later, when these children contracted preventable diseases, their mothers had to take time off work.

At an individual level, the choices of many couples over the next few months will make perfect economic sense. What do pandemic patients need? Looking after. What do self-isolating older people need? Looking after. What do children kept home from school need? Looking after. All this looking after—this unpaid caring labor—will fall more heavily on women, because of the existing structure of the workforce. "It's not just about social norms of women performing care roles; it's also about practicalities," Wenham added. "Who is paid less? Who has the flexibility?"

According to the British government's figures, 40 percent of employed women work part-time, compared with only 13 percent of men. In heterosexual relationships, women are more likely to be the lower earners, meaning their jobs are considered a lower priority when disruptions come along. And this particular disruption could last months, rather than weeks. Some women's lifetime earnings will never recover. With the schools closed, many fathers will undoubtedly step up, but that won't be universal.

Despite the mass entry of women into the workforce during the 20th century, the phenomenon of the "second shift" still exists. Across the world, women—including those with jobs—do more housework and have less leisure time than their male partners. Even memes about panic-buying acknowledge that household tasks such as food shopping are primarily shouldered by women. "I'm not afraid of COVID-19 but what is scary, is the lack of common sense people have," reads one of the most popular tweets about the coronavirus crisis. "I'm scared for people who actually need to go to the store & feed their fams but Susan and Karen stocked up for 30 years." The joke only works because "Susan"

and “Karen”—stand-in names for suburban moms—are understood to be responsible for household management, rather than, say, Mike and Steve.

Look around and you can see couples already making tough decisions on how to divide up this extra unpaid labor. When I called Wenham, she was self-isolating with two small children; she and her husband were alternating between two-hour shifts of child care and paid work. That is one solution; for others, the division will run along older lines. Dual-income couples might suddenly find themselves living like their grandparents, one homemaker and one breadwinner. “My spouse is a physician in the emergency dept, and is actively treating coronavirus patients. We just made the difficult decision for him to isolate & move into our garage apartment for the foreseeable future as he continues to treat patients,” wrote the Emory University epidemiologist Rachel Patzer, who has a three-week-old baby and two young children. “As I attempt to home school my kids (alone) with a new baby who screams if she isn’t held, I am worried about the health of my spouse and my family.”

Single parents face even harder decisions: While schools are closed, how do they juggle earning and caring? No one should be nostalgic for the “1950s ideal” of Dad returning to a freshly baked dinner and freshly washed children, when so many families were excluded from it, even then. And in Britain today, a quarter of families are headed by a single parent, more than 90 percent of whom are women. Closed schools make their life even harder.

Other lessons from the Ebola epidemic were just as stark—and similar, if perhaps smaller, effects will be seen during this crisis in the developed world. School closures affected girls’ life chances, because many dropped out of education. (A rise in teenage-pregnancy rates exacerbated this trend.) Domestic and sexual violence rose. And more women died in childbirth because resources were diverted elsewhere. “There’s a distortion of health systems, everything goes towards the outbreak,” said Wenham, who traveled to west Africa as a researcher during the Ebola crisis. “Things that aren’t priorities get canceled. That can have an effect on maternal mortality, or access to contraception.” The United States already has appalling statistics in this area compared with other rich countries, and black women there are twice as likely to die in childbirth as white women.

For Wenham, the most striking statistic from Sierra Leone, one of the countries worst affected by Ebola, was that from 2013 to 2016, during the outbreak, more women died of obstetric complications than the infectious disease itself. But these deaths, like the unnoticed caring labor on which the modern economy runs, attract less attention than the immediate problems generated by an epidemic. These deaths are taken for granted. In her book *Invisible Women*, Caroline Criado Perez notes that 29 million papers were published in more than 15,000 peer-reviewed titles around the time of the

Zika and Ebola epidemics, but less than 1 percent explored the gendered impact of the outbreaks. Wenham has found no gender analysis of the coronavirus outbreak so far; she and two co-authors have stepped into the gap to research the issue.

The evidence we do have from the Ebola and Zika outbreaks should inform the current response. In both rich and poor countries, campaigners expect domestic-violence rates to rise during lockdown periods. Stress, alcohol consumption, and financial difficulties are all considered triggers for violence in the home, and the quarantine measures being imposed around the world will increase all three. The British charity Women's Aid said in a statement that it was "concerned that social distancing and self-isolation will be used as a tool of coercive and controlling behaviour by perpetrators, and will shut down routes to safety and support."

Researchers, including those I spoke with, are frustrated that findings like this have not made it through to policy makers, who still adopt a gender-neutral approach to pandemics. They also worry that opportunities to collect high-quality data which will be useful for the future are being missed. For example, we have little information on how viruses similar to the coronavirus affect pregnant women—hence the conflicting advice during the current crisis—or, according to Susannah Hares, a senior policy fellow at the Center for Global Development, sufficient data to build a model for when schools should reopen.

We shouldn't make that mistake again. Grim as it is to imagine now, further epidemics are inevitable, and the temptation to argue that gender is a side issue, a distraction from the real crisis, must be resisted. What we do now will affect the lives of millions of women and girls in future outbreaks.

The coronavirus crisis will be global and long-lasting, economic as well as medical. However, it also offers an opportunity. This could be the first outbreak where gender and sex differences are recorded, and taken into account by researchers and policy makers. For too long, politicians have assumed that child care and elderly care can be "soaked up" by private citizens—mostly women—effectively providing a huge subsidy to the paid economy. This pandemic should remind us of the true scale of that distortion.

Wenham supports emergency child-care provision, economic security for small-business owners, and a financial stimulus paid directly to families. But she isn't hopeful because her experience suggests that governments are too short-termist and reactive. "Everything that's happened has been predicted, right?" she told me. "As a collective academic group, we knew there would be an outbreak that came out of China, that shows you how globalization spreads disease, that's going to paralyze financial

systems, and there was no pot of money ready to go, no governance plan ... We knew all this, and they didn't listen. So why would they listen to something about women?"

The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage

As Gloria Steinem said, “The truth will set you free. But first it will piss you off.”

By Helen Lewis

MARCH 10, 2021

In July, Clare Wenham—and her daughter, Scarlett, and Scarlett’s picture of a unicorn—went viral. Wenham researches global health policy at the London School of Economics, and she was giving an interview to the BBC about Britain’s attempts to manage the coronavirus pandemic. But Scarlett had another pressing issue on her mind: Which shelf displayed her unicorn to its best advantage?

Wenham soldiered on through Scarlett’s entreaties, and her interviewer even offered his opinion (the lower shelf, if you’re interested). The moment provided a neat contrast with another incident three years earlier, also on the BBC, when the South Korea expert Robert Kelly was interrupted by his children during a live interview from his home. Back then, the clip’s humor came from Kelly’s wife desperately trying to salvage his professional facade by running into the room to retrieve his 4-year-old daughter and nine-month-old son. For Wenham, that wasn’t an option: Her partner was working in another room, oblivious to the chaos. She just had to get on with it.

The idealized image of working parents as swans—serene on the surface, frantically paddling away under the water—has been an unexpected casualty of the pandemic. Zoom meetings have ensured that employers, and the outside world, can’t help but see the struggle.

And what a struggle it has been. A year ago, I wrote that the coronavirus would be a “disaster for feminism.” Not a disaster for the empowering T-shirt kind of feminism, but for the kind that asks governments and employers to change their spending priorities. Researchers who had studied previous epidemics predicted that school closures would force parents out of the labor market, and that the burden of homeschooling would fall harder on mothers. Women are more likely to be single parents, and when they’re in straight couples, they’re more likely to be the lower earner. Most couples who were forced to protect one partner’s job would pick the man’s, researchers predicted, either for sensible economic reasons or for unconscious cultural ones. The pandemic would send many families back to the 1950s, with a revival of the breadwinner/homemaker divide.

All of that has happened. Whereas Kelly’s interrupted interview was rare enough in 2017 to be newsworthy, Wenham’s went viral for the opposite reason—because it was so relatable. “Complete

strangers reached out” to ask her for parenting advice, she told me, although she preferred to talk about policy data. “At home I only have a sample size of two.”

Feminism is a fractured movement. After all, what does a single mother in a favela have in common with a Manhattan socialite? Yet the pandemic—or more accurately, the economic shutdowns imposed to contain it—has affected women and girls around the world in remarkably similar ways. Spikes in domestic violence have been recorded in countries as varied as Sweden and Nigeria, and women have borne the brunt of joblessness in 17 of the 24 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries that reported an overall rise in unemployment last year. In the U.S., 275,000 women left the workforce in January 2021, compared with 71,000 men; in South Africa, a survey in July found that two out of three respondents who had lost their jobs or been furloughed in the early months of the pandemic were women.

Wenham, who co-leads the international Gender and COVID-19 project, attributes some of this global trend to the complacency of rich countries: Places that could have done more didn’t. The message she got from the British government when she tried to discuss COVID-19’s gender impact, she said, went something like this: “London is not Liberia. It won’t happen here.”

That attitude has also hampered attempts to collect better data on the medical and social effects of COVID-19. In the case of medical data, indifference has had worse effects for men. A recent study found that fewer than 5 percent of nearly 2,500 registered COVID-19 clinical trials planned to disaggregate their data by sex, though men are more likely to be hospitalized with the coronavirus, and more likely to die from it. As the British Medical Journal asked in an editorial last year, why pass up the opportunity to learn more and perhaps save men’s lives?

A lack of information is also a problem for social scientists and policy makers. “On my more cynical days, I think the government doesn’t want the data,” Wenham said, because hard figures would show women just how screwed they have been. By law, British companies are obliged to report their gender pay gap—but they were given a year off in 2020, and this year the figures do not have to be submitted until October.

In the meantime, the data gap has been filled by academic researchers and international organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. In Britain, the Women’s Budget Group, a collective of independent researchers, has chronicled the pandemic’s unequal impact. A survey of 1,003 people found that parents with low incomes were nine times more likely to report a risk of losing their jobs if schools and nurseries were closed, while one in five mothers was made redundant or lost hours because of caring responsibilities, compared with 13 percent of fathers. Alongside investment in child

care and the inclusion of more women in political decision making, the Women’s Budget Group has called for targeted support of female-dominated sectors, such as hospitality and retail.

The raw statistics are one thing, but what strikes you when talking with parents is their sheer exhaustion, often laced with a sense of injustice. Susannah Hares, a senior policy fellow for the Centre for Global Development, is a single mother of a 2-year-old. Her day job involves studying the gendered effects of COVID-19, so it feels strangely fitting that her son’s nursery class has been sent home to self-isolate three times in the past year, for more than a week each time, with no notice. “I’ve had to pull out of panels,” she told me. “I’ve felt it has impacted my career.”

Last March, I also quoted the Emory University epidemiologist Rachel Patzer, who had to care for a three-week-old baby and two young children while her husband—who works in the emergency department of a local hospital—lived above their garage to reduce his chance of infecting the family. Like Hares, and many other women I have spoken with over the past year, when we caught up recently, Patzer stressed her privilege—she has kept her job. Nonetheless, repeated quarantines, a lack of child care, and the toll of virtual schooling have made her life difficult. Worse, others around her have struggled to comprehend the challenges she faces, or preferred not to acknowledge them. “Many of my colleagues who were male, childless, or who even had older children could not understand,” she told me. “I have voiced these concerns to colleagues and have been advised to stop mentioning my children as an excuse impacting my work.”

Realizing that school reopenings have been such a low political priority has felt like a particular insult for many American parents. “I’m still incredibly disappointed with our culture and our leadership in allowing for the opening of bars, restaurants, and other nonessential businesses when there are still schools that are not open,” Patzer said. “I have seen so many of our friends suffer this past year.”

For now, many women are too busy trying to hold everything together to translate this anger into political action. But could this heightened awareness of the modern economy’s unfair load shape politics over the next decade? In the United States, where “rage moms” and “wine moms” were credited with influencing the results of the presidential election, having children is held up as the pinnacle of female achievement. And yet the pandemic has shown us how little support the country gives parents—the lack of federally mandated maternity leave, for example, makes the U.S. an outlier among rich countries. The Biden administration has deputized a Gender Policy Council, which reports directly to the president, to address the issue.

In Britain, there was an immediate backlash when the chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, praised “mums everywhere” for “juggling child care and work.” Praise is nice, ran the typical

response, but money is better. The statement also managed to offend dads, who felt insulted at not having their contributions recognized, although population-level data show that unpaid caring labor falls more heavily on women. That has always been the great paradox of feminism: It's hard to find time to campaign against inequality when you're elbow-deep in diapers, or dinner needs to be on the table. At the same time, the movement has long relied on "consciousness raising" as a first step to action. As Gloria Steinem said, "The truth will set you free. But first it will piss you off."

The past year has forced many women to confront the inequality in their own life—and every kid sitting on a lap in a Zoom meeting, or bursting in to show off a unicorn, has forced that knowledge on the rest of us. The effects of the pandemic will last for years, even decades. More women than men appear to suffer from "long COVID." Those who have taken career breaks to care for children are likely to be first in line for redundancies if companies need to downsize. The pandemic will have a long tail in which anger can turn into action.

For Hares, the picture is not all bleak. She found surprising reassurance in reading about the medieval Black Death pandemic, whose death toll caused a shortage of farm labor, which in turn "encouraged techniques that didn't require the strength to use the heavy plough, making those jobs accessible for women," as Hares put it. Some historians suggest that those women married later and had fewer children, increasing their independence. Hares believes that the switch to working from home could benefit women in professional roles by accelerating a trend toward flexible working that many employers had previously resisted. "My pre-pandemic life was characterized by always being late and stressed—trying to manage nursery pickups and drop-offs," she added. "That part of my life has become so much easier since last March."

Still, much of what researchers predicted last year has come true. The coronavirus has been a disaster for feminism—and a huge setback for the gains of the past 50 years, such as the domestic-violence-refuge movement and women's increased economic independence. It has also smashed the idea that the developed world has no more use for feminism, and revealed that while women are divided by race, class, nationality, and plenty else, we still can and should talk about women's issues. A generation of little girls—some of them right now drawing unicorns with felt-tip pens—deserves nothing less.

