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# Dorothy Parker and Italian Women's Magazines

With only one exception,[1] all of Dorothy Parker's original short stories made their first appearance in a magazine. In this she was not unique: the most influential short story writers of the period — from Hemingway to Fitzgerald, from Lardner to Faulkner — published much of their work in the same way. It was usual for the pieces of the best-known authors to appear later also in book form, and it was as collections in a book that they reached the large public, and critical recognition.[2] The association of the stories with the magazines was only temporary, therefore. Still it is important for us, for the kind of magazine in which the stories were first published can help us to see them in a different perspective — that of the audience that first read them and decreed their success.

Parker's name is principally associated with *The New Yorker,* where half of her entire prose fiction production first appeared. But also the other magazines that welcomed her work — among which *The Smart Set, The Bookman, Harper's Bazaar* — basically addressed the same category of readers.

It is a little known fact that in the postwar period Dorothy Parker enjoyed a brief moment of popularity also with some Italian magazines: *Grazia* and *Annabella,* two women's magazines.

In the first part of this essay I will compare the Italian women's magazines that published Parker's stories with the American magazines in which the same pieces originally appeared. My purpose is to investigate the kind of reading of these stories that could be expected by the Italian audience as opposed to the

original audience. A reading inscribed in the translations themselves, as we shall see.

Parker's stories appeared in the Italian women's magazines in the following order (the information for each Italian translation is followed by the original title, the American magazine where it was first published and the date of publication):

1 "Eccoci qui", *Grazia* 272 (June 1946), p. 20
"Here We Are", *Cosmopolitan,* March 1931

2 "Se avessi un milione", *Annabella* 15 (April 11, 1948), pp. 4-5
"The Standard of Living", *The New Yorker,* 20 September 1941

3 "Eri perfettamente a posto" *Grazia* 471 (March 4, 1950), p. 23
"You Were Perfectly Fine", *The New Yorker,* 23 January 1929

4 "Il tono di vita", *Grazia* 481 (May 13, 1950), pp. 24-25
"The Standard of Living", *The New Yorker,* 20 September 1941

5 "L'ultimo Te", *Grazia* 492 (July 29, 1950), pp. 23; 34
"The Last Tea", The *New Yorker,* 11 September 1926

6 "Una piccola donna qualsiasi", *Grazia* 498 (September 9, 1950), pp.22-23
"The Sexes", *The New Republic,* 13 July 1927

7 "II Valzer", *Grazia* 509 (November 25, 1950), pp. 22-23
"The Waltz", The *New Yorker,* 2 September 1933

The contrast between the Italian and the American magazines above is so marked that the list partly speaks for itself. But a few observations will help us to bring their differing characteristics into focus.

The first thing we can notice is that the American magazines that first offered Parker's stories were written for a dual readership,

whereas *Grazia* and *Annabella* were directed exclusively to women readers. Their public differed also from a social and cultural point of view. *The New Yorker* was openly edited for a metropolitan, sophisticated and culturally informed public, as its editor Harold Ross pointed out in a 1925 prospectus[3] summarizing his ideas about the magazine:

> The *New Yorker* [...] will be what is commonly called sophisticated, in that it will assume a reasonable degree of enlightenment on the part of its readers [...] The *New Yorker* will be the magazine which is not edited for the old lady in Dubuque. It will not be concerned in what she is thinking about [...] the *New Yorker* is a magazine avowedly published for a metropolitan audience.[4]

The *New Republic* was edited for a liberal and informed public. Its founding editor, Herbert Croly, gave it a political purpose and engaged it in social issues — its goal being "less to inform or entertain its readers than to start little insurrections in the realm of their convictions"[5] — but he also reserved an important space to art and literature. What was accorded almost no space at all in this "journal of opinion" (as the subtitle read) was advertising; and pictures were completely absent.

The *Cosmopolitan* was yet another different magazine. It was devoted to fiction, and it gave an important place both to pictures and advertising (it even featured an index of the advertising companies for each issue). It catered to a less exclusive audience, as compared to the other two magazines; but the fact that it was a quality publication in spite of its more popular public was the great source of pride of Ray Long, its editor.[6]

Because of their picked audience, these magazines could afford publishing even innovative fiction — and in any case, their prose was never insipid. Being accepted by one of these magazines was therefore a sign of distinction for a writer. And such prestigious literary awards as the O. Henry Memorial prize very often acknowledged their merit by selecting their stories as finalists.

