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Vasiliki Misiou

Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, vmisiou@enl.auth.gr

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From “A Room of Your Own” to “A Room of Her Own”: Women ReWriting Women and The Path to Feminist Practice

Vasiliki Misiou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Abstract: Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own (1929) was first translated in Greek by Mina Dalamanga (Odysseus Editions) in 1980. Almost forty years later, in 2019, Vasia Tzanakari was assigned the translation of Woolf’s seminal text by Metaichmio Publications. And in 2021, a new translation by Sparti Gerodimou saw the light of day, published by Erato Publications (2021). Three different women translators have thus rendered Woolf’s text in Greek with all three publications coming out at times marked by significant changes in Greek society. Exploring the context in which the agents were situated and drawing on feminist translation practices and approaches to translation, while informed by critical linguistics and sociolinguistics, this paper investigates the translational travel of Woolf’s text and the way(s) it intervened in representation(s) of feminism, gender, sexuality, and identity in the Greek context. Based on the agenda pursued by the agents themselves, as reflected in the paratextual materials studied here, this paper ultimately discusses the interaction and interweaving among gender, language, and translation, as well as the umbilical ties between feminism(s) and translation that are testimony to the acts of transformation performed in society.

Keywords: feminist translation, gender and/in translation, peritext, A Room of One’s Own, translating women

Introduction

Each of us is here now because in one way or another we share a commitment to language and to the power of language, and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us. In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation.
—Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider, 43

Audre Lorde’s words came to my mind with force when an attendee at the International Symposium on “Feminism in Translation: (In)Visible Women Going Transnational” raised the question of the possible renderings of the title of Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own and more specifically of the gender-unmarked term one’s. The question sparked an intriguing discussion on gender and/in translation, and on transnational and translational journeys of texts. Personally, it made me reflect on the power of language and translation and the capacity they offer for resistance, reclamation, and rehabilitation. And it almost instantly made me think of the translation(s) of Virginia Woolf’s text in Greek. Much to my surprise, there is no research published on this subject despite there being an abundance of studies on the modernist writer, essayist, feminist, and her work.

A Room of One’s Own (1929) was first translated in Greek in 1980. The translation of Mina Dalamanga (Odysseus Editions) came out at a time marked by significant changes in the social landscape of Greece, the creation of the so-called Autonomous Women’s Space, and amendments in the legal and institutional framework related to family law and gender equality. Quite significantly, at the time of the publication of Woolf’s text, the women’s movement in Greece entered its second-wave
heyday (1980–1986). Almost forty years later, Vasia Tzanakari was assigned the translation of A Room of One’s Own by Metaichmio Publications. Its new translation and publication in 2019 were of symbolic importance too, not only because of the commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of Woolf’s text, but mainly due to the radical revisions in the Greek legal and institutional framework implemented this time in relation to gender and sexual identity, the rise of voices engaging with questions of representations of gender and sexuality in language and (literary) translation, and the emergence of a new gender-aware and gender-informed audience. And then, only two years later, a new translation by Sparti Gerodimou saw the light of day, published by Erato Publications (2021). This latest translation came out in a period characterised by the #MeToo movement that had taken off in Greece, three years after the debate began in the USA and around the world and after the sexual assault accusation made by Olympic sailing champion Sofia Bekatorou who drew the movement in Greece, challenging deeply ingrained social and cultural norms and leading to several other cases being reported. Three different women translators have thus rendered Woolf’s text in Greek with all three publications being marked by remarkable incidents and events taking place in Greek society that have had a profound impact on its people.

Translations, much like texts, should be explored in the context in which they are produced and operate. The meanings of a text are embedded within its context and the reading of a text, its interpretations are related to the context surrounding it which provides readers with the means necessary to understand it. When it comes to new knowledge, therefore, translators are invited to create or allow for the creation of a context that will accompany it and its world. Writers and translators need to adapt to changing conditions given that books change when they are re-read. As Woolf herself argues, “[e]ven things in a bookcase change if they are alive; we find ourselves wanting to meet them again; we find them altered” (1927, 47). Sharing her belief that different generations of readers read and interpret books differently, Woolf underlines that readers should always be aware of themselves as part of “a long succession of readers” (1924, 19) who continue the conversation. Similarly, translators should always see themselves as part of a succession of mediators who are expected to facilitate the transnational and translational journey of a text. Let alone when a text’s “complexity and obliquity render it virtually inexhaustible by interpretation and limitlessly re-readable,” as Laura Marcus points out about Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own (2010, 152).

In this spirit, and focusing on the translational travel of Virginia Woolf’s text during the said forty-year period and on the way(s) it intervened in Greek representation(s) of feminism, gender, sexuality and identity, this paper explores the three translations of A Room of One’s Own published in the Greek context. Among the questions that will be addressed are the following: How did the translators deal with gender issues? Did they inform readers about their approach to translation? Did they defend themselves and their choices? Were they visible in the target text? If yes, how? Did they adopt feminist translation strategies? Did they challenge normative practices and gender constructs? Did they look at language “as an instrument of women’s oppression and subjugation which needed to be reformed” (Flotow 1997, 14)? That is, did they use language and translation as “tools for gender liberation” (Castro 2013, 7)? Can they be seen as feminist translators? Did their translation provide the space for resistance and a new way for (female) readers to construct their world? Did they allow for the text’s openness to interpretation and multiple (gendered) readings? What does the different rendering of the title in Greek signify?

Exploring the context in which the agents were situated and drawing on feminist translation practices and approaches to translation, while informed by critical linguistics and sociolinguistics, this paper analyses the Greek translations of Woolf’s text through the prism of the translation strategies adopted to render feminist thought and Woolf’s unconventional writing style in Greek. Based on the agenda pursued by the agents themselves, as reflected in the paratextual materials studied here, this paper ultimately discusses the interaction and interweaving among gender, language, and translation,
as well as the umbilical ties between feminism and translation that are testimony to the acts of transformation performed in society.

**A Room of One’s Own amidst social, cultural, and political change in Greece**

Mina Dalamanga’s translation of Woolf’s text came out in 1980 by Odysseus Editions, a Greek publishing house founded in 1973 that provided the Greek market with political works before literature titles were added to its catalogues from the 1980s onwards. The translation was published at a time when the Greek government had to deal with the challenge of addressing and responding to the 1975 Constitution which included an explicit gender equality clause (article 4, paragraph 2) and considered all legal differentiation by gender unconstitutional (article 116, paragraph 1), demanding its implementation within an eight-year time frame (Lyberaki 2010, 13, 15). This led in the early 1980s to a wave of legislative action and change in the fields of family law, employment, and social protection.

On March 7, 1980, a gathering took place in front of the Propylaia, University of Athens, to celebrate the international women’s day which was organised by the Action Committee on Family Law Change. The number of women’s groups participating in the gathering was unexpectedly high, their enthusiasm made the event a success, and this is how the Women’s Coordinating Action Committee made its first appearance in Greece. The so-called Autonomous Women’s Space was a fact, and it was largely created in response to the need for supporting women’s gender consciousness development. On October 6 that year the first feminist march also took place in Greece and a month later the “House for Women” was founded which aimed