CHAPTER 4 - Target Texts

4.1 *Donne difficili: due estratti*

Introduzione

Che cosa significa essere una donna difficile? Non parlo di essere maleducata, scortese, insopportabile o una diva. Innanzitutto, difficile significa complicata e questo libro contiene una gran quantità di donne che lo sono. Dividere le figure storiche in buone e cattive è un approccio sterile e riduttivo. Una buona parte di noi è più di una sola cosa; tutte le persone sono “problematiche”. In questo libro, troverete donne con idee sgradite alle femministe moderne; troverete donne con idee sgradite ai loro contemporanei. Una storia del femminismo non dovrebbe tentare di addolcire gli spigoli delle pioniere del movimento (o cancellarle completamente dal racconto se si ritiene che i loro peccati siano troppo grandi). Deve permettere loro di avere difetti, di essere umane, tanto quanto gli uomini. [...] Non dobbiamo essere perfette per meritare di avere pari diritti. Quella delle figure di riferimento non è per forza una cattiva idea, ma il modo in cui queste vengono usate nel femminismo può trasformare un movimento politico radicale in un’annacquata e squisitamente frivola pornografia motivazionale. Avere qualche eccezione come esempio non sostituisce la contestazione delle regole stesse e nella foga di esaltare le donne della storia stiamo distorcendo il passato. Prendete *Storie della Buonanotte per Bambine Ribelli*, il libro per l’infanzia che ha riscosso un successo pazzesco e ha venduto più di un milione di copie: racconta cento storie “di emancipazione, toccanti e motivazionali”, con la promessa che “siano vere favole per eroine che non hanno bisogno di essere salvate”. Il capitolo sulla stilista Coco Chanel parla del fatto che voleva avviare un’attività e che “un amico ricco le prestò i soldi necessari per realizzare il suo sogno”. Non si accenna al fatto che Chanel era l’amante di un ufficiale nazista e molto probabilmente una spia per la Germania hitleriana. Negli Anni Trenta, tentò di far licenziare quell’ “amico ricco” sulla base di leggi razziste che proibivano agli ebrei di possedere un’attività. In nome di ragazzine ispiratrici in un mondo dominato da uomini, più che mascherare la storia di Coco Chanel, il libro la spazza via violentemente. Trovate che “ci sia da andar fieri” della collaborazione di Chanel con i nazisti ai tempi della guerra? Io no, sebbene si debba ammettere che sembra proprio una donna “che non ha avuto bisogno di essere salvata”. La vera Coco Chanel era perspicace, tendenziosa, talentuosa, cinica... e interessante. La pallida versione di lei ridotta a una santa femminista non lo è. Posso giustificare questo approccio in un libro per l’infanzia, ma è allarmante vedere negli adulti lo stesso bisogno. Non possiamo onorare le donne strappando via dalla narrazione la politica, e dunque il conflitto. Dispiegate le bandierine e non fate

troppe domande! Si crea una storia del femminismo in cui tutti gli avversari sono cattivi dei cartoni animati o sono misteriosamente assenti, in cui non si devono trovare compromessi difficili e i disaccordi interni scompaiono. L'Unica Vera Via è ovvia e tutte le Brave Persone la seguono. Noi femministe siamo dalla parte giusta della storia e dobbiamo solo aspettare che il mondo ci raggiunga. La vita non funziona così. Sarebbe molto più semplice se i trionfi femministi dipendessero dalla sconfitta di qualche mostro, ma sessisti grotteschi come Donald Trump hanno potere solo perché persone che altrimenti sarebbero accettabili li hanno votati. Ci sono state donne che si sono opposte al suffragio femminile; sono le donne a fruire maggiormente di riviste e siti web che evidenziano i difetti fisici di altre donne; non c'è divario di genere nel sostegno dei diritti legati all'aborto. Le persone sono complicate e anche progredire lo è. Se il femminismo moderno sembra essere inefficace, è perché si è rifugiato in due diverse modalità: una vuota celebrazione o un fittizio impegno contro bastardi duri e puri. Nessuna delle due modalità si occupa della difficoltà e dunque nessuna delle due può fare la differenza. La storia delle donne non dovrebbe essere una frivola caccia alle eroine. Troppo spesso vedo femministe rimproverarsi l'un l'altra di provare ammirazione per le sorelle Pankhurst (autocrate), Andrea Dworkin (troppo aggressiva), Jane Austen (troppo borghese), Margaret Atwood (si preoccupa che ci siano giusti processi per le accuse di molestia sessuale) e Germaine Greer (da dove comincio?). Ultimamente ho letto un articolo riguardo il fatto che ero "problematica" perché avevo espresso compassione verso il candidato alla Corte Suprema Brett Kavanaugh. Il mio crimine è stato aver detto che le sue udienze di conferma erano state trasformate in un circo mediatico e persino gli imputati accusati di abuso sessuale meritano di meglio. Le critiche riflettono un desiderio disperato di fingere che le questioni spinose siano in realtà semplici. Niente più esseri umani imperfetti che annaspiano dentro sistemi vasti e complicati: esistono brave e cattive persone ed è facile distinguere le une dalle altre. Questo approccio è patetico e infantile e bisognerebbe opporvi resistenza. Voglio restituire complessità alle pioniere femministe. Si potrebbe contestare ciò che hanno lasciato in eredità, potrebbero aver fatto delle terribili scelte strategiche e non essere state all'altezza degli ideali che sostenevano, ma hanno avuto la propria importanza. Il loro essere difficili è parte della storia. Poi c'è un secondo significato di "difficile". Ogni richiesta di avere maggiori diritti incontra opposizione e ogni progresso crea delle ripercussioni. Cambiare il mondo è sempre difficile. Al Castello di Dublino, a maggio 2018, mentre aspettavo i risultati del referendum irlandese per la legge sull'aborto, ho visto uno striscione che diceva: "Se non c'è lotta non c'è progresso". Queste parole sono prese da un discorso di Frederick Douglass, che ha condotto una campagna per la fine della tratta degli schiavi negli Stati Uniti. Voleva mettere in chiaro che "il potere non concede nulla senza una richiesta". In altre parole, chi fa attivismo deve disturbare. Non possono accettare la risposta "No". "Coloro che si professano a favore della libertà, ma disapprovano le rivolte sono

persone che vogliono un raccolto senza aver arato il terreno” ha detto Douglass. “Vogliono la pioggia senza tuoni e fulmini. Vogliono l’oceano senza il tremendo scrosciare delle sue molte acque.”. Cambiare il mondo non farà sì che piacciate alla gente, vi farà soffrire, sarà difficile. Vi sembrerà di essere in battaglia. Dovete accettare le dimensioni della montagna davanti a voi e iniziare a scalarla comunque. C’è poi la difficoltà stessa dell’essere donna. In un mondo costruito per gli uomini, le donne faranno sempre fatica a trovare il proprio posto. Siamo ciò che Simone de Beauvoir chiamava “il secondo sesso”. I nostri corpi sono diversi dall’essere umano standard (il maschio). I nostri desideri sessuali sono stati tradizionalmente rappresentati come fluidi, difficili da interpretare, imprevedibili. Le nostre esperienze di vita sono misteriose e inconoscibili; le nostre menti sono il “continente oscuro” freudiano. Ci immaginano dal lato sbagliato di un mondo diviso in due. Gli uomini sono seri, le donne sciocche. Gli uomini sono razionali, le donne emotive. Gli uomini sono forti, le donne deboli. Gli uomini sono decisi, le donne volubili. Gli uomini sono obiettivi, le donne no. Gli uomini sono l’umanità e le donne ne sono un sottoinsieme. Gli uomini vogliono il sesso, le donne lo concedono o lo negano. Le donne vengono guardate, gli uomini guardano. Quando siamo vittime, è difficile crederci. [...] Nella lotta per i pari diritti, le donne affrontano spesso l’ostacolo dello scetticismo: questo problema esiste davvero se solo le donne ne parlano? D’altro canto, sappiamo quanto sono irrazionali. Infine, c’è un altro significato di “difficile” che cerco di far emergere in questo libro. Qualsiasi storia del femminismo deve iniziare dalla presa di coscienza che molte rivoluzionarie non sono...piacevoli. E alle donne è sempre stato detto di esserlo. Alle ragazze viene ordinato di comportarsi “da signorine” per tenerle buone e a bada. (Sono fatte di zucchero, cannella “ed ogni cosa bella”.) La maternità è esaltata in quanto percorso di interminabile abnegazione. Per strada degli uomini a caso ci dicono “Su con la vita”, perché Dio non voglia che le nostre emozioni influenzino la giornata di qualcun altro. Se alziamo la voce, siamo irritanti; la nostra ambizione desta sospetti; la nostra rabbia è ritratta come innaturale, orrenda, sfigurante: a chi serve stare a sentire la “rompiscatole”, l’“isterica” o la “donna nera arrabbiata”? Tutto ciò non è minimamente utile se si vuole uscire a fare casino, il tipo di casino che porta cambiamenti legali e culturali.

[...]

Una storia più convenzionale del femminismo avrebbe probabilmente inizio nel 1792 con “Rivendicazione dei diritti della donna” di Mary Wollstonecraft, ma io non sono una storica e questa non è una storia convenzionale. Come molte donne, sono arrivata al femminismo grazie a una sensazione invadente che non ero bene in grado di articolare, la sensazione che alcuni aspetti della mia vita avessero qualcosa di sbagliato. Il femminismo mi ha dato le parole per comprendere le mie esperienze e quello che vedevo attorno a me. Mi ha rassicurata sul fatto che non ero sola. Mi ha fatta

arrabbiare per tutte le donne il cui potenziale è andato perso e le cui vite sono state limitate da leggi e pratiche ingiuste. Mi ha fatto conoscere molte delle persone migliori e più ammirevoli che io conosca. Voglio sviscerare il femminismo ed esaminare il meccanismo che lo rende così potente; prendendo in esame una serie di lotte (per il voto, per il diritto al divorzio, per la possibilità di andare all'università) mi auguro di mostrare come avviene il cambiamento e quanto ancora c'è da fare. Vedremo anche i compromessi di scarso valore, le incompatibilità caratteriali e le ripercussioni negative che accompagnano ogni occasione in cui lo status quo viene messo in discussione. Per scegliere le lotte e le donne mi sono concentrata sulla Gran Bretagna, il paese dove vivo, ma molti schemi, discussioni e controversie sono universali. Il femminismo britannico ha preso forma a partire dall'assenza di una costituzione scritta, dal nostro sistema parlamentare e dallo status ufficiale di Paese cristiano, ma anche da correnti più ampie, come l'immigrazione, il calo del tasso di natalità e l'ingresso delle donne nella forza lavoro. Mi sono tenuta alla larga dalle questioni da cui il sistema online di opinioni provocatorie è ossessionato, come gli arcani dibattiti sul lessico, perché le parole contano meno delle azioni. Ho scelto un assortimento eclettico di donne difficili, tutte protagoniste di svariate lotte: ciascuna ha qualcosa da insegnarci, senza che ci sia la necessità da parte nostra di cancellare i pezzi difficili dalle loro biografie. Non si può scrivere la miglior storia del femminismo: ci sono molte storie e molti femminismi. Ciononostante, anche tentare di scrivere un qualsiasi tipo di storia sembra un azzardo. Questa è un'epoca individualistica a livelli eccezionali e spesso le donne hanno il terrore di reclamare l'autorità di parlare di vite che non siano la propria. Sarà pure per prudenza e sicurezza, ma è anche un cattivo uso del proprio privilegio da parte di chi lo ha. Non dovremmo togliere spazio alle altre donne, ma non possiamo neanche parlare soltanto di noi stesse: un milione di memorie non formano una storia. Affinché abbiano luogo dei progressi politici dobbiamo trattare le donne come qualcosa di più di un gruppo disorganizzato di individui: siamo una classe e siamo unite da problemi comuni così come siamo divise da differenze. Il femminismo dev'essere abbastanza aperto da affrontare il fatto che altre identità (donne lesbiche, immigrate, adultere) possano essere d'ostacolo alle donne tanto quanto lo è il loro sesso. Non c'è un solo modo per essere una donna e non c'è un modello universale di femminile. Molte delle più grandi lotte che ancora imperversano vengono complicate tanto dalle differenze tra donne quanto da quelle tra noi e gli uomini. Cosa manca a questo libro? È difficile capire da dove iniziare. È questo il punto: questa è una storia del femminismo parziale, imperfetta, personale e la mia speranza è che gli spazi vuoti non appaiano come mancanze, ma come inviti. Non vedo l'ora di leggerne altre.

Istruzione

Fu proprio la pecora a rendere la protesta così offensiva. A Edimburgo in un freddo pomeriggio d'inverno (ne esistono altri tipi?) un gruppo di donne stava tentando di andare a lezione di anatomia. Volevano diventare medici, ma c'era una pecora che girava libera e sola per la città. Era il giorno venerdì 18 novembre 1870. La regina Vittoria era a metà del suo regno. In precedenza, nello stesso anno, le donne sposate in Inghilterra e Galles ottenevano il diritto di possedere denaro e beni immobili, Louis Pasteur dimostrava che i germi sono causa di malattie e Dante Gabriel Rossetti pubblicava una raccolta di poesie salvate dalla bara di Elizabeth Siddal, sua moglie e musa. Verso le 16.30 di un giorno di novembre a Edimburgo, era quasi buio ed era legittimo che le donne fossero nervose mentre camminavano verso Surgeons' Hall, un elegante edificio nella zona sud della città. Un gruppo di studenti di medicina e uomini del posto le stavano aspettando fuori dai cancelli. Centinaia di spettatori, percependo che stava per succedere qualcosa, si aggiravano già da quelle parti. Non c'era la polizia, per incompetenza o per una silenziosa empatia verso i manifestanti. Mentre le donne raggiungevano l'ingresso, i cancelli rimasero chiusi. I giovani all'interno stavano bevendo whisky e fumando sigarette e insultarono le donne. "Aspettammo in tranquillità sullo scalino per vedere se i riottosi avrebbero fatto proprio come pareva a loro" ha scritto Sophia Jex-Blake nelle sue memorie *Donne nella medicina: una tesi e una storia*. Nel giro di poco tempo, uno dei loro colleghi, Sanderson, uscì dall'atrio, aprì i cancelli e le scortò all'interno. Fu un atto coraggioso. Gli scherni e le urla continuarono anche mentre le donne entravano nell'aula di anatomia. Fu allora che la pecora fu spinta dentro l'atrio. La povera Mailie doveva il suo nome alla pecora in una poesia di Robert Burns. Alla vista dell'animale, il tutor universitario, il dottor Handyside, si raggelò. "Fatela restare" disse. "Ha più buon senso di quelli che l'hanno spedita qua". Alla fine della lezione, le donne si rifiutarono di uscire furtive dall'aula dalla porta sul retro. Un buon numero di studenti, maschi, solidali con le colleghe le scortarono fino a casa "senza altri danni se non quelli inflitti ai nostri abiti dal fango che ci era stato scagliato addosso dai nostri galanti avversari", come raccontò Jex-Blake. Il giorno dopo, i colleghi tennero lontana con dei grossi bastoni la folla che si era riunita a urlare. L'intimidazione continuò per diversi giorni, finché i "riottosi" si resero conto che le loro tattiche non stavano funzionando e si arresero. Che cosa aveva provocato una tale indignazione? Sophia e le sue colleghe volevano diventare medici, una professione che allora era aperta solo agli uomini. Le donne potevano fare le infermiere, certo, ma era un ruolo di cura (medicare e pulire) differente dal sapere medico, appannaggio maschile. Due anni prima, l'Università di Londra era diventata la prima al mondo ad ammettere le donne ai corsi di laurea, sebbene venisse conferito loro un "attestato delle competenze" anziché un diploma. Qualcosa stava cambiando: le donne stavano rivendicando il diritto

all'istruzione superiore e agli impieghi della classe media che ne derivavano. La prosa distaccata di Sophia Jex-Blake non dà molto l'idea di quanto dev'essere stato carico di tensione quel giorno a Edimburgo. Le sue descrizioni mi hanno fatto pensare agli sputi e alle urla che accolsero i primi studenti neri che volevano frequentare scuole per soli bianchi nel Sud dell'America negli Anni Cinquanta. In entrambi i casi, si stava desegregando l'istruzione, la si stava aprendo a gruppi che in precedenza erano stati esclusi o relegati in istituti di serie B. È dura immaginare anche solo quanto fosse difficile imparare in un ambiente così ostile. Sophia e le sue colleghe passarono alla storia come "le Sette di Edimburgo" o "Septem contra Edinam" (Sette contro Edimburgo). Furono le prime donne ad essere studentesse universitarie a pieno titolo in un'università britannica. La storia delle Sette di Edimburgo è la storia di un nobile fallimento e di un inatteso successo. Ha avuto inizio con una semplice richiesta.