Differently from the American magazines that published Parker's work, *Grazia* and *Annabella* were not the sort of

magazines taken into consideration by the world of 'high' culture.[7]

*Grazia* catered to a middle class public. It aspired to be an informative publication covering a variety of subjects, but traditional feminine concerns remained at the center of its attention. Far from being provocative, it tended to present all topics (especially political and social issues) in an unproblematic way. It was a magazine for the woman who lived in the city and wished to be modern — but it definitely took into consideration also the point of view of the "old lady of Dubuque"'s Italian sisters. Fiction was given prominence (for instance, the new serialized novels were advertised in the front cover), but it was not one of its main departments: fashion, beauty and expert advice on domestic and/or sentimental problems were much more important.

*Annabella,* directed to a lower middle-class audience, was an even more conservative magazine. It was edited for an unsophisticated public looking for quiet and easy diversion within a narrow range of 'feminine' interests. It was a cheap and lean publication[8] devoted to fashion, gossip about celebrities and fiction — fiction openly treated as pure entertainment.

The fact of being chosen by *Grazia* and *Annabella* (or by any other women's magazine of the time, for that matter) certainly could not advance the Italian critical reputation of a writer. On the contrary, since the fiction of these magazines was mostly formulaic, being popular with their unsophisticated audience could be even counterproductive for an author of uncertain critical standing like Parker:[9] it could affiliate her with those writers of "letteratura amena" ('light' fiction) who were merely tolerated as a necessary evil by critics devoted to 'serious' fiction.[10]

When we consider the ancillary role played by fiction in these magazines, we can't be surprised by the circumstance that the name of the translator was never mentioned in *Annabella* and hardly ever appeared in *Grazia,* where only few people were granted this privilege. Eugenio Vaquer[11] was one of these favored translators: in the course of 1950 he signed several pieces, among which Parker's "Il tono di vita" and "Il valzer". Although we do not know who translated the other stories by Parker,[12] we can

safely suppose that each translation was the work of a different person: because some of them appeared in different years; but above all because each version presents peculiar stylistic solutions. On the other hand, the translations have also some salient common features — features that are actually more interesting than the differences. This circumstance can be explained in two ways. In the first place, the similarities point to an analogous translating method: the different translators evidently shared some common assumptions about what the 'right' way to approach the original texts was. Secondly, the similarities point to some editing work: prior to publication, the translations must have been revised according to identical principles, presumably by the magazine staff. Or in other words, they must have been adapted to the requirements of the magazines and their audience.

The first important characteristic uniting the different translations is a free recourse to omissions. Some omissions can be safely attributed to the translators themselves. In point of fact, an analysis of their work reveals that none of them felt committed to a translation reproducing the original at any cost, and omissions are but one aspect of this attitude. Although in different degrees, all of them left out interjections, repetitions, linguistic hedges, single words (in the following examples words omitted in translation are emphasized):

1. "What do you suppose they cost?" Annabel said.
   *"Gee,* I don't know," Midge said. *"Plenty, I guess."*
   "Like a thousand dollars?" *Annabel said.*
   *"Oh,* I guess like more," Midge said. "On account of the emerald."
   *"Well,* like ten thousand dollars?" *Annabel said.*
   *"Gee,* I wouldn't even know," *Midge said.* ("The Standard of Living", p. 33)[13]

   "Quante credi che costino?" Annabel domando,
   "Non lo saprei," Midge disse.
   "Forse mille dollari?"

"Un po' più credo. Per via dello smeraldo," disse Midge.
"Diciamo diecimila?"
"Non saprei" ("Se avessi un milione", p. 5)

2. "Let's don't think about *a lot of* Chinese. We've got something better to think about. *I mean, I mean — well, what do we care about them?"*
"I know," she said. "But I *just sort of* got to thinking of them, all of them, *all over everywhere, doing it all the time. At least, I mean, — getting married, you know. And it's — well,* it's sort of such a big thing to do, it makes you feel queer. *You think of them, all of them,* all doing it just like it wasn't anything. *And how does anybody know what's going to happen next?"* ("Here We Are", p. 126)

"Non pensiamo ai cinesi. Abbiamo di meglio a cui pensare."
"Lo so;" disse lei. "Ma stavo pensando a tutti, a tutti quelli che si sposano come se niente fosse. E' ... bene, è una cosa così grossa che ci si sente strani." ("Eccoci qui", p. 20)

An omission that is worth dwelling on is that of "he said/she said" (cf. passage 1). This feature of American colloquial prose had bothered also Parker's first Italian translator, Eugenio Montale, whose solution had generally been a recourse to variation. Synonyms of 'to say' are to be met in these translations as well; omissions are more frequent, however, and one cannot help seeing in them the influence of the writer who, more than any other, had come to embody the American style for the general public of postwar Italy: Ernest Hemingway.[14] Hemingway was particularly noted for his dialogues in which reporting verbs disappeared almost completely — a feature that the first Italian translators of his work tended to accentuate.[15] It is not surprising, therefore, that some translators should have taken his syncopated style as a model while working on the dialogues of another American author.[16]

Translators cannot be held responsible for all of the

omissions traceable in the published stories, however. Bold cuts of the kind characterizing passage 2 above call for another explanation: they suggest the interference of some magazine editor, most likely prompted by reasons of limited space. All the published stories had an average length of one or two pages (comprehensive of illustrations and advertising); this standard implied that some narratives had to be cut down to size — and the longer the original text, the heavier the omissions. "Eccoci qui" is the translation that suffered the most from this approach. Apparently only one page was available for it, and the text (the longest of the six stories in the original version) exceeded the limit by far. This did not discourage the magazine from publishing it: paragraphs were trimmed off; whole passages were deleted; and as a result the piece — having lost roughly one sixth of the original text — neatly fitted its allotted space. The quality of the cuts confirms that they were prompted purely by questions of limited space, since no special feature (such as slang or idiomatic expressions, for instance) marks them off from the body of the text:

3. "I'm so glad we're going to the Biltmore. *I just love it.* The twice I've stayed in New York we've always stayed there, Papa and Mamma and Ellie and I, and I was crazy about it. I always sleep so well there. *I go right off to sleep the minute I put my head on the pillow.* "
   *"Oh, you do?" he said.*
   *"At least, I mean," she said. "Way up high it's so quiet. "*
   *"We might go to some show or other tomorrow night instead of tonight," he said. "Don't you think that would be better?"*
   *"Yes, I think it might," she said.*
   *He rose, balanced a moment, crossed over and sat down beside her.*
   *"Do you really have to write those letters tonight?" he said.*
   *"Well," she said, "I don't suppose they'd get there any quicker than if I wrote them tomorrow. "*
   There was a silence with things going on in it. ("Here We Are", pp. 132-133)

> "Sono così contenta di andare a Biltmore. Ci sono stata tutt'e due le volte che siamo venuti a New York, papà, mamma, Ellie e io, e ne andavo pazza. Ci ho sempre dormito così bene."
> Ci fu un silenzio pieno di significati. ("Eccoci Qui", p. 20)

An editorial procedure sanctioning dramatic omissions such as those in the passages above implied a rather utilitarian conception of the role of fiction in the magazine. The integrity of the original text was clearly regarded as less important than pagination; and, apparently, no anxiety about the betrayal of the original work troubled the editors. This procedure presupposed also the support of an undiscriminating audience, however — an audience that read fiction merely to while away leisure time, and who was perfectly happy with the abridged version of a story, as long as the plot was engaging enough.

The attendance of an audience of this kind also provides a reason for another feature of the published translations: the omission of almost all the literary and cultural references of the original stories. Some of these references could be very difficult to grasp for a person with a limited experience of American culture, but others — such as those to Walt Whitman and Louisa Alcott in "You Were Perfectly Fine" / "Eri perfettamente a posto" — required no effort at all to be translated, and readers of average culture to appreciate them. Therefore the fact that they did not appear in the published version points again to the intervention of an editor whose esteem of the cultural preparation of the public reading the magazine was very low. This editor did not even take into consideration using fiction as a means of cultural promotion, and used omissions to sanction its role as light entertainment. [17]

Editorial attention to the audience surely explains also the omission of a cultural allusion of a different kind:

> 4. Annabel and Midge passed without the condescension of hurrying their pace; they held their heads higher and set their feet with exquisite precision, *as if they stepped over the necks of peasants.* ("The Standard of Living", p. 30)