*

Tutto ciò che voleva, disse, erano "pari condizioni e bando ai favoritismi". In un saggio pubblicato nel 1869, a soli ventinove anni, Sophia Jex-Blake affermò che le donne erano naturalmente predisposte a una carriera medica, grazie al loro tradizionale ruolo di cura dei malati. Rampolla di un avvocato benestante, le era stata data un'istruzione prima a casa e poi in scuole private vicino alla casa di famiglia ad Hastings. Studiò al Queen's College di Londra, dove coltivò quella a cui spesso ci si riferisce come un'"appassionata amicizia" con Octavia Hill (nota per il suo impegno nelle riforme sociali) e dove rimase per insegnare matematica. Sophia figura nel saggio di Virginia Woolf sui diritti delle donne "Le tre ghinee", come esempio della "gloriosa lotta condotta nell'età vittoriana dalle vittime del sistema patriarcale contro i patriarchi, dalle figlie contro i padri". Suo padre le dava 40 sterline l'anno e le impedì di ricevere uno stipendio per le ore di insegnamento. Woolf immagina la conversazione tra di loro, quando il padre di Sophia dice che aspettarsi un compenso per il proprio lavoro "non si addirebbe al suo status. Lei risponde: "Perché non dovrei riceverlo? Tu che sei un uomo fai il tuo lavoro e vieni pagato, e a nessuno viene in mente di considerarlo degradante, bensì un giusto scambio." Fa notare che suo fratello Tom si guadagna da vivere facendo l'avvocato, dopotutto. Ah, risponde il padre, ma Tom deve mantenere una moglie e una famiglia. "Di gran lunga diverso è il caso della mia adorata! A te non manca nulla, e sai bene che (nei limiti delle possibilità umane) non ti verrà mai a mancare nulla." Suo padre era convinto che a livello economico avrebbe fatto affidamento prima su di lui e poi sul marito. Non era l'atto generoso che poteva sembrare: la generosità di lui dipendeva dall'obbedienza di lei. Sophia, però, era testarda e decise di deludere suo padre piuttosto che sottomettersi alla sua benevola dittatura. Durante un viaggio in America, visitò un ospedale pediatrico a Boston dove incontrò Lucy Ellen Sewall, una delle prime donne medico,

specializzanda all'Ospedale per Donne e Bambini del New England. Era questa la vita che voleva. C'era un problema però. Per lavorare come medico doveva ottenere la laurea in medicina presso un'università riconosciuta. Il Medical Act del 1858 era stato pensato per scoraggiare imbrogliatori e ciarlatani, ma aveva avuto un malaugurato effetto collaterale: dava potere esclusivo di certificare i medici alle scuole di medicina britanniche, che si opponevano in maniera compatta all'ammissione delle studentesse. E allora, scrisse Jex-Blake, il Medical Act "creò una barriera di fatto insormontabile per l'ammissione delle donne alla pratica autorizzata della medicina". Questo non fermò i loro tentativi. Nel 1860, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson trovò una scappatoia dopo essere stata respinta da tutti i college più tradizionali. Studiò invece presso la Venerabile Società di Speciali, una corporazione di livrea a Londra, il cui atto costitutivo prometteva di esaminare qualsiasi candidato avesse terminato il suo corso. Garrett Anderson dovette prendere (costose) lezioni private, perché non era ammessa a tutte le lezioni e faticò a inserirsi in ospedale. Quando finalmente ci riuscì all'Ospedale del Middlesex, sostenne un esame orale assieme agli studenti maschi e andò "troppo bene", secondo Sophia Jex-Blake, "scatenando così la loro ira maschile, che si manifestò nella richiesta che le fosse intimato di lasciare l'ospedale". Garrett Anderson ottenne l'autorizzazione a praticare. Era uno dei sette nominativi esaminati dalla Società di Speciali nel 1865 e ottenne il punteggio più alto in assoluto rispetto ai sei candidati uomini. Ma fu un trionfo che durò poco. Venne subito approvata una legge che vietava agli studenti di medicina di frequentare anche solo una parte dei corsi privatamente. Alle donne era stato di nuovo bloccato l'accesso alla professione. Questo mostra un tema condiviso nella storia del sessismo. Insistete che una donna sia incapace di ottenere un qualche risultato; quando, nonostante tutto, una di loro lo ottiene, cambiate le regole. Alle Olimpiadi il tiro al piattello era una disciplina mista, finché la ventiquattrenne cinese, Zhang Shan, non vinse l'oro nel 1992. Non riuscì a difendere il proprio titolo: alle Olimpiadi successive, quattro anni dopo, le discipline di tiro furono distinte in maschili e femminili e il tiro al piattello venne riservato solo agli uomini. Nel 2016, ci furono nove eventi di tiro a volo per gli uomini e sei per le donne. Dopo che una donna, Kathrine Switzer, completò illegalmente la Maratona di Boston (riservata agli uomini) nel 1967, sfidando chi diceva che la distanza era troppo impegnativa per le donne, l'Unione Atletica Dilettanti impedì alle donne di competere in tutti gli eventi assieme agli uomini. Poiché la scappatoia usata da Elizabeth Garrett Anderson non era più percorribile, a Sophia Jex-Blake serviva un altro modo per essere ammessa in all'università. Bisognava mettere in discussione le regole che escludevano le donne. Scelse Edimburgo, perché la città era considerata progressista, ma la sua prima domanda di accettazione fu rifiutata. Nella primavera del 1869, mise un annuncio sul quotidiano *Scotsman*, chiedendo ad altre donne di unirsi a lei. Risposero in quattro e inviarono tutte la candidatura in estate. Altre due si aggiunsero dopo, dando così corpo alle Sette di Edimburgo. Questa volta l'università

permise loro di immatricolarsi. Formalmente potevano frequentare l'università e studiare per la laurea, a condizione che i docenti non dovessero far loro lezione insieme agli uomini. Questo significava lezioni separate (che dovevano essere loro a organizzare) e, ovviamente, tasse più alte. Era molto lontano dal “pari condizioni e bando ai favoritismi” richiesto da Jex-Blake. A Edimburgo, le sette donne ebbero a che fare con una serie di reazioni che saranno ben note a chiunque abbia fatto attivismo per i diritti delle donne. Alcuni professori (uomini) empatizzarono e offrirono supporto. Un numero ridotto era apertamente ostili: uno disse a Jex-Blake che “non riusciva a immaginare come delle donne rispettabili potessero mai desiderare di studiare medicina; anche perché per qualsiasi signora, questo era fuori discussione”. Comunque, la maggioranza rimase semplicemente apatica. “Non volevano espandere in maniera arbitraria il loro potere per escludere le donne dall'istruzione e tuttavia erano spaventati dalla forza e dalla portata del cambiamento proposto”, scrisse Jex-Blake. Questo è il gruppo che spesso causa più problemi a chi si occupa di attivismo politico: ripensate a Millicent Fawcett, a cui era stato detto che le suffragette militanti erano sgradevoli da un uomo che non aveva fatto nulla in prima persona per far progredire il suffragio femminile. O a Tess Gill, a cui avevano detto che ordinare da bere in un bar era *de minimis*, ovvero non abbastanza importante da disturbare un tribunale. Quando Sophia iniziò la sua campagna, il dottor John Brown, fratello di uno dei docenti universitari di Edimburgo, scrisse allo *Scotsman* dicendo che le donne dovevano essere “libere di studiare e praticare la medicina come lo sono gli uomini”, sebbene “potremmo essere in disaccordo riguardo il livello di urgenza”. L'apatia fa spesso da copertura al conservatorismo. Se nulla cambia, prevale lo status quo, il che è perfetto per coloro a cui lo status quo piace. Anche il problema delle priorità è usato contro le femministe per implicare che qualsiasi cosa si stia facendo in questo momento non sia il vero problema. Il vero problema è qualcos'altro (di solito qualcosa per cui il vostro avversario in primis non ha fatto nulla). Uno dei momenti più indimenticabili del mio personale percorso come femminista è stato leggere il lavoro sul linguaggio di Deborah Cameron. Mi ha mostrato quanto profondamente il sessismo sia intrecciato alle parole che usiamo, che siano descrizioni legate al genere come “irritante” o “dispotica” oppure il fatto che ci è voluto fino agli anni settanta perché le donne ottenessero il titolo onorifico Ms che non ne indicasse lo stato coniugale. Singolarmente, questi esempi possono sembrare irrilevanti, ma nel loro insieme danno silenziosamente forma al modo in cui costruiamo la realtà intorno a noi. Cameron rimase favorevolmente colpita arrivando all'Università di Oxford e scoprendone la politica del “linguaggio neutro”, ma meno nel constatare di essere una di “solo due donne e mezzo nel suo dipartimento”. Comunque, ecco il paragrafo che mi è rimasto impresso. “Non accetterei mai l'idea secondo cui la lingua è ‘irrelevante’ o una ‘distrazione’ da problemi più importanti” scrive nel libro *Il linguaggio e la politica sessuale*. “Probabilmente ci sono problemi più importanti, ma è inevitabile che la lotta

politica si svolga su molti fronti contemporaneamente. Non esiste la fatina femminista con la bacchetta magica che dice: “Okay, puoi avere un linguaggio non sessista o la parità salariale: quale delle due scegli?” Ecco perché le femministe devono essere difficili. Affrontiamo sfide da parte di alleati benintenzionati, pignoli irritanti e oppositori dichiarati. La risposta dev’essere diversa per ciascuno, ma nessuno di loro deve distrarci. John Brown, che riuscì ad abilitarsi come medico alla fine del XIX secolo, magari non avrà sentito la necessità di cambiare il sistema, ma Sophia Jex-Blake, che non ci riuscì, la sentì eccome. Ebbe anche l’impressione che l’apatia si sarebbe inasprita trasformandosi in antipatia se avesse continuato. Aveva ragione.

[...]

4.2 *The Atlantic*: due articoli

Il Coronavirus è un disastro per il femminismo

Le pandemie colpiscono gli uomini e le donne in maniera diversa.

Di Helen Lewis

19 MARZO 2020

Ora basta. Quando le persone cercano di essere positive riguardo al distanziamento sociale e allo smart working e rimarcano il fatto che William Shakespeare e Isaac Newton crearono alcune delle loro opere più importanti mentre l'Inghilterra era devastata dalla peste, una risposta ovvia c'è: nessuno dei due si doveva occupare di accudire i figli.

Shakespeare trascorse gran parte della sua vita professionale a Londra, dove c'erano i teatri, mentre la sua famiglia viveva a Stratford-upon-Avon. Durante la peste del 1606, il drammaturgo si salvò per pura fortuna dall'epidemia (la proprietaria della casa in cui viveva morì al culmine dell'ondata) e sua moglie e le due figlie adulte rimasero al sicuro nella campagna del Warwickshire. Nello stesso periodo, Newton non si sposò né ebbe mai figli. Osservò la Grande Peste del 1665-1666 dalla tenuta di famiglia nell'est dell'Inghilterra e passò gran parte della sua vita da adulto come borsista all'Università di Cambridge, con pasti e gestione domestica a carico del college.

È improbabile che lo scoppio di una malattia infettiva dia a chi ha responsabilità di cura il tempo di scrivere *Re Lear* o di sviluppare una teoria sull'ottica. Una pandemia amplifica tutte le disuguaglianze esistenti (anche se la classe politica insiste nel dire che non è il momento di parlare di nulla che non sia la crisi immediata). Lavorare in smart working se si ha un posto fisso in un ufficio è più semplice; chi ha un lavoro da dipendente con uno stipendio e gode dei benefici di un posto fisso sarà meglio tutelato; l'autoisolamento è meno gravoso in una casa spaziosa piuttosto che in un piccolo appartamento. Uno degli effetti più evidenti del Coronavirus però sarà un salto indietro agli Anni Cinquanta per molte coppie. In tutto il mondo, l'indipendenza delle donne sarà la vittima silenziosa della pandemia.

Come semplice malattia fisica, il Coronavirus sembra colpire le donne meno pesantemente, ma negli ultimi giorni la discussione sulla pandemia si è ampliata: non stiamo soltanto attraversando una crisi della sanità pubblica, ma anche dell'economia. Dal momento che la vita normale è rimasta sospesa per tre mesi o più, è inevitabile che si siano persi dei posti di lavoro. Al contempo, la chiusura delle scuole e l'isolamento familiare stanno spostando la cura dei bambini dall'economia retribuita (asili,

scuole, babysitter) a quella non retribuita. Il Coronavirus fa a pezzi il patto che così tante coppie con doppio reddito hanno stretto nel mondo industrializzato: possiamo lavorare entrambi, perché qualcun altro si occupa dei nostri figli. Invece, le coppie dovranno decidere chi dei due incasserà il colpo.

Molte storie di arroganza sono connesse alla pandemia. Tra le più esasperanti c'è l'incapacità dell'Occidente di imparare dalla storia: la crisi dell'Ebola in tre Paesi africani nel 2014; il virus Zika tra il 2015 e il 2016; e le recenti ondate di SARS e influenza suina e aviaria. Le personalità accademiche che hanno studiato questi fenomeni hanno scoperto che hanno avuto effetti profondi e di lunga durata sulla parità di genere. “I redditi di tutti sono stati colpiti dall'epidemia di Ebola in Africa occidentale” ha affermato Julia Smith, una ricercatrice di politiche sanitarie presso l'Università Simon Fraser in un'intervista al New York Times di questo mese, ma “i guadagni degli uomini sono ritornati a dove erano prima dell'epidemia più velocemente rispetto a quelli delle donne”. Gli effetti distorsivi di un'epidemia possono durare per anni, come mi ha spiegato Clare Wenham, assistente universitaria di politiche per la salute globale presso la London School of Economics. “Abbiamo anche assistito a un calo dei tassi di vaccinazione infantile [durante l'Ebola].” Successivamente, quando questi bambini hanno contratto malattie che potevano essere evitate grazie alla prevenzione, le loro madri hanno dovuto assentarsi dal lavoro.