> Annabel e Midge passavano senza degnarsi di affrettare il passo; tenendo alta la testa e posando i piedi con precisione squisita sull'asfalto. ("Se avessi un milione", p. 4, *Annabella)*

> Annabel e Midge passavano senza condiscendere ad accelerare il passo; raddrizzavano ancor più il capo, e posavano i piedi con precisione squisita, quasi sfilassero su di una ribalta." ("II tono di vita" p. 24, *Grazia)*

The censored clause compares the two secretaries to two proud aristocratic ladies — more specifically, as a later allusion confirms,[18] to two haughty French noblewomen at the time of the Revolution. The intent of the original comparison is clearly parodic; and surely no reader of *The New Yorker* would have seen in it the slightest shadow of contempt. But, apparently, the allusion was regarded as potentially offensive for the public of the two Italian magazines: *Annabella* ruled it out altogether; and *Grazia* replaced it with a neutral reference to the stage. And a similarly politically correct change took place also in "II valzer", where the "hulking peasant" of the original story was turned into an innocuous "pachiderma" ('pachyderm'). Suppressions of this kind reveal that the irony informing the original stories was utterly misunderstood — or that, at any rate, it was considered too subtle for the public of the two publications.

The influence of the public — or of the idea of the public nurtured by the magazine editors, which amounts to the same — can be traced also in the titles chosen for two of the stories. The first is "Una piccola donna qualsiasi", ('A little woman like any other') the Italian version of "The Sexes". We have no way of knowing whether the translator settled upon the Italian title herself (himself?), or whether someone else chose it. But it is clear that the change was occasioned by the specific public addressed. The reason why the Italian title departs from the original one is obvious: a literal translation would have given prominence to a word that was still unmentionable in a 'decorous' women's magazine.[19] This bowdlerized title points to more than the moral

narrowness of the magazine publishing it, however. It also discloses the particular interpretation of the story expected from its readers.

The original story is a comment on the "battle of the sexes" in which the weaknesses of both parties are humorously exposed. The original title does not take sides; and the first readers of the story in *The New-Republic* surely appreciated its humorous detachment.

By contrast, the Italian title "Una piccola donna qualsiasi" not only invited readers to see the story only from the point of view of the woman, but it also encouraged women readers ('little women themselves') to identify with the same-sex character — which clearly deprived the narrative of a great part of its original meaning.

The second title departing from the original version is "Se avessi un milione" ('If I had a million'), the Italian translation of "The Standard of Living" published by *Annabella* in 1948.

In this case the change was most likely introduced to attract the readers' attention; and since it is generally people who have no money that fantasize about what they could do with it, the Italian title evidences that the readers of the magazine were regarded as being close enough to the protagonists to become interested in their game. But the point is another: in the original story the two protagonists are openly described as cheap — charming, for sure, but unquestionably cheap. One is surprised, therefore, by the preference accorded to this piece — the only one to be chosen by both magazines (*Grazia* published it in 1950). After all, not only did it not stage a couple (the standard situation in the majority of the stories) but it also contained an unflattering portrait of substantially the same people it was supposed to entertain.

It is evident that whoever decided upon this story did not read it as its original title, and its original context in *The New Yorker*, suggested it was meant to be read. The public of *The New Yorker* arrived at it after leafing through a series of advertisements — among which those for fur coats and pearls that they could certainly buy without waiting for an improbable legacy. Moving in the selfsame sophisticated and comfortable world the two secretaries can only dream about, they would immediately distance

themselves from the protagonists' lack of refinement. Their self-complacency would not last long, however: they would soon realize that the story is not about the vulgarity of people without means, but about the coexistence of outrageously different standards of living. And belonging to the privileged side, by the end of the narrative they would feel indicted and uneasy rather than self-satisfied.

This is distinctly not the kind of reading of the story expected from the public of the two women's magazines. Apparently, what was to render this narrative attractive for them was its evocation of the many pleasures of an opulent materialistic world. In other words, what was expected from them was a reading so superficial as to submerge the social implications of the two secretaries' game.

This is suggested not only by the title of the story in *Annabella,* but also by the way the same piece was presented in *Grazia.* The title of the translation in the latter magazine, "Il tono di vita", was closer to the original one. But the story was accompanied by a picture (see ill. 1) that was the graphic equivalent to *Annabella*'s title: it showed two elegantly-dressed girls, the one in the foreground holding a precious make-up case and surprised in the act of giving the last touch to her make up; the other entwining a long string of pearls round her neck. These glamorous girls, meant to represent the essence of the narrative, were obviously neither of the secretaries, but the heiresses that the two protagonists dreamt of being. The biased reading of the story implied by *Grazia*'s illustration becomes all the more evident when we compare it with the drawing commenting the same piece in *The New Yorker.* The American magazine offered a much smaller picture — and one that at first engaged the readers' attention more for the seeming incongruity of its subject than in itself. It was the portrait of a fat bird (presumably a young chicken) casting a proud glance at the viewers. The public of *The New Yorker* was prepared for irony, however, and the meaning of the illustration would soon emerge for them: the plebeian bird giving itself airs obviously caricatured the girls' bearing as described in the narrative. The implications of the two different pictures are apparent. The two secretaries could be transfigured into beautiful creatures by the

wishful thinking of readers who identified with them; but from the point of view of those who could see them with detachment, they were little more than pompous jokes.

At times the translators openly departed from the original texts. The changes mostly regarded minor but significant details, as in the following examples:

5. He sat down, leaning back against bristled green plush, in the seat opposite the girl in beige ("Here we are", p. 15)
   Egli sedette, appoggiando il dorso al ruvido panno verde, di fronte alla ragazza in grigio ("Eccoci qui", p. 20)
6. They wore thin, bright dresses, tight over their breasts and high on their legs, and tilted slippers, fancifully strapped. ("The Standard of Living" p. 30)
   Portavano vestiti vivaci, leggeri, aderenti al petto e ai fianchi e scarpine altissime con cinturini fantasia. ("Se avessi un milione", p. 4)
7. "the first thing I'd do, I'd go out and hire somebody to shoot Mrs. Gary Cooper". ("The Standard of Living", p. 31)
   "la prima cosa che farei sarebbe di andare a comprare una pistola e sparare su Gary Cooper". ("II tono di vita", p. 24)
8. Said I ought to be doing sort of Garbo parts. ("The Last Tea", p. 184)
   Diceva che avrei dovuto interpretare parti sul genere della Bergman. ("L'ultimo té", p. 23)

Passages 5 and 6 call to mind the fact that fashion was one of the main concerns of women's magazines, and that the readers of these stories — as the translators must have been well aware of — would pay particular attention to the style of the clothes described. The replacing of such details as the color of a dress (passage 5) or the shape of a skirt (passage 6) can be therefore explained as an 'updating' of the fashion in order to increase the appeal of the stories.[20]

The change in passage 7 has only one plausible justification: the translator (Vaquer) took advantage of his position to vent a personal idiosyncrasy and 'get rid of' Gary Cooper (in his version

Gary Cooper himself, and not his wife, is the designated victim). What is worth emphasizing, however, is that the name of the actor was retained: film stars — differently from literary works and writers — were familiar figures to the public of these magazines. The same logic leading to the 'updating' of fashion details must have prompted the substitution of the name of (Ingrid) Bergman to that of (Greta) Garbo in passage 8. Greta Garbo was renowned in Italy, and the readers of *Grazia* had doubtless met her name and picture in the magazine on several occasions. But she belonged to an older generation, and she might give a slightly passé air to the text. The name of Bergman 'rejuvenated' the story and increased its attractiveness for the Italian audience (whose interest in Bergman was particularly keen in 1950, the year when the actress left Hollywood for Rossellini and Italy).

Most of the common features of the translations we have analyzed so far show how deeply the medium and the audience conditioned the work of the translators — both in the sense that the translators must have kept the prospective readers in mind; and in the sense that the stories were certainly tampered with by an editor. Each translation combines those features in a different way, however; and each piece is distinguished also by other peculiar traits.

The translator of "Eccoci qui", for instance, seems to have let a gender-biased view of the relationship between the sexes engineer the omissions ascribable to her/him. In fact, whereas in the original text both the man and the woman are (humorously) embarrassed and ill at ease, in translation, thanks to the omissions, the man regains most of his composure. The woman, on the contrary, sounds much more quarrelsome and unreasonable. As a result, the man emerges as the stronger personality, and the woman as the weaker partner who needs to be curbed and guided. Inevitably, this changes also the source of humor of the story: in translation it is the woman — not the awkward couple — who becomes the comic butt.