A livello individuale, le scelte di molte coppie nel corso dei prossimi mesi saranno assolutamente sensate dal punto di vista economico. Di cosa hanno bisogno i pazienti in pandemia? Di assistenza. Di cosa hanno bisogno le persone anziane in auto isolamento? Di assistenza. Di cosa hanno bisogno i bambini rimasti a casa da scuola? Di assistenza. Tutta questa assistenza (questo lavoro di cura non retribuito) graverà maggiormente sulle donne, a causa dell'attuale struttura della forza lavoro. “Non si tratta soltanto delle norme sociali per cui le donne ricoprono ruoli di cura; riguarda anche i risvolti pratici” ha aggiunto Wenham. “Chi viene pagato meno? Chi ha maggiore flessibilità?”

Secondo le stime del governo britannico, il 40% delle donne che lavorano hanno un part time, a fronte di un mero 13% tra gli uomini. Nelle relazioni eterosessuali è più probabile che le donne guadagnino meno e quindi che i loro impieghi vengano considerati non prioritari quando si presentano delle situazioni di crisi. Una crisi questa che, nello specifico, potrebbe durare mesi anziché settimane. Alcune donne non recupereranno mai un certo livello di guadagno nel corso della loro vita. Con la chiusura delle scuole, senza dubbio molti padri faranno la loro parte, ma non sarà una cosa universale.

Nonostante l'ingresso in massa delle donne nella forza lavoro durante il XX secolo, esiste ancora il fenomeno del “secondo turno”. In tutto il mondo, le donne (incluse quelle che lavorano) svolgono più lavori domestici e hanno meno tempo libero rispetto ai loro compagni. Persino i meme sugli acquisti

dettati dal panico riconoscono che sono in primo luogo le donne a farsi carico di mansioni domestiche come la spesa. “Non ho paura del COVID-19, ciò che spaventa è la mancanza di buonsenso nelle persone” si legge in uno dei tweet più in voga sulla crisi del Coronavirus. “Ho paura per le persone che hanno davvero bisogno di andare a comprare per sfamare la famiglia, mentre ‘Susan’ e ‘Karen’ hanno fatto scorte per 30 anni”. La battuta funziona solo perché si capisce che “Susan” e “Karen” (classici nomi da mamme nelle provincia americana) sono responsabili della gestione domestica, anziché, ad esempio, Mike e Steve.

Guardatevi intorno e potrete vedere coppie che stanno già prendendo decisioni difficili su come suddividere il lavoro extra non retribuito. Quando ho chiamato Wenham, era in autoisolamento con due figli piccoli; lei e il marito si alternavano in turni di due ore tra accudimento dei figli e lavoro retribuito. È una possibile soluzione; per altri, la suddivisione seguirà consuetudini più antiche. Le coppie con reddito doppio potrebbero all’improvviso trovarsi a vivere come i loro nonni, una persona si prende cura della casa e l’altra porta a casa lo stipendio. “Mio marito è medico al pronto soccorso e si sta occupando a tempo pieno di pazienti Covid. Abbiamo appena preso la difficile decisione per cui si isolerà trasferendosi nel nostro appartamento in garage fino a quando sarà necessario e comunque fino a quando cura pazienti Covid” ha scritto l’epidemiologa dell’Emory University di Atlanta, Rachel Patzer, che ha una neonata di tre settimane e due bambini piccoli. “Mentre cerco di far fare un po’ di scuola ai miei figli a casa (da sola) con una neonata che strilla se non la tengo in braccio, sono preoccupata per la salute di mio marito e della mia famiglia”.

I genitori single affrontano decisioni ancora più difficili: come destreggiarsi tra reddito e accudimento mentre le scuole sono chiuse? Nessuno dovrebbe avere nostalgia dell’“ideale degli Anni Cinquanta” per cui il papà tornava a casa e trovava la cena calda e i bambini già in pigiama, quando così tante famiglie ne erano escluse, persino allora. E oggi in Gran Bretagna un quarto delle famiglie fanno capo a un genitore single, che più del 90% delle volte è una donna. Le scuole chiuse rendono le loro vite ancora più difficili.

Altre esperienze simili arrivano dall’epidemia dell’Ebola, altrettanto dure e con effetti paragonabili, sebbene forse minori, si manifesteranno durante questa crisi anche nel mondo industrializzato. La chiusura delle scuole ha influenzato le opportunità di vita delle ragazze poiché molte si sono ritirate. (Un aumento dei tassi di gravidanza in età adolescenziale ha accentuato questa tendenza.) Sono aumentate le violenze domestiche e sessuali e più donne sono morte di parto perché le risorse sono state destinate altrove. “C’è una profonda distorsione all’interno dei sistemi sanitari, tutto si concentra sull’epidemia” ha spiegato Wenham, che è stata in Africa occidentale come ricercatrice durante la

crisi dell'Ebola. “Tutto ciò che non è una priorità viene cancellato, il che può impattare sulla mortalità materna o sull'accesso alla contraccezione.” Gli Stati Uniti hanno già statistiche scioccanti in confronto ad altri Paesi ricchi e lì le donne nere hanno il doppio delle probabilità di morire di parto rispetto alle donne bianche.

Per Wenham la statistica più impressionante emersa in Sierra Leone, uno dei Paesi maggiormente colpiti dall'Ebola, tra il 2013 e il 2016, ha mostrato che durante l'epidemia, sono morte più donne per complicazioni ginecologiche post-parto che non per la malattia infettiva in sé. Ma queste morti, come accudimento e assistenza che passano inosservati e su cui ruota l'economia moderna, attirano meno l'attenzione rispetto ai problemi immediati generati da un'epidemia. Queste morti sono date per scontate. Nel suo libro “Invisibili” Caroline Criado Perez osserva che sono stati pubblicati 29 milioni di articoli scientifici in più di 15.000 riviste accademiche con doppio referaggio durante le epidemie di Zika ed Ebola, ma meno dell'1% ha indagato l'impatto di genere delle epidemie. Wenham finora non ha trovato alcuna analisi di genere rispetto all'epidemia di Coronavirus; lei e due coautrici si sono addentrate nella questione per colmare questa lacuna.

I dati che abbiamo dalle epidemie di Ebola e di Zika dovrebbero essere sfruttati per rispondere alla situazione attuale. Sia nei Paesi ricchi sia in quelli poveri, chi fa attivismo si aspetta un aumento dei tassi di violenza domestica durante i periodi di lockdown. Lo stress, il consumo di alcol e le difficoltà economiche sono tutte considerate cause scatenanti della violenza domestica e le misure di quarantena imposte nel mondo vedranno tutti e tre i fattori in crescita. L'associazione di beneficenza britannica Women's Aid in una dichiarazione ha dichiarato la propria “preoccupazione per il fatto che distanziamento sociale e autoisolamento favoriranno tra chi perpetra violenza atteggiamenti di coercizione e controllo sbarrando la strada a forme di supporto e richiesta di aiuto”.

I ricercatori, tra cui anche quelli con cui ho parlato, sono demoralizzati dal fatto che scoperte come questa non abbiano raggiunto i decisori politici, che adottano ancora un approccio alle pandemie che non tiene conto del genere. Inoltre, sono preoccupati che si stiano perdendo opportunità di raccogliere dati specifici e sofisticati che potrebbero essere utili per il futuro. Ad esempio, abbiamo poche informazioni su come i virus simili al Coronavirus colpiscano le donne incinte (da qui i consigli contrastanti offerti durante la crisi attuale) o, secondo Susannah Hares, responsabile per le politiche all'interno del Centro per lo Sviluppo Globale, non ci sono dati sufficienti per costruire un modello per quando le scuole riapriranno.

Non dovremmo commettere di nuovo quest'errore. Per quanto sia tetro da immaginare ora, altre epidemie sono inevitabili e bisogna opporsi alla tentazione di affermare che il genere sia una

questione secondaria, o una distrazione dalla vera crisi. Ciò che facciamo ora avrà un impatto sulle vite di milioni di donne e ragazze nelle future epidemie.

La crisi del Coronavirus sarà globale e di lunga durata, tanto economica quanto sanitaria. Tuttavia, offre anche un'opportunità. Questa potrebbe essere la prima epidemia in cui le differenze legate al genere e al sesso possono essere raccolte e tenute in considerazione dai ricercatori e dai decisori politici. Per troppo tempo la classe politica ha dato per scontato che l'assistenza a bambini e anziani possa essere "assorbita" dai privati (principalmente dalle donne) di fatto offrendo una grossa forma di sovvenzione all'economia retribuita. Questa pandemia dovrebbe ricordarci della vera entità di tale distorsione.

Wenham è a supporto delle misure di emergenza per l'assistenza all'infanzia, per offrire sicurezza economica ai proprietari di piccole attività e incentivi economici pagati direttamente alle famiglie, ma non è fiduciosa, perché nella sua esperienza i governi pensano troppo sul breve periodo e sono troppo reattivi. "Tutto ciò che è successo era stato previsto, no?" ha detto. "Come comunità accademica, sapevamo che ci sarebbe stata un'epidemia proveniente dalla Cina, che mostra come la globalizzazione diffonda malattie, capaci di paralizzare i sistemi finanziari e non c'erano riserve di denaro pronte e neanche un progetto politico per affrontare tutto questo...Lo sapevamo e non ci hanno ascoltato. Quindi perché dovrebbero ascoltare qualcosa riguardo le donne?"

La pandemia ha dato alle donne un nuovo tipo di rabbia

Come ha detto Gloria Steinem: “La verità vi renderà libere. Ma prima vi farà incazzare.”

Di Helen Lewis

10 MARZO 2021

A luglio, Clare Wenham (con sua figlia Scarlett e la foto di un unicorno) è diventata virale. Wenham conduce ricerche sulle politiche per la salute globale presso la London School of Economics e la BBC la stava intervistando in merito ai tentativi di gestione della pandemia da Coronavirus da parte della Gran Bretagna. Ma Scarlett aveva in mente un altro problema urgente: quale mensola faceva risaltare di più il suo unicorno?

Wenham si è destreggiata tra le richieste di Scarlett e l'intervistatore le ha persino dato la sua opinione (la mensola più in basso, se vi interessa). Questo episodio si è posto in netto contrasto con un altro simile di tre anni prima, quando Robert Kelly, esperto in materia di Corea del Sud, venne interrotto dai suoi figli durante un'intervista in diretta da casa sua. In quell'occasione, ciò che aveva divertito di più del filmato era la moglie di Kelly, che aveva cercato disperatamente di salvare l'immagine professionale del marito precipitandosi nella stanza per recuperare la figlia di quattro anni e il figlio di nove mesi. Per Wenham questa opzione non era proprio prevista: il suo compagno stava lavorando in un'altra stanza, ignaro del caos. Ha dovuto cavarsela come poteva.

L'immagine idealizzata che vede come cigni (calmi in superficie, ma frenetici sott'acqua) i genitori che lavorano è stata una vittima inaspettata della pandemia. Le riunioni su Zoom hanno fatto sì che i datori di lavoro e il mondo là fuori non potessero non farsi spettatori delle varie difficoltà.

E che difficoltà. Un anno fa avevo scritto che il Coronavirus sarebbe stato un “disastro per il femminismo”. Non un disastro per il tipo di femminismo che promuove l'emancipazione sulle magliette, ma quello che chiede a governi e datori di lavoro di modificare le priorità di spesa nei loro budget. I ricercatori che avevano studiato le precedenti epidemie avevano già previsto che la chiusura delle scuole avrebbe costretto i genitori a uscire dal mercato del lavoro e che il peso della didattica a casa sarebbe ricaduto più pesantemente sulle madri. È più probabile che le donne siano genitori single e che quando si trovano in relazioni eterosessuali guadagnino meno del partner. Gran parte delle coppie costrette a proteggere il lavoro di uno dei due partner avrebbe scelto quello dell'uomo, come previsto dai ricercatori, sia per motivazioni economiche e razionali sia sulla base di inconsce questioni

culturali. La pandemia avrebbe riportato molte famiglie agli Anni Cinquanta, con un ritorno alla divisione tra chi si guadagna la pagnotta e chi si prende cura della casa.

Tutto questo è accaduto. Mentre l'interruzione dell'intervista a Kelly nel 2017 era stato un evento di scarso rilievo e di nessun interesse per la stampa, quella di Wenham è diventata virale per la ragione contraria: perché ci si poteva immedesimare. "Mi hanno contattata dei perfetti sconosciuti" per chiedere consigli su come fare i genitori, mi ha raccontato lei, sebbene preferisse parlare di dati statistici e politiche. "A casa ho solo un piccolo campione: due figli".

Il femminismo è un movimento frammentato. Dopotutto, cos'hanno in comune una madre single in una favela e una donna in carriera a Manhattan? Eppure la pandemia (o più precisamente le chiusure di attività economiche imposte per contenerla) ha colpito donne e ragazze di tutto il mondo in modi particolarmente simili. Si sono registrati picchi di violenza domestica nei Paesi più disparati come Svezia e Nigeria e le donne hanno pagato il prezzo più caro per la disoccupazione in 17 su 24 paesi aderenti all'Organizzazione per la cooperazione e lo sviluppo economico, che l'anno scorso hanno registrato un aumento complessivo della disoccupazione. Negli Stati Uniti la forza lavoro costituita da donne ha perso 275.000 unità a gennaio 2021, a fronte di 71.000 uomini; in Sudafrica, a luglio, in un sondaggio si è scoperto che, nei primi mesi della pandemia, due partecipanti su tre che avevano perso il lavoro o erano stati messi in cassa integrazione erano donne.

Wenham, che è una delle figure guida del progetto Gender and COVID-19, attribuisce una parte di questa tendenza globale alla noncuranza dei Paesi ricchi: posti che avrebbero potuto fare di più non l'hanno fatto. Il messaggio che ha ricevuto dal governo britannico quando ha provato a parlare dell'impatto del COVID-19 sulla parità di genere, ha detto, faceva più o meno così: "Londra non è la Liberia. Qui non succederà".

Un tale atteggiamento ha anche ostacolato i tentativi di raccogliere dati più precisi sugli effetti medici e sociali del COVID-19. Nel caso dei dati medici, l'indifferenza ha avuto effetti peggiori sugli uomini. Uno studio recente ha scoperto che su quasi 2.500 studi clinici registrati per il COVID-19 è stata pianificata una divisione dei dati in base al sesso solo per meno del 5%, nonostante sia più probabile per gli uomini essere ricoverati per il Coronavirus e morire. Come si è chiesta l'anno scorso in un editoriale la rivista medica British Medical Journal, perché rinunciare all'opportunità di saperne di più e salvare la vita degli uomini?

La mancanza di informazioni è anche un problema per sociologi e decisori politici. "Nei giorni in cui mi sento più cinica, penso che il governo non li voglia questi dati" afferma Wenham, perché i numeri reali mostrerebbero alle donne quanto siano state fregate. Per legge, le aziende britanniche sono

obbligate a riferire il loro divario di genere nella retribuzione, ma è stato dato loro un anno di pausa nel 2020 e quest'anno i numeri non devono essere presentati fino a ottobre.