None of the translators took great notice of Parker's use of a gendered language æ a fact that impoverished the translated

stories and facilitated a misrepresentation of the original characters.[21]

This is particularly evident in "L'ultimo tè", whose translator tampered with the image of the protagonists mainly by disregarding the characteristic traits of their language. The man — invariably slangy, blunt and callously oblivious to the woman's feelings in the original narrative — became proper and nicer to the woman in the Italian version (his using a term of endearment in passage 10 betrays the translator's positively biased view of him):

9. "All right, all right, I'm here, aren't I?" he said. "Keep your hair on." (p. 185)
   "Sta bene, sta bene. Son qui, no?" disse lui. "Non ti arrabbiare." (p. 23)
10. "No need worrying over me," he said. "I'll be all right. Listen. You don't have to worry" (p. 185)
    "Non c'è proprio bisogno che tu ti tormenti per me" disse lui. "Non mi accadrà nulla di male. Dà retta, cara: non e proprio il caso di angustiarti." (p. 23)

The woman, on the other hand, lost some of her 'feminine' indirectness, and acquired a more straightforward language (note, in passage 12, the 'masculinizing' effect deriving from the translation of "Goodness" — the mild, 'proper' interjection she uses throughout the story— with the stronger "Diamine"):

11. "Of course, if you'd rather be some place, with I don't know what kinds of people," she said, "I'm sure I don't see how I can help that." (p. 184)
    "Si capisce, preferiresti essere in qualche altro posto, a sbevazzare con non so che sorta di gente" disse lei. "Be', mi dispiace ma non so proprio che farci."(p. 23)
12. "Goodness, it isn't any of my business what you do," she said. (p. 185)
    "Diamine, non spetta a me impicciarmi dei fatti tuoi" disse lei. (p. 23)

Before concluding I'd like to dwell on a last passage, taken from Vaquer's translation of "The Waltz/II valzer"):

13. And then he comes into my life [...] to sue me for the favor of one memorable mazurka [...] For God's sake, don't *kick,* you idiot; this is only second down. (pp. 47-48)
Ed ecco che arriva lui [...] e sollecita l'onore d'un memorabile boogie-woogie. [...] Smetti di scalciare, idiota: non balliamo il boogie-woogie. (p. 22. See ill. 2)

The change in this passage implies more than a translator's preference in dance styles — it points, once more, to the ultimate reason why Parker's stories were accorded attention in a magazine like *Grazia.* The substitution of the traditional mazurka with the American boogie-woogie was clearly intended to enhance the attractiveness of the story by making it appear more glamorous and modern — and modernity and glamour were synonymous with the United States for the public reading publications of this kind in postwar Italy. One has only to leaf through the issues of *Grazia* of these years to realize how strong the attraction of American civilization was, and how deep it reached. With only a few exceptions, all the covers were devoted to some Hollywood star — who was therefore presented as the model whose style Italian women were supposed to imitate. The same Hollywood stars appeared in many advertisements; and when it was not an actress, it was some American scientist that guaranteed the quality of the products. American people, their way of life and their fads were a regular feature in all issues: not only because there were many articles about them, but also because there seemed to be hardly any subject that could be discussed without referring to them. Even articles that treated general subjects (such as the family, for instance) were Americanized by illustrating them with pictures portraying some Hollywood actress or actor (who were metonymic for American people). The narrative section could not escape this American vogue, of course. Apparently, an American signature was seen as a guarantee that stories would attract readers, regardless of their quality. As a consequence, not only were stories by American writers to be found

regularly, but they were also chosen for the leading feature: the serialized novel that accompanied readers for months.[22]

It is in the context of this popular enthusiasm for America that the significance of the presence of Dorothy Parker in these magazines is to be assessed. What seems to be certain is that there was no special interest in her as an author — not even in the year when five of her stories were published in *Grazia* was she accorded the distinction of a few lines introducing her. For these magazines she was simply another American writer whose stories would contribute to the picture of the United States their readers were so eager to contemplate. And in this respect her (and the other American writers') stories were not more important than the American advertisements and American news items one found on the same pages.