Nel frattempo il vuoto di dati è stato colmato dai ricercatori accademici e dalle organizzazioni internazionali come la Fondazione Bill & Melinda Gates. In Gran Bretagna, il Women's Budget Group, un gruppo di ricerca indipendente, ha registrato l'impatto disuguale della pandemia. Con un sondaggio su 1.003 persone si è riscontrato che per genitori con un reddito basso le probabilità di rischiare di perdere il lavoro era nove volte più alte se le scuole e gli asili nido erano chiusi, mentre una madre su cinque è stata licenziata o ha perso delle ore a causa delle responsabilità di cura, a fronte del 13% dei padri. Oltre agli investimenti nei servizi per l'infanzia e per politiche di inclusione di un numero maggiore di donne nei processi decisionali politici, il Women's Budget Group ha richiesto supporto mirato ai settori a prevalenza femminile, come quello alberghiero e del commercio al dettaglio.

Le statistiche grezze ci sono, ma ciò che colpisce parlando con i genitori è il loro assoluto sfinimento, spesso intriso di un senso di ingiustizia. Susannah Hares, responsabile per le politiche all'interno del Centro per lo Sviluppo Globale, è madre single di un bambino di 2 anni. Il suo lavoro principale include lo studio degli effetti del COVID-19 sulle questioni di genere; perciò, cade stranamente a pennello il fatto che la classe di suo figlio all'asilo nido sia stata mandata a casa in autoisolamento per tre volte nell'ultimo anno, ogni volta per più di una settimana, senza preavviso. "Mi sono dovuta ritirare dai comitati" mi ha raccontato. "Ho avuto la sensazione che questo abbia impattato sulla mia carriera".

A marzo scorso ho anche citato Rachel Patzer, epidemiologa dell'Emory University di Atlanta, che ha dovuto prendersi cura di un neonato di tre settimane e di due bambini piccoli mentre suo marito, che lavora al pronto soccorso di un ospedale della zona, viveva in garage per ridurre le possibilità di infettare la famiglia. Come Hares e molte altre donne con cui ho parlato nel corso dell'ultimo anno, Patzer, quando ci siamo riviste di recente, ha sottolineato il suo privilegio: è riuscita a tenersi il suo lavoro. Ciononostante, il ripetersi delle quarantene, una mancata assistenza all'infanzia e il prezzo della didattica a distanza le hanno reso la vita difficile. La cosa peggiore è che altre persone intorno a lei hanno fatto fatica a capire le sfide che affronta o hanno preferito non riconoscerle. "Molti dei miei colleghi e delle mie colleghe, che fossero uomini, senza figli o persino con figli più grandi, non riuscivano a capire" mi ha spiegato. "Ho espresso queste preoccupazioni a colleghi e colleghe e mi è stato consigliato di smettere di usare i figli come scusa per il mio lavoro."

Nel rendersi conto che le riaperture delle scuole hanno avuto una così scarsa priorità nella classe politica molti genitori americani si sono sentiti particolarmente presi in giro. “Sono ancora incredibilmente delusa dal fatto che la nostra cultura e i nostri leader abbiano permesso ai bar, ai ristoranti e ad altre attività non essenziali di riaprire quando ancora ci sono scuole che non sono aperte” ha detto Patzer. “Ho visto così tanti nostri amici soffrire nell’anno appena trascorso.”

Per ora, molte donne sono troppo impegnate a tenere tutto in piedi per poter trasformare questa rabbia in un’azione politica. Potrà questa nuova consapevolezza di un carico tanto sbilanciato nell’economia moderna, nel corso del prossimo decennio, plasmare la politica? Negli Stati Uniti, dove alle “rage moms”, le mamme a cui la pandemia ha regalato un rinnovato spirito politico, e alle “wine moms”, quelle per cui un bicchiere di vino scaccia via la fatica quotidiana, è stato attribuito il merito di aver influenzato i risultati delle elezioni presidenziali, avere figli è ritenuto il culmine del successo femminile. Eppure la pandemia ci ha mostrato il poco sostegno che il paese dà ai genitori: la mancanza di un congedo parentale su mandato federale, ad esempio, rende gli Stati Uniti un caso anomalo tra i Paesi ricchi. L’amministrazione Biden ha nominato un Consiglio per le Politiche di Genere, che riferisce direttamente al presidente, per affrontare questo problema.

In Gran Bretagna, c’è stato un contraccolpo immediato quando il cancelliere dello Scacchiere, Rishi Sunak, ha elogiato “le mamme ovunque” per “essersi destreggiate tra la cura dei figli e il lavoro”. Gli elogi fanno piacere, è stata la tipica risposta, ma il denaro di più. L’affermazione è anche riuscita a offendere i papà, che si sono sentiti insultati nel non vedere riconosciuti il loro apporto, sebbene i dati mostrino che il lavoro di cura non pagato ricade più pesantemente sulle donne. Questo è sempre stato il grande paradosso del femminismo: è difficile trovare il tempo di fare campagne politiche contro la disuguaglianza quando sei immersa nei pannolini fino al collo o si tratta di preparare la cena. Allo stesso tempo, il movimento si è a lungo affidato alla “autocoscienza” come primo passo verso l’azione. Come ha detto Gloria Steinem: “La verità vi renderà libere. Ma prima vi farà incazzare.”

Lo scorso anno ha costretto molte donne a riconoscere e fare i conti con la disuguaglianza nelle loro vite; ogni bambino seduto in braccio durante una riunione su Zoom o che irrompe nella stanza per mostrare il suo unicorno ha costretto tutti noi a prenderne coscienza. Gli effetti della pandemia dureranno anni, persino decenni. Sembra che più donne che uomini soffrano di “long COVID”. È probabile che le persone che hanno preso congedi temporanei per occuparsi dei bambini siano in prima fila per il licenziamento se le aziende avranno bisogno di ridurre il personale. La pandemia avrà un lungo strascico in cui la rabbia si potrà trasformare in azione.

Per Hares il quadro non è del tutto negativo. Ha trovato conforto, in modo sorprendente, leggendo della pandemia medievale e della Morte Nera, il cui numero di vittime causò una carenza di lavoro agricolo, che a sua volta “promosse lo sviluppo di tecniche che non richiedevano forza nell’uso dell’aratro rendendo quei lavori accessibili alle donne”, come spiega Hares. Alcuni storici sostengono che queste donne si sposarono più tardi ed ebbero meno figli, con una crescita della loro autonomia. Hares crede che il passaggio allo smart working potrebbe avere risvolti positivi per le donne che ricoprono ruoli nelle libere professioni, accelerando una tendenza al lavoro flessibile verso la quale molti datori di lavoro in passato hanno opposto resistenza. “La mia vita pre-pandemia era caratterizzata dal mio essere sempre in ritardo e stressata, nel tentativo di organizzarmi per andare e tornare dall’asilo nido”, ha aggiunto. “Da marzo scorso quella parte della mia vita è diventata molto più semplice.”

Tuttavia, molto di ciò che i ricercatori avevano previsto lo scorso anno si è avverato. Il Coronavirus è stato un disastro per il femminismo e un’enorme battuta d’arresto per le conquiste degli ultimi 50 anni, come il movimento dei rifugi contro la violenza domestica e l’accresciuta indipendenza economica delle donne. Ha anche distrutto l’idea che il mondo industrializzato non abbia più bisogno del femminismo e mostrato che, sebbene le donne siano diverse per etnia, classe sociale, nazionalità e molto altro, possiamo e dovremmo parlare ancora dei problemi delle donne. Una generazione di bambine (alcune delle quali proprio ora stanno disegnando unicorni con i pennarelli) non merita nulla di meno di questo.

CHAPTER 5 - Lewis as a columnist. Lewis as a non-fiction writer

The present section aims at providing theoretical concepts on opinion journalism and non-fiction as distinct genres, in order to subsequently analyse Helen Lewis' work as a columnist and as a non-fiction writer and to investigate and summarise the differences and similarities in terms of genre, themes, vocabulary and register between the two articles from *The Atlantic* and some excerpts from Lewis' book *Difficult Women*.

5.1 Columns: an introduction

Before defining the concept of column and presenting its main features, it is important to understand that it is a subcategory encompassed within a much wider genre, called opinion journalism, which also includes Op-Ed pieces, editorials and letters to the editor among others.

First and foremost, we should define what the origin of opinion journalism as a genre is and, considering that *The Atlantic* is an American magazine, it is relevant for the purpose of the present analysis to focus on the origin and development of opinion journalism in the US.

As reported by the Digital Resource Center in their article "A Short History of Opinion Journalism", newspapers had always been «niche products, produced for a political party and read by party members». Nevertheless, in the 19th century it was noticed that addressing a larger audience by getting rid of partisan ranting was an effective way to increase sales. As a matter of fact, *New York Sun* was the first newspaper in the US to offer non-partisan reporting in the 1830s. In 1841, another important newspaper named *New York Tribune* was founded by Horace Greeley, who was credited for segregating news reports from opinion writing, giving birth to the concept of "editorial".

On the other hand, the journalism historian Michael Socolow outlines the main steps in the process of creating *The New York Times*' Op-Ed page. First of all, it should be noted that such section takes its name from the fact that it was located across from the editorial page in the print newspaper (Lerner, 2020). In his article, Socolow states that John Oakes, the editorial page editor of *The New York Times*, created the first Op-Ed page in 1970 because he felt that «a newspaper most effectively fulfils its social and civic responsibilities by challenging authority, acting independently, and inviting dissent» (2010, 283). Hence, this new section served as a political instrument.

The need for a dedicated space where opinions and positions on political issues could be expressed arose in the summer of 1956, when Ed Barrett, Oakes' friend, was asked by the Suez Canal Company

to write a piece about its position on the Egyptian government's decision to seize the Canal. Barrett then submitted the article for publication, but Oakes could not publish it, because the newspaper «didn't have a place for that kind of fairly short piece» (Socolow 2010, 282). After *The New York Times*, many other newspapers and magazines followed the lead and included an Op-Ed section in their own format.

As we move forward in the discussion, we should also mention the main differences between different types of articles subsumed under the category of opinion journalism. Such differences lie in the identity of the author and the content of the article, as well as its purpose, length and style.

Editorials pages include articles – written by staff writers and editors of a newspaper – in which the position of the editorial board on a given subject is presented. On the other hands, letters are pieces written by members of the community and submitted to a magazine or newspaper for publication to give the readership an occasion to express their opinions in a public context.

For what concerns column writing, as Brian McNair states, a columnist holds a kind of journalistic authority that «is built on the journalist's reputation for knowing and understanding things we, the readers, do not, but should» (2008, 107). This means that columns – including Op-Ed pieces, which are often considered a particular type of column – might be written by either external contributors or staff columnists, who are invited to express their personal opinion, grounded in either field research or academic research – as Seglin argues in his article “How to write an op-ed or column”.

Moreover, McNair presents three categories of column: the polemical column, the analytical-advisory column, and the satirical column (2008, 110). Lewis' journalistic work would be encompassed in the second category, as the author applies her own authority to in-depth consideration of the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences for women, but also includes future perspectives, advice and calls to action in her articles.

As Wahl-Jorgensen argues in her essay, editorials and Op-Ed or opposite editorials are core elements of a newspaper's identity, as they are «the only place in the paper where journalists are authorised to express opinion» (2008, 67). As a matter of fact, as Wahl-Jorgensen's research is focused on the British journalistic scene, she also notes that all of today's most important British newspapers devote designated spaces – generally between three and five pages – to opinions.

Taking into account the visual aspects, these sections present a less imposing layout and look more text-heavy if compared with the rest of the newspaper. Quality papers tend to publish three editorials each day and, while the first two generally deal with political issues high on the news agenda, the

third is shorter and often covers a humorous topic or a “soft news” item (Wahl-Jorgensen 2008, 69-70).

As we are analysing Helen Lewis’ work as a staff writer for *The Atlantic*, we will be focusing on columns among all the above-mentioned types of articles as we move forward in the discussion.

5.2 Non-fiction. An introduction

If we intend to provide a definition of non-fiction, it is first and foremost essential to understand what fiction is and what are the differences between fiction and non-fiction works.

As Penny Colman argues in her article *A New Way to Look at Literature: A Visual Model for Analyzing Fiction and Nonfiction Texts*, a very common, though inaccurate, claim is that fiction is fake and based on imagination, while non-fiction is based on true facts, and therefore the purpose of fiction is to entertain, while non-fiction aims at providing information. Such claim misses the mark as it presents these two genres in a dichotomous way and fails to include «the range of possibilities in both genres, e.g., information-rich fiction such as historical fiction or narrative nonfiction about real people in real settings dealing with real events» (Colman 2007, 260).

Colman believes that the main distinction between these two genres is whether the author is allowed to make things up or not while writing. Hence, the best option would be to define non-fiction as «writing about reality (real people, places, events, ideas, feelings, things) in which nothing is made up» and fiction as «writing in which anything can be made up» (Colman 2007, 260).

The author proposes a model for analysing fiction and non-fiction texts, made up of nine elements, which might prove very helpful when it comes to understanding the main features of both genres and discussing, further on, whether and to what extent they are present in Helen Lewis’ book *Difficult Women*.

The nine elements proposed by Colman in her model are the following (emphasis is mine):

- **Made-up material:** The author states that a writer’s decision to include fictionalized elements or aspects based on incomplete or unverified information «determines whether or not a piece is fiction, nonfiction, or hybrid regardless of the form - poetry, article, drama, etc.» (2007, 261).
- **Information:** This includes facts, events, biographical accounts, etc. that are real, actual, and verifiable. To what extent are they present in the text?

- **Structure:** It can be simple or complex depending on the criteria by which the material is organized and the number of layers of organization.
- **Narrative texts:** Does the text tell a story?
- **Expository texts:** Does the text convey information or explain ideas or concepts?
- **Literary devices:** These are «techniques such as diction or word choice; metaphors; repetition; and telling details that are used to create a particular effect or evoke a particular response» (Colman 2007, 264). Are they present in the text? To what extent?
- **Author's voice:** Can the reader sense the presence of an author within the text? In which ways? – e.g. the use of first-person pronouns, the narration of personal experience, etc.
- **Front and back matter:** Front matter includes «such entries as the title page, table of contents, and preface», while back matter includes «an appendix, a glossary, and/or an index» (Colman 2007, 266).
- **Visual material:** Are there illustrations, photographs, graphs, etc. within the text?

5.3 Compare & Contrast

Lewis as a columnist. Lewis as a non-fiction writer.

Taking into consideration the definitions and model proposed by Colman, it can be argued that the two selected articles, as well as the book, can be included in the field of non-fiction writing, as they both rely to a great extent on facts rather than on made-up material. Both the articles and the excerpts from the book narrate events, present facts and include biographical elements from interviews – i.e. episodes from the author's experience and Sophia Jex-Blake's life, as well as personal recounts on Clare Wenham's and Rachel Patzer's lives and experiences.