In conclusion, the translations of Parker's stories that appeared in *Grazia* and *Annabella* did not contribute in any significant way to her Italian reputation as an author. Partly because they were offered by publications that inevitably reached a limited public by reason of their transient nature. But above all because they were presented to an audience whose main interest in them was not literary — an audience, in fact, for whom the literary quality of the original story and/or translation was far from being a fundamental issue. Nevertheless, these translations are important for what they reveal about their translators and their public. And although they did not help Dorothy Parker to emerge as a writer in Italy, they associated her name — once again, after her appearance in "il decennio delle traduzioni" — with an important moment of the Italian discovery of American culture.

1 "The Custard Heart", new for *Here Lies* (1939).

2 Parker's first collection of short stories was *Laments for the Living*, published in 1930. Her second collection, *After such Pleasures*, appeared in 1933. *Here Lies* was her third collection.

3 A prospectus whose promises were actually kept by the *The New Yorker* during the twenty-six years of Ross' editorship — differently from what often happens in the case of statements of intention publicizing new magazines.

4 Quoted in Theodore Paterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*,

Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1964, pp. 247-248. (Paterson's book is a very useful source of information not only on *The New Yorker,* but also on the other magazines we are going to dwell on. The other indispensable work on American magazines is Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines,* Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957, 5 vols.). Among the several works on *The New Yorker* now available, I have found particularly interesting George H. Douglas. *The Smart Magazines. 50 Years of Literary Revelry and High Jinks at Vanity Fair, the New Yorker, Life, Esquire, and the Smart Set,* (Hamden, Connecticut, Archon Books, 1991), Gigi Mahon, *The Last Days of The New Yorker.* (New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1988), Brendan Gill, *Here at the New Yorker,* (New York, Random House, 1975) and Thomas Kunkel. *Genius at Work. Harold Ross of the New Yorker,* (New York, Random House, 1995).

5 Cf. David Seideman, *The New Republic. A Voice of Modern Liberalism,* New York; Westport, Connecticut; London, Praeger, 1986, p. 68.

6 The fact of being a fairly expensive magazine contributed to the prestige of *Cosmopolitan:* the middle-class public who was willing to pay for it did not regard it as a throwaway publication, but approached it with the respect generally accorded to a book.

7 For a profile of *Grazia* and *Annabella* see *Bibliografia dei periodici femminili lombardi:* 1786-1945, Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 1993. On Italian women's magazines see also Milly Buonanno. *Naturale come sei. Indagine sulla stampa femminile in Italia,* with a Foreword by Giovanni Bechelloni. Rimini, Firenze, Guaraldi, 1975. There are only a few studies on Italian women's magazines, but a vast bibliography on their American counterparts. Three works I have found particularly interesting are: Nancy K. Humphreys, *American Women's Magazines. An Annotated Historical Guide* (New York and London, Garland Publishing, 1989); Helen Woodward, *The Lady Persuaders* (New York, Ivan Obolensky, 1960); and *Women's Magazines 1940-1960. Gender Roles and the Popular Press,* edited and with an Introduction by Nancy Walker (Boston, New York, Bedford, St. Martin's, 1998).

8 In the year when Parker's story appeared in the magazine an average issue had 12-14 pages in all.

9 The first Italian translation of Dorothy Parker — *Il mio mondo è qui,* translated by Eugenio Montale and published by Bompiani in 1941 — had not been particularly successful. Nevertheless, it made Parker's work part of "il decennio delle traduzioni" (as Cesare Pavese predicted these years would be called), a time when the translation of American writers deeply affected the Italian cultural scene. There is a vast bibliography on the reception of American literature and the translations of American authors between 1930 and 1950. See, among other studies, Dominique Fernandez, *II mito dell'America negli intellettuali italiani dal 1930 al 1950,* translated by Alfonso Zaccaria, Palermo, Salvatore Sascia Editore, 1969; Agostino Lombardo, "La letteratura americana in Italia" in *La ricerca del vero. Saggi sulla tradizione letteraria americana,* Roma, Edizioni di Storia e

Letteratura, 1961, pp. 13-61; Nicola Carducci, *Gli intellettuali e l'ideologia americana nell'Italia letteraria degli anni trenta,* Fasano, Lacaita Editore, 1973.

10 Hardly any of the authors who were most successful with these magazines were taken into consideration by critics discussing 'serious' contemporary American fiction in such literary magazines as *Fiera Letteraria*, *Letteratura* or *La Rassegna d'Italia.*

11 Eugenio Vaquer worked for a shipping company — a circumstance that gave him the opportunity of getting to know American language and culture at first hand. He was a translator (he translated, among other authors, D. H. Lawrence and O. Wilde) and a journalist, but it was as a novelist that he achieved critical esteem in the 1950s.

12 I found no record of these translators in the Mondadori Archives.

13 For the original short stories I will refer to *The Collected Dorothy Parker,* with an Introduction by Brendan Gill, New York, London, Toronto, Penguin Books, 1989.

14 On the celebrity of Hemingway in Italy see Dominique Fernandez, *II mito dell'America negli intellettuali italiani dal 1930 al 1950,* cit., pp. 91-102.

15 Vittorini, for instance, omitted several of the (few) reporting verbs in his translation of "The Gambler, the Nun, the Radio", published in his *Americana. Raccolta di Narratori* as "Monaca e messicani, la radio". On Vittorini's translations see Guido Bonsaver, "Vittorini's American Translations: Parallels, Borrowings, and Betrayals" in *Italian Studies. An Annual Review* 53 (1998), pp. 67-93; Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, "Italian Translations of Faulkner: the State of the Art" in *The Translations of Faulkner in Europe,* Venezia, Supernova, 1998, pp. 22-38; Mario Materassi, "From *Light in August* to *Luce d'Agosto.* Elio Vittorini's Literary Offences" in *RSA Journal. Rivista di Studi Nord-Americani* 6 (1995), pp. 5-23.

16 This translating of dialogues 'à la mode' is particularly evident in "Eri perfettamente a posto", in which all but four of the reporting verbs were suppressed.

17 The intervention of an editor is suggested also by a comparison of the two translations by Vaquer published in *Grazia* with "Eri perfettamente a posto", his translation of "You Were Perfectly Fine" included in the anthology of American short stories *Ritorno a Babilonia. L'America nei suoi migliori racconti* (Firenze, Vallecchi, 1946). Whereas in the two pieces published in *Grazia* the cultural and literary references are mostly omitted, the anthologized version retains them.

18 "They turned to go; to go, from their manner, where the tumbrel awaited them" (p. 34). The tumbrel was "an open cart in which condemned persons were conveyed to their execution, especially to the guillotine during the French Revolution." *(Oxford English Dictionary)*

19 Nine years before Montale had had no difficulties in using the word 'sessi' in his translation addressed to a different public. (And twenty-three years before the same title had not been considered unsuitable for the readers of *The New Republic).*

20 It is worth mentioning that, although "Se avessi un milione" had no

illustrations, it was accompanied by pictures of two models wearing the latest fashion in women's dresses — and, of course, tight bodices and long skirts were in vogue that year.

The translators who did not update the fashion of the original stories rendered with particular accuracy the descriptions of the clothes worn by the characters. Compare, for instance, the opening of "The Sexes" in *Grazia* with Montale's version:

The young man with the scenic cravat glanced nervously down the sofa at the girl in the fringed dress.

II giovanotto con la cravatta scenografica lanciò un'occhiata nervosa alla ragazza con il vestito a frange sull'altra estremità del divano. ("Una piccola donna qualsiasi")

II giovane dalla cravatta sgargiante dette un'occhiata attraverso il sofà, alla ragazza vestita di crespo. ("I sessi" in *II mio mondo è qui,* Milano, Bompiani, 1993, p.35)

21 On Parker's use of 'women's language' (a term linked to Robin Lakoff's groundbreaking work *Language and Woman's Place,* New York, Harper and Row, 1975) see Paula A. Treichler, "Verbal Subversions in Dorothy Parker: 'Trapped Like a Trap in a Trap'" in *Language and Style* 13:4 (Fall 1980), pp. 46-61. There is a vast bibliography on issues of language and gender. Some of the works I have found particularly interesting are: Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand. Women and Men in Conversation,* New York, Ballantine Books, 1990; Deborah Tannen, ed., *Gender and Discourse,* New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994; Deborah Cameron, ed., *The Feminist Critique of Language,* London and New York, Routledge, 1998; Mary M. Talbot, *Language and Gender. An Introduction,* Cambridge, Polity Press, 1998.

22 This distinction was accorded, among others, to Louis Bromfield's *Il Destino di Anna Bolton (What Became ofAnna Bolton)* in 1946; Taylor Caldwell's *Le rive dell'innocenza perduta (This Side of Innocence)* in 1949; Edna Ferber's *Blix* in 1950.