As *Difficult Women* is a collection of essays, it can be claimed that its main purpose is to make a point, which is clearly explained by the author in the introduction to the book. Indeed, such essays aim at raising awareness about how the accomplishments highlighted by the author are valid and need to be acknowledged and valued, despite being achieved by complex women and regardless of the means they used to do so. In this regard, the articles serve a similar purpose, although the main subject they tackle is different – namely, the consequences of the Covid pandemic on feminism and the future perspectives for the movement – they also involve a call to action for both the citizens and the policy makers. As a matter of fact, their intention is to present the author's opinion, which is informed and backed up by solid evidence and data she or authoritative source collected.

As far as the structure is concerned, both in the articles from *The Atlantic* and in the analysed excerpts from the book we can note that there is a multi-layered structure of organisation. Indeed, the author alternates exhibiting data and offering real-life examples, narrating facts and presenting opinions, and she orders logical and chronological facts in a very personal manner within the texts.

As already mentioned in the Source Text Analysis chapter, Grabe's macro-genres classification divides texts into expository and narrative texts. Therefore, it can be argued that, while all the analysed excerpts include a host of narrative elements, they are still classified within the expository genre due to their prevailing informational functions.

While the use of literary devices – e.g. metaphors - has been thoroughly discussed from a linguistic standpoint in the first two chapters of the present work, it is essential to point out one of the main differences between Lewis' writing style as a columnist and as a non-fiction writer: the tone.

Indeed, when writing columns, Lewis tends to use a more conversational tone, as well as a more informal register: for example, we can note that she uses a wide range of idioms and fixed expressions, culture-bound elements – e.g. the names Karen and Susan to depict the image of suburban mums, the phrases “wine moms” and “rage moms” – active constructions and abbreviations. Instead, in the book we can notice that, while still adopting some strategy to convey informality, Lewis is more inclined towards a neutral writing style.

On the other hand, both in the book and in the articles, the voice of the author is present and visible, and can be easily identified thanks to the wide use of first-person pronouns to refer to herself and second-person ones to address her readership and close the distance between one another.

For what concerns the last two elements of the model proposed by Colman – i.e., ‘front and back matter’ and ‘visual material’ – they do not appear to be relevant for the purposes of the present compare & contrast analysis.

CHAPTER 6 - Comment to the translation

The present chapter aims at analysing and discussing the main problems and challenges of the translation process. There are two main sections: the first one is devoted to the selected excerpts from the book *Difficult Women*, while the second one deals with the two selected articles from the magazine *The Atlantic*. In both sections, the main problems and challenges are discussed from a lexical, syntactic and stylistic perspective, with a focus on the main techniques used to shape the target text.

Special attention was devoted to achieving gender neutrality translating an author so sensitive to gender issues, while complying with the strict grammar gender rules in Italian; hence, while translating, it was extremely important to take this aspect into account and find creative ways to convey neutrality.

Gender neutrality is deemed to be so crucial, as in her writings, Lewis refers to the fourth-wave feminism, also known as “intersectional feminism”, which is grounded in the theory of intersectionality, proposed in 1989 by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw. This new wave is based on the premise that barriers to gender equality depend on many more aspects of women’s identity than just biological sex – i.e., race, class, religion, disability, gender and sexual identity – and all these aspects intersect, creating new, unique patterns of oppression.

Among them, gender identity is certainly one of those that are looked upon with greater attention in the current times, because of an ever-growing awareness – especially regarding all those identities encompassed within the umbrella term “transgender”, i.e. “genderqueer”, “agender”, “non-binary”, “genderfluid”, “gender questioning” – which in turn calls for a larger use of gender-inclusive language. Therefore, it was a priority to fulfil such need with each translation choice – some examples are discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

As for the quotations from other books, the approach chosen was to provide an original translation of each fragment. Such approach was used for quotations both from books that had never been translated into Italian – e.g., *Medical Women: A Thesis and A History* by Sophia Jex-Blake – and from books that already had an official Italian translation – e.g., *Three Guineas* by Virginia Woolf. Nonetheless, in this second case, it was deemed useful to look up the official translation first and compare it with the new option to see whether there were any significant discrepancies in meaning or in any other key semantic/pragmatic aspect.

The next paragraphs present and define the main techniques that were adopted throughout the translation process, following the classification provided by Peter Newmark (1987, 84-93) that includes procedures and strategies by previous scholars such as Catford, Vinay and Darbelnet, etc.

- **Transference**

It is «the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure. [...] The word then becomes a 'loan word'» (1987, 81). This technique is generally complemented with a second translation procedure, forming the so called «couplet» – as Newmark argues, couplets are commonly used to translate culture-bound words and «combine two procedures [...] for dealing with a single problem» (1987, 91). Transference should only be applied for «cultural 'objects' or concepts related to a small group or cult» (Newmark 1987, 81).

- **Shifts or transpositions**

A shift (in Catford's words) or transposition (as Vinay and Darbelnet called it) is «a translation procedure involving a change in the grammar from SL to TL» (Newmark 1987, 85). There are several different types of shifts that can happen in translation – i.e., verb to noun, adverbial phrase to adverb, preposition to prepositional phrase.

- **Recognised translation**

Newmark argues that recognised translation is «the official or the generally accepted translation of any institutional term» (1987, 89).

- **Compensation**

It is a procedure that translators choose to adopt when there is «loss of meaning, sound-effect, metaphor or pragmatic effect in one part of a sentence» and such loss will be «compensated in another part, or in a contiguous sentence» (Newmark 1987, 90).

- **Addition and explicitation**

Additions in a translation may take different forms, such as classifiers, explanations of a term in brackets or an alternative to the translated word, as Newmark states (1987, 93).

Finally, one last technique worth mentioning is explicitation, which was first presented by the scholars Vinay and Darbelnet as «the process of introducing information into the target language which is present only implicitly in the source language, but which can be derived from the context or the situation» (1995, 8).

6.1 Excerpts from the book *Difficult Women*

• Lexical challenges

Starting from the introduction to the book *Difficult Women*, we can immediately notice the first lexical challenge, namely the presence of the idiomatic expression «thumbs-up, thumbs-down approach». This expression includes a figurative component which needs to be taken into account to be accurately conveyed in translation.

The chosen equivalent is shown in the following chart (emphasis is mine).

A thumbs-up, thumbs-down approach to historical figures is boring and reductive.	Dividere le figure storiche in buone e cattive è un approccio sterile e riduttivo.
---	---

As we can see, a «thumbs-up, thumbs-down approach» is an approach that aims at telling good and bad historical figures apart. To convey such message, it was necessary to use two translation techniques: expansion, by adding the verb «dividere» which was not present in the ST, and shift, by making the noun «approccio» a part of the predicate nominative – a structure composed by a copula or linking verb and an adjective, a noun or, as in this case, an adjective + noun structure – while its SL equivalent «approach» is the subject of the clause.

Another interesting example of lexical challenge is the following (emphasis is mine):

[...] dilute a radical political movement into feel-good inspiration porn .	[...] trasformare un movimento politico radicale in un' annacquata e squisitamente frivola pornografia motivazionale .
---	--

It can be noted that part of the meaning of the verb «dilute» was lost when choosing the verb «trasformare» as its Italian equivalent. Therefore, a compensation procedure was used to recover the figurative meaning conveyed by the English verb: we chose to add the adjective «annacquata» – which is not present in the ST – however it is close to the semantic field of the verb «dilute», a near-synonym. Moreover, the decision to use the adverb + adjective lexical collocation «squisitamente frivola» came from the idea that the Italian adjective «frivola» is generally perceived as more negative than the English ST compound «feel-good» and thus the selected adverb would partly restore a positive connotation. This is another example of compensation while facing complex ST meaning layering and loss.

The following examples show two instances of shift, as in both cases the adverbs in bold (emphasis is mine) have an Italian equivalent belonging to a different grammatical category, i.e., respectively an adjective phrase; and an impersonal complex verb phrase.

Take the wildly successful children’s book <i>Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls</i> [...]	Prendete <i>Storie della Buonanotte per Bambine Ribelli</i> , il libro per l’infanzia che ha riscosso un successo pazzesco [...]
I don’t – although admittedly she does sound like a woman who ‘didn’t need rescuing’.	Io no, sebbene si debba ammettere che sembra proprio una donna “che non ha avuto bisogno di essere salvata”.

In the first example, the adjective phrase «wildly successful» in the ST is used as a typical pre-modifier to describe the children’s book *Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls*. This adjective phrase is translated into Italian with a relative clause featuring a linking verb (figurative meaning – metaphor) + noun structure «riscuotere successo» and the adjective «pazzesco» is moved into a post-modifier position as it is typical in Italian. In the second example, the adverb «admittedly» is rendered in the TT as a complex verb phrase with an impersonal subject pronoun «si», i.e., modal verb + infinitive, (from «dover ammettere»), «si debba ammettere»: therefore, there is a class shift from adverb to verb.

Moving on to the excerpt from the essay about education, we can argue that it features several noteworthy examples of lexical challenges.

First of all, it is important to note that some proper names were used in the TT as well in the form of borrowings, either because they were followed by an explanation in the ST or because their meaning could be easily inferred from the context.

[...] as they walked to Surgeons’ Hall , <i>an elegant building in the city’s Southside</i> .	[...] mentre camminavano verso Surgeons’ Hall , <i>un elegante edificio nella zona sud della città</i> .
The Medical Act of 1858 had been designed to discourage quacks and charlatans [...]	Il Medical Act del 1858 era stato pensato per scoraggiare imbroglioni e ciarlatani [...]

For what concerns idioms, an outstanding example is the following (emphasis is mine):

All she wanted, she said, was a ‘ fair field and no favour ’.	Tutto ciò che voleva, disse, erano “ pari condizioni e bando ai favoritismi ”.
--	---

The idiom «fair field and no favour», as we have already explained in Chapter 1, derives from an historical episode – namely the formulation of Open-Door policy. Hence, it conveys a strong political message in the form of a motto. The TT phrase «bando ai favoritismi» shares some semantic and cultural features with the ST idiom: first, its meaning is a good match with the ST idiom both from a semantic and pragmatic perspective; second, it is a catchphrase that could and would be used in a political context.

Another idiom is «to lock somebody out of something» (emphasis is mine).

Women were locked out of the profession again.	Alle donne era stato di nuovo bloccato l'accesso alla professione.
---	--

In this case, there is a shift in the «who(m)/what» perspective between the ST passive verb phrase and the TT one. The noun «women» is no longer the subject of this sentence but is the recipient of the action of being denied access to the medical profession – this latter is now instrumental subject (inanimate causing the happening), that is, in a more standard syntax “l’accesso alla professione era stato negato alle donne”.

Finally, an interesting linguistic item to discuss is the verb «to curdle», which is used in its metaphorical meaning – namely «to spoil, to turn sour». In order to recover such meaning, a certain amount of explicitation was adopted (emphasis is mine):

She also sensed that apathy would curdle to antipathy if she carried on.	Ebbe anche l'impressione che l'apatia si sarebbe inasprita trasformandosi in antipatia se avesse continuato.
---	---

This is another example of compensation via two reflexive verbs (frequently used in Italian) – «trasformarsi» and «inasprirsi» – and two complex structures: a complex conditional phrase «si sarebbe inasprita» and a reduced relative clause via a gerund «trasformandosi in» to create a cause-effect relationship that overtly describes the ST idea of apathy turning into something else figuratively conveyed by the verb «to curdle» – which, according to the MacMillan dictionary, literally refers to a process whereby a liquid turns into a solid, that is “if milk or another liquid curdles, or if something makes it curdle, lumps begin to form in it”.

• Gender-neutral lexical choices

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, a very significant issue that has been tackled throughout the translation process is gender neutrality.

Some examples are listed below (emphasis is mine):

Most of us are more than one thing; everyone is ‘problematic’.	Una buona parte di noi è più di una sola cosa; tutte le persone sono “problematiche”.
Take the wildly successful children’s book <i>Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls</i> [...]	Prendete <i>Storie della Buonanotte per Bambine Ribelli</i> , il libro per l’infanzia che ha riscosso un successo pazzesco [...]
In other words, campaigners have to be disruptive.	In altre parole, chi fa attivismo deve disturbare.
She was one of seven candidates examined by the Society of Apothecaries in 1865	Era uno dei sette nominativi esaminati dalla Società di Speciali nel 1865 [...]

As we can notice, the highlighted items in the ST would have required a gendered translation – e.g. «il libro per bambini», «gli attivisti» – but, since we aimed at using a more inclusive language, we deliberately chose to avoid the so called «overextended (or generalised) masculine form» – which is the phrase used in Italian to indicate the usage of the masculine form as a neutral form – and opted in favour of periphrases, such as «chi fa attivismo», or more generic phrases, such as «per l’infanzia».

• Syntactic and stylistic challenges

As we already discussed in the first chapter, sentence organization works very differently in Italian and in English, especially for what concerns omitting the subject from a sentence.

While Italian is extremely flexible in this regard, being an inflected language, subject omission in English is only possible in some specific grammar structures – i.e., in compound conjunctive or disjunctive clauses when the subject is shared with the main clause. Other interesting cases of ambiguity and further syntax complexity can be found in relative clauses or embedded relative clauses as well as in passages where more agents are included: these conditions may create potential confusion if the subject is not clearly stated (repeated) in both the main and the subordinate clause.

Another syntax issue that is challenging in the translation work from English into Italian is that adverbials (time, place, mode) have a fixed, default position in the unmarked English sentence

structure (SVOMTP). Such basic grammar rule was particularly important in the discussion about markedness and style and the resulting translation choices.

One more challenge worth pointing out is that English sentences tend to be shorter. As a matter of fact, another procedure we decided to use in the TT is the condensation of two sentences – especially if the second one is a disjunctive clause starting with the connector «but» – which was, in some cases, a much better choice as in Italian we tend to create longer sentences and, as a general rule, a sentence should not start with the connector «but».

<p>A more conventional history of feminism would probably begin in 1792, with Mary Wollstonecraft’s <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Women</i>. But I’m not a historian, and this is not a conventional history.</p>	<p>Una storia più convenzionale del femminismo avrebbe probabilmente inizio nel 1792 con “Rivendicazione dei diritti della donna” di Mary Wollstonecraft, ma io non sono una storica e questa non è una storia convenzionale.</p>
--	--

Furthermore, the ST presented several interesting challenges related to style and stylistic choices. As already noted, the concept of style is strictly linked with the idea of markedness and thematic structure. Indeed, according to Baker, a clause consists of a theme – «what the clause is about» – and a rheme – «what the speaker says about the theme» (2018, 136) and any thematic choice the speaker or writer makes by selecting a certain element as the theme of a clause affects the meaning and degree of markedness of the clause itself to a more or less significant extent.

The choice of a marked option – namely an element which is generally not found in theme position – is based on the intention, as Baker argues, to «foreground a particular element as the topic of the clause or its point of departure» (2018, 146). This means that such choice is aimed at drawing the reader’s or listener’s attention on a specific element which is deemed to be important in order to understand a particular connotation or intention.

In the selected excerpts, from the book *Difficult Women*, there are a wide range of examples showing stylistic problems and discrepancies between some segments in the ST and their Italian equivalents.

Some noteworthy examples are as follows (emphasis is mine):

<p>It’s the sheep that makes the protest feel really insulting.</p>	<p>Fu proprio la pecora a rendere la protesta così offensiva.</p>
<p>The day was Friday 18 November 1870.</p>	<p>Era il giorno venerdì 18 novembre 1870.</p>

The daughter of a prosperous lawyer , she had been educated first at home [...]	Rampolla di un avvocato benestante , le era stata data un’istruzione prima a casa [...]
--	--

In all the above-mentioned examples, we can notice that the author has deliberately chosen to use an unconventional sentence organization to fulfil a particular stylistic purpose.

Indeed, in the first example, Lewis’ choice to write «It’s the sheep that makes...» instead of using the default unmarked option «The sheep makes...» is grounded in the intention to emphasize the role of the sheep in the protest. As a result, we have chosen to add the adverb «proprio» as an intensifier, implying that the sheep is the very element making the protest feel insulting.

In the second example, the unmarked option would have been «It was Friday 18 November 1870», so the choice to use a marked option aims at drawing special attention on the date itself, which is a very significant one, as we can understand while reading the whole essay. Therefore, we proposed a marked option in Italian as well: instead of selecting the default unmarked option «Era venerdì 18 novembre 1870», we added the noun phrase «il giorno».

In both above-mentioned cases, the translation technique of explicitation was adopted: as a matter of fact, the elements added in translation were already implicitly present in the ST and the introduction of an additional segment in the TT only allows to convey a nuance of meaning that would otherwise be lost in translation.

On the other hand, as for the third example, the markedness of the highlighted clause has been conveyed in translation by using another translation technique – namely compensation. To recover the same degree of markedness as in the ST, we decided to translate the noun «daughter» with «rampolla», a word that appears to be strongly marked in Italian for two main reasons: it is generally used in its masculine form, and it pertains to a more formal register of speech and writing than the noun «daughter» and its Italian equivalent «figlia»; it is also typically used to refer to the successful son of an important, rich or aristocratic figure.

The aforementioned examples illustrate a significant difference between how markedness works in English and how it works in Italian: as a matter of fact, we can note that English mostly relies on sentence construction to draw attention on a certain element or to convey a specific nuance of meaning, whereas Italian dynamic syntax needs to be boosted by lexical items – e.g., degree adverbs such as “proprio” – that are either untypical and/or emphatic functional words.

• Quotations

As we already argued at the beginning of this chapter, the approach to quotations was creative as well as comparative. Indeed, we decided to elaborate original translations, while still taking into account the official Italian translation of each fragment – when there was one available, as in the case of Virginia Woolf’s essay *Three Guineas* – and comparing it with our own (emphasis is mine):

<i>SOURCE TEXT</i>	<i>OFFICIAL TRANSLATION</i>	<i>TARGET TEXT</i>
‘ How entirely different is my darling’s case!’	“ La mia bambina è in una situazione completamente diversa!”	“ Di gran lunga diverso è il caso della mia adorata!”

Comparing the official translation with our version, we can highlight the fact that we selected a marked option over an unmarked one. As a matter of fact, the theme-rheme structure in the ST was maintained in the TT, hence emphasizing the importance of the predicate nominative «di gran lunga diverso è» in terms of meaning and degree of markedness. On the other hand, in the official translation the attention is drawn on the subject rather than on the predicate nominative, which is located in rheme position.

Some quotations from books that to this day have not been translated into Italian are listed as follows (emphasis is mine):

[...] ‘could not imagine any decent woman wishing to study medicine – as for any lady, that was out of the question’.	[...] “non riusciva a immaginare come delle donne rispettabili potessero mai desiderare di studiare medicina ; anche perché per qualsiasi signora, questo era fuori discussione”.
‘I would never take the line that language is “trivial” or a “distraction” from more important issues’ [...] ‘There probably are more important issues, but political struggle invariably takes place on many fronts at once. No feminist fairy with a magic wand ever comes up and says: “OK, you can have non-sexist language or equal pay; now which is it to be? ”’	“Non accetterei mai l’idea secondo cui la lingua è ‘irrilevante’ o una ‘distrazione’ da problemi più importanti” [...] “Probabilmente ci sono problemi più importanti, ma è inevitabile che la lotta politica si svolga su molti fronti contemporaneamente. Non esiste la fatina femminista con la bacchetta magica che dice: “Okay, puoi avere un linguaggio non sessista o la parità salariale: quale delle due scegli? ”

In the first example, which is a fragment from Sophia Jex-Blake’s memoir *Medical Women: A Thesis*

and *A History*, the translation technique is explicitation, with the addition of the modal verb «potere» and the adverb «mai» used as an intensifier.

In the second example, a shift was required in order to convey the meaning of the adverb «invariably»: as a matter of fact, it was translated with the predicate nominative «è inevitabile», followed by a relative clause. Hence, there has been a shift in the grammatical category, from the ST adverb to verb + adjective. On the other hand, explicitation was used to translate the interrogative clause «now which is to be»: the verb «scegliere» was added in the TT, because it was implicitly expressed by the phrase «something is to be», which implies that something is required to be chosen in this case.

6.2 Articles from *The Atlantic*

- **Lexical challenges**

Looking at the two selected articles from a lexical perspective, we can notice a wide range of grammatical and lexical collocations, as well as idioms, fixed expressions and metaphors, that required special attention and the use of specific techniques in the translation process.

In the first article, *The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism*, we can observe as follows (emphasis is mine):

[...] neither of them had child-care responsibilities.	[...] nessuno dei due si doveva occupare di accudire i figli.
Working from home in a white-collar job is easier [...]	Lavorare in smart working se si ha un posto fisso in ufficio è più semplice [...]

In the first example, a shift procedure was adopted: indeed, the phrase «child-care responsibilities», which has an adjective + noun structure, has been translated with «occuparsi di accudire i figli» – that is, reflexive prepositional verb + non-finite verb + noun structure phrase.

The second example presents two significant phrases: «to work from home» and «white-collar job». As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown period, the Italian population has become acquainted with the phrase «smart working», which is indeed a pseudo-anglicism – namely, a kind of lexical borrowing that is formed from English elements, but does not exist in English, either with the same meaning or at all – in English the same idea is conveyed by the following words “teleworking”, “telework”, “telecommuting”.

Nevertheless, the phrase «work from home» expresses a slightly different meaning: in fact, while the concept of «smart working» implies a more flexible attitude towards the working hours and the working environment, work from home relies on a stricter schedule. However, as work modalities have become a key theme in institutional communication and political debate (also due to Covid-19), we preferred to use «smart working» – more commonly employed in official contexts – over the more accurate equivalent «telelavoro» in the translation process.

For what concerns «white-collar job», the procedure of explicitation was chosen to clarify its culture-bound meaning: as a matter of fact, this is a compound noun that refers to a kind of job held in an office and people recruited for the position are usually university graduates or other qualified figures.

Moving forward in the discussion, another interesting item to take into account is the metaphor «to take the hit» (emphasis is mine):

Instead, couples will have to decide which one of them takes the hit .	Invece, le coppie dovranno decidere chi dei due incasserà il colpo .
---	---

As already discussed in the second chapter of this work, this phrase has both a literal and a metaphorical meaning. In order to convey the same level of ambivalence in Italian, we chose the idiomatic phrase «incassare il colpo», where the verb «incassare» means either «being hit without reacting» or «endure negative experiences without being affected by them» (De Mauro, 2023).

Another noteworthy metaphor is shown in the following excerpt (emphasis is mine):

[...] she and two co-authors have stepped into the gap to research the issue .	[...] lei e due coautrici si sono addentrate nella questione per colmare questa lacuna .
---	---

The fragment in bold features two lexical items which were challenging during the translation process: the idiom «to step into the gap» and the lexical collocation «to research an issue». As well as in the previous example, the idiom «to step into the gap» has both a literal and a metaphorical meaning – the latter is related to the idea of filling a gap on a certain issue or topic. We therefore chose to use two Italian verbs – «addentrarsi» and «colmare» – to convey both meanings of the idiom «to step into the gap». In addition, the phrase «addentrarsi nella questione» is also a good Italian equivalent for the lexical collocation «to research an issue», because the verb «to research» entails the in-depth study of a particular subject or topic.

Another interesting instance of lexical collocation is the adverb + adjective structure, which appears only once in the first article, unlike the more common verb + noun. As you can see in the chart below (emphasis is mine):

[...] Dad returning to a freshly baked dinner and freshly washed children .	[...] il papà tornava a casa e trovava la cena calda e i bambini già in pigiama .
---	--

The adverb «freshly» is generally used to refer to something that has just been made or done; hence, it needs to be translated taking into consideration the adjective by which it is followed. In the first example, the lexical collocation «freshly baked» implies that dinner has just been taken out of the oven; therefore, we decided to use a shift procedure, translating the adverb + adjective structure with the adjective «calda». Likewise, in the second example, in which kids are described as ready for bed the chosen TT lexical collocation points towards a more common Italian stereotypical image with kids wearing their pyjamas, i.e., «già in pigiama».

Moving on to the second article, *The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage*, we can highlight a fixed expression which has become quite common in recent years thanks to social networks and social media: «to go viral». The adjective «viral» used to be mainly associated with the medical semantic field, but it has acquired a figurative meaning which refers to content becoming very popular and widespread on the Internet in a short time lapse.

In July, Clare Wenham – and her daughter, Scarlett, and Scarlett’s picture of a unicorn – went viral .	A luglio, Clare Wenham (con sua figlia Scarlett e la foto di un unicorno) è diventata virale .
---	---

In the aforementioned example (emphasis is mine), we chose to translate said fixed expression using a typical Italian collocation with the verb «diventare» instead of «andare», which would be an inappropriate calque and would sound untypical and odd, as «andare virale» is not a collocation in Italian.

As we progress in the translation analysis, it is worth noting two phrases that required an explicitation procedure (emphasis is mine):

For Wenham, that wasn’t an option [...]	Per Wenham questa opzione non era proprio prevista [...]
--	---

Not a disaster for the empowering T-shirt kind of feminism [...]	Non un disastro per il tipo di femminismo che promuove l’emancipazione sulle magliette [...]
---	---

In both cases, we chose explicitation because we deemed the two phrases in the ST to express nuances of meaning that would be lost with a more literal translation. Especially in the second case, we can see that there are two adjectives that cannot be translated into Italian with two equivalent adjectives: as a matter of fact, «empowering» is a very complex adjective, because, while the correspondent noun «empowerment» can be easily translated with the noun «emancipazione», the adjective «emancipatorio» is not as common as its English equivalent.

Therefore, we decided to translate them with a relative clause, in order to clarify that the type of feminism we are talking about is the one that promotes empowerment by using T-shirts with feel-good mainstream slogans rather than a more solid and active part played in political debate or within organisations and/or institutions.

Another significant example to discuss is the case of two culture-bound terms – to which we referred using the acronym CBT in the second chapter of the present work: the phrases «rage moms» and «wine moms». Earlier in the discussion, we explained thoroughly what these expressions mean and where they come from, because these pieces of information are not present within the co-text nor can be inferred from the context. As these terms feature a high level of opacity for the TL readership, the translation process required the adoption of a combination of two translation techniques, to which Newmark referred as a «couplet».

In the United States, where “rage moms” and “wine moms” were credited with influencing the results of the presidential election [...]	Negli Stati Uniti, dove alle “rage moms” , le mamme a cui la pandemia ha regalato un rinnovato spirito politico , e alle “wine moms” , quelle per cui un bicchiere di vino scaccia via la fatica quotidiana , è stato attribuito il merito di aver influenzato i risultati delle elezioni presidenziali [...]
--	---

The two culture-bound terms were rendered in Italian with a borrowing and/or transference – namely, transferring the SL terms to the TT by way of loan words – followed by an additional part, which is a brief explanation of the terms in order to make them more intelligible to the TL readership.

Progressing in the translation analysis, we can notice another significant metaphorical item: the phrase «to be elbow-deep in something» (emphasis is mine):

<p>[...] to campaign against inequality when you're elbow-deep in diapers or dinner needs to be on the table.</p>	<p>[...] di fare campagne politiche contro la disuguaglianza quando sei immersa nei pannolini fino al collo o si tratta di preparare la cena.</p>
--	--

In this case, as well as for all the other metaphorical items we discussed in the present chapter, the phrase «to be elbow-deep» has two meanings – a literal and a metaphorical one. While it can be used to express that someone is immersed in a liquid up to the elbow, in the aforementioned example, we can clearly see that this is not the case: in fact, metaphorically speaking, we should understand being «elbow-deep in diapers» as being surrounded by a huge number of diapers.

To convey such metaphorical meaning, the Italian language offers a phrase which relies on the same semantic field of “water” and has an equivalent metaphorical meaning: «essere immersa fino al collo». Moreover, it is interesting to note that they both present a reference to a body part – namely the “elbow” in English and the “neck” in Italian – that confers visual strength and a colloquial nuance to the whole sentence.

The last lexical item worth discussing for the purpose of the present analysis is a term on which we already elaborated in the terminology section of the STA chapter: the phrase «consciousness raising», which is closely linked to the feminist movement as a practice of personal introspection, as well as collective political discussion. (Emphasis is mine.)

<p>[...] the movement has long relied on “consciousness raising” as a first step to action.</p>	<p>[...] il movimento si è a lungo affidato alla “autocoscienza” come primo passo verso l'azione.</p>
--	--

The concept of consciousness raising was introduced by the activist Carol Hanisch (1969) and has been a powerful tool for the second-wave feminists to find common ground and understand that, regardless of their many differences, women shared a range of problems worth fighting for all together. Nowadays the practice of “consciousness raising” is still a fundamental tool used within the feminist movement; as a matter of fact, this term has a recognised translation which we decided to adopt, as it can often be found in several kinds of feminism-related writings – the noun «autocoscienza».

• Gender-neutral lexical choices

For what concerns the issue of gender neutrality, both the selected articles offer a host of examples worth discussing. As shown below (emphasis is mine):

[...] even as politicians insist this is not the time to talk [...]	[...] anche se la classe politica insiste nel dire che non è il momento di parlare [...]
Academics who studied these episodes found [...]	Le personalità accademiche che hanno studiato questi fenomeni hanno scoperto che [...]
Dual-income couples might suddenly find themselves living like their grandparents, one homemaker and one breadwinner .	Le coppie con reddito doppio potrebbero all'improvviso trovarsi a vivere come i loro nonni, una persona si prende cura della casa e l'altra porta a casa lo stipendio .
[...] campaigners expect domestic-violence rates to rise during lockdown periods.	[...] chi fa attivismo si aspetta un aumento dei tassi di violenza domestica durante i periodi di lockdown.
In Britain, the Women's Budget Group, a collective of independent researchers [...]	In Gran Bretagna, il Women's Budget Group, un gruppo di ricerca indipendente [...]
[...] the lack of federally mandated maternity leave , for example, makes the U.S. an outlier among rich countries.	[...] la mancanza di un congedo parentale su mandato federale, ad esempio, rende gli Stati Uniti un caso anomalo tra i Paesi ricchi.

The main point was to avoid using the overextended masculine form as much as possible. To achieve such result, we adopted different strategies and techniques.

In the first example, instead of using the noun «politici», we preferred the noun + adjective structure «classe politica», where «classe» is a collective noun. The same happened in the second example with the noun «personalità», which encompasses male and female despite the noun being feminine in grammar gender. In the third example, instead, the translation procedure used was explicitation: as a matter of fact, «homemaker» and «breadwinner», two conceptually dense compound words, were translated by means of periphrases.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning the case of the phrase «maternity leave»: in fact, though the author chose the feminine form (probably common in the UK) rather than the genderless «parental leave», we ascertained that in the United States no parental leave is granted to any parent, regardless

of their sex and/or gender – even if it might be included in the so-called “security” in some specific cases, depending on jobs and careers. Therefore, we chose the genderless Italian equivalent «congedo parentale».

- **Syntactical and stylistic challenges**

For what concerns syntactical matters, it can be argued that, unlike the excerpts from *Difficult Women*, the two articles from *The Atlantic* required a more thorough reassessment of syntactical structures during the translation process.

As it is shown in the examples below (emphasis is mine):

For those with caring responsibilities, an infectious-disease outbreak is unlikely to give them time to write King Lear or develop a theory of optics.	È improbabile che lo scoppio di una malattia infettiva dia a chi ha responsabilità di cura il tempo di scrivere Re Lear o di sviluppare una teoria sull’ottica.
In heterosexual relationships, women are more likely to be the lower earners [...]	Nelle relazioni eterosessuali è più probabile che le donne guadagnino meno [...]
The joke only works because “ Susan ” and “ Karen ” — stand-in names for suburban moms — are understood to be responsible for household management [...]	La battuta funziona solo perché si capisce che “Susan” e “Karen” (classici nomi da mamme nella provincia americana) sono responsabili della gestione domestica [...]
[...] black women there are twice as likely to die in childbirth as white women.	[...] lì le donne nere hanno il doppio delle probabilità di morire di parto rispetto alle donne bianche.
A survey of 1,003 people found that parents with low incomes were nine times more likely to report a risk of losing their jobs [...]	Con un sondaggio su 1.003 persone si è riscontrato che per genitori con un reddito basso le probabilità di rischiare di perdere il lavoro erano nove volte più alte [...]
Realizing that school reopenings have been such a low political priority has felt like a particular insult for many American parents.	Nel rendersi conto che le riaperture delle scuole hanno avuto una così scarsa priorità nella classe politica molti genitori americani si sono sentiti particolarmente presi in giro.

The examples above show some instances where the syntactical structure of a sentence required reordering according to Italian rules.

The phrase we dealt with most frequently was «to be likely/unlikely to», which we chose to translate into Italian in several different ways depending on the co-text: for example, in the first two cases we decided to use the predicate nominatives «è improbabile» and «è più probabile» to introduce a relative clause. Instead, when the phrase was coupled with a number – e.g. “twice as”, “nine times more” – we used the noun «probabilità».

As regards the third example, the same process has been applied, translating the passive verb «to be understood» into Italian with an impersonal form of the verb «capire» – e.g. si capisce – which introduces a relative clause.

Finally, in the last example, it should be noticed that, while in the ST the subject of the sentence is «realizing» – gerund form of the verb «to realize» – in the TT the subjects are the «many American parents» who felt offended when they realized that inadequate relevance had been given to school reopenings. Hence, we can state that what was an impersonal sentence in English has been translated into Italian with a personal structure.

Style has also been affected by the translation process. As it has already been argued previously, the concept of style is closely linked to the thematic structure and hence the degree of markedness of a written or oral text.

More specifically, it is important to point out that the thematic structure of the two selected articles as a whole can be considered as not marked. Nonetheless, the ST features some marked stylistic choices worth mentioning, as they required a specific translation technique in order to fully convey the same degree of markedness. By way of example (emphasis is mine):

<p>When people try to be cheerful about social distancing and working from home [...], there is an obvious response [...]</p>	<p>Quando le persone cercano di essere positive riguardo al distanziamento sociale e allo smart working [...], una risposta ovvia c'è [...]</p>
--	--

In this case, while the thematic structure has been maintained, some degree of markedness was attempted by changing the word order in the rheme segment. The same compensation procedure was also used in another case, which is shown below (emphasis is mine):

<p>Despite the mass entry of women into the workforce during the 20th century, the phenomenon of the “second shift” still exists.</p>	<p>Nonostante l'ingresso in massa delle donne nella forza lavoro durante il XX secolo, esiste ancora il fenomeno del “secondo turno”.</p>
--	--

Here, as well as in the previous example, the thematic structure has not been changed. Instead, we chose to compensate by placing the verb at the beginning of the main clause rather than at the end, hence drawing attention to an element that would not normally be the focus of said clause.

CONCLUSIONS

The writing process of the present dissertation work required performing a variety of complex tasks, but the main and certainly the most relevant was the translation project.

In this regard, it is essential to highlight that translation as a task can be either self-determined or commissioned. A translation task may be defined as self-determined when a translator looks for and selects on their own a certain writing (i.e. book, essay, article, etc.) to translate and afterwards they search a publisher or publishing house that might be interested in the work they are presenting. This condition gives them more freedom when it comes to making their own translation choices – especially regarding potentially controversial issues such as gender neutrality.

On the other hand, a translation task is commissioned when the publishing house itself is in charge of selecting which writing the translator is going to work on, depending on their own editorial policies and guidelines. As a consequence, when the task is commissioned, the translator is still allowed to make their own translation choices, but the editor will be the person responsible for the final revision of the translation and will have to decide what choices will be accepted, hence having the last say in what can or cannot be published.

In our case, the task was self-determined and, as already stated in the introduction, our initial idea was to work exclusively on Helen Lewis' book *Difficult Women*, including the introduction to the book and the whole essay "Education" in the present dissertation. However, this project was found to be not feasible because an official Italian translation (translators: Dafne Calgaro, Marina Calvaresi) of said book was published in October 2021 by the Italian publishing house Blackie (Milan).

Therefore, we also decided to include in our work two articles written by the same author for the American magazine *The Atlantic*. The articles we selected were chosen because they both dealt with the impact of the Covid pandemic on gender equality and women's life – a topic which has recently turned out to be critical within the feminist discourse. Along with a general likeness in content, the two articles also present several similarities in linguistic choices, stylistic features, tones and register.

As already stated before, our translation task was self-determined; however, we are fully aware that some of the choices we made – i.e. using inclusive expressions and phrases to convey gender neutrality – would be controversial or even not acceptable in a commissioned translation project, especially because the general trend when translating from English into Italian leans towards a flattening approach and also because in Italy the use of inclusive language in place of the so called «overextended masculine form» has not gained ground yet, both in oral and written texts.

However, while the core of the present work is undoubtedly the original translations into Italian we chose to present, the decision to carry out an in-depth analysis of the selected excerpts from the book *Difficult Women* and the two articles from *The Atlantic* proved extremely helpful to create a rich and comprehensive groundwork for our translation task.

As a matter of fact, the Source Text Analysis sections (Chapter 1 and 2) required special effort and thorough research, as we decided to analyse our STs taking into consideration several linguistic aspects – i.e. vocabulary, syntax, style, markedness, culture-bound elements.

Along with this wide variety of challenges, there was yet another element of complexity to consider: the book and the two articles pertain to two distinct literary genres – namely literary non-fiction and Op-Ed columns – which we have examined in the Compare & Contrast section (Chapter 3).

While these two genres commonly present significant differences that we investigated in Chapter 3, we also noticed that Lewis tends to use the same overall approach while writing both non-fiction and columns. As already claimed within our dissertation work, the informative and persuasive functions are widely prevalent in Lewis' writing style; as a result, her writings appear to be well-informed, historically accurate and almost educational when it comes to identifying the scope behind her work.

Understanding how these genres are approached by our author was a key step towards establishing which translation procedures and techniques would prove most effective in conveying the same degree of markedness as in the STs.

Both in the source text analysis and in the translation process, the most significant challenge we undertook was dealing with the substantial differences between English and Italian syntax and style. As a matter of fact, Italian and English diverge prominently in terms of how flexible the default sentence structure is and how any change in this regard may affect both meaning and markedness of the sentence itself. On that note, we also identified and tackled the most evident syntactical and stylistic discrepancies between the ST and our draft translation into Italian.

From a broader perspective, as Lewis' writings are extremely rich in idiomatic expressions and specific lexical items, we inevitably had to select and discuss only the most interesting linguistic choices among those made both by the author in her writings and by us in our translations.

While we only have the book *Difficult Women* as a tool to study Lewis' approach to literary non-fiction, more research on her writing style as a columnist could be carried out in the future by examining other articles from *The Atlantic* and pointing out recurring features, relying on a wider sample of writings pertaining to the same genre. Another possible investigation to carry out in the

future could be an analysis of the published translation to detect and understand the translators' choices and discuss them thoroughly towards the STA.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, Mona. *In Other Words, A Coursebook on Translation*. Abingdon, Routledge (2018).
- Benson, Morton, Evelyn Benson, and Robert Ilson (eds.) *The BBI dictionary of English word combinations*. John Benjamins Publishing Company (1997): 19, 31.
- Brogaard, Brit. Gatzia, Dimitria Electra. "Introduction: Epistemic Modals." Dordrecht, Springer Science and Business (2016): 130.
- Colman, Penny. "A new way to look at literature: A visual model for analyzing fiction and nonfiction texts." *Language Arts* 84.3 (2007): 257-268.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" *University of Chicago Legal Forum*: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8.
- Grabe, William. "Narrative and Expository Macro-Genres" Ann M. Johns (ed.) *Genres in the Classroom: Multiple Perspectives*. Abingdon, Routledge (2001): 249-267.
- Harvey, Malcolm. "A beginner's course in legal translation: the case of culture-bound terms." *ASTTI/ETI* 2.24 (2000): 357-369.
- Lakoff, George. "The contemporary theory of metaphor." Andrew Ortony (ed.) *Metaphor and thought*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (1993): 202-251.
- Lewis, Helen. *Difficult Women – A History of Feminism in 11 Fights*. London, Vintage Digital (2020).
- McNair, Brian. "I, Columnist." Bob Franklin (ed.) *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*. London and New York, Routledge (2008): 106-114.
- Newmark, Peter. *A Textbook of Translation*. Prentice Hall (1987).
- Nida, Eugene. *Toward a Science of Translating*. Leiden, E. J. Brill (1964).
- Socolow, Michael J. "A profitable public sphere: the creation of The New York Times Op-ed page." *Journalism & mass communication quarterly* 87.2 (2010): 281-296.
- Vinay, Jean-Paul and Darbelnet, Jean. *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*, trans. of Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) by Juan C. Sager and Marie-Josée Hamel. Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company (1995).
- Wahl-Jorgensen, Karin. "Op-ed pages" Bob Franklin (ed.) *Pulling newspapers apart: Analysing print journalism*. London and New York, Routledge (2008): 67-74.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Articles:

A 164-Year Tradition: <https://www.theatlantic.com/history/> (last accessed on 30.11.21)

“A Short History of Opinion Journalism.” – Digital Resource Center: <https://digitalresource.center/content/short-history-opinion-journalism> (last accessed on 03.06.22)

Cartoon of the Day: “A Fair Field and No Favor!”: <https://www.harpreweek.com/09Cartoon/BrowseByDateCartoon.asp?Month=November&Date=18> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

Fetters, Ashley. (May 23rd, 2020). “Who Is a Wine Mom?” – The Atlantic: <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2020/05/wine-moms-explained/612001> (last accessed on 08.12.21)

Hanisch, Carol.. (February 1969) “The Personal Is Political” – Writings by Carol Hanisch: <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html/> (last accessed on 20.03.23)

Jarmy, Clare. (April 10th, 2020). “Book review: Difficult Women: A history of feminism.” – Tes Magazine: <https://www.tes.com/news/book-review-difficult-women-history-feminism/> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

Lerer, Lisa. Medina, Jennifer. (2020) “The ‘Rage Moms’ Democrats Are Counting On.” – The New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/17/us/politics/democrats-women-voters-anger.html> (last accessed on 08.12.21)

Lerner, Kevin M. (June 22nd, 2020). “From op-eds to editorials, readers find it difficult to distinguish fact from opinion.”: <https://ijnnet.org/en/story/op-eds-editorials-readers-find-it-difficult-distinguish-fact-opinion> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

Lewis, Helen. (March 19th, 2020). “The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism.” – The Atlantic: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/feminism-womens-rights-coronavirus-covid19/608302> (last accessed on 16.08.22)

Lewis, Helen. (March 10th, 2021). “The Pandemic Has Given Women a New Kind of Rage.” – The Atlantic: <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/03/pandemic-has-made-women-angry/618239> (last accessed on 01.09.22)

Manker, Jonathan. (February 26th, 2016). “Morphological Typology.”: <https://linguistics.berkeley.edu/~jtmanker/Morphological%20Typology%20-%20Spring%202016%20-%20Ling%20100%20Guest%20Lecture.pdf> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

“Non-fiction text types.” : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z2t3rdm/revision/8/> (last accessed on 24.08.21)

Nordquist, Richard. (July 15th, 2019). “An Introduction to Literary Non-Fiction.”: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-literary-nonfiction-1691133> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

Seglin, Jeffrey. “How to write an op-ed or column.” *Journalist’s Resource: Research on today’s news topics* (2013) – News Hooks: <https://newshooks.com/news/how-write-op-ed-or-column> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

Smith, Brian. “Op-Ed? Editorial? What do all these terms really mean?”: <https://eu.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/2018/09/13/oped-editorial-opinion-section-journalism-terms-defined-des-moines-register/1224898002> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

Sturges, Fiona. (March 5th, 2020). “Difficult Women by Helen Lewis review – a history of feminism in 11 fights.” – The Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/mar/05/difficult-women-history-feminism-11-fights-helen-lewis-review/> (last accessed on 03.09.22)

“What is the difference between Op-Ed columns and Editorials?” – The New York Times: <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/ref/membercenter/faq/timesselectqa14.html> (last accessed on 03.06.22)

Online dictionaries:

Cambridge Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Chambers Dictionary: <https://chambers.co.uk>

Collins Dictionary: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com>

Dizionario italiano De Mauro: <https://dizionario.internazionale.it>

Macmillan Dictionary: <https://www.macmillandictionary.com>

Open Education Sociology Dictionary: <https://sociologydictionary.org>

Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>

The Britannica Dictionary: <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary>

The Commons – Social Change Library: <https://commonslibrary.org/consciousness-raising>

OTHER RESOURCES

The Source Text Analysis model used for the present work is the one proposed in the document “Analysing your Source Text” produced by Dr Emma Tyler (July 2016): <http://www.tree-genie.co.uk/Translation/Analysing%20your%20Source%20Text.pdf> (last accessed on 03.09.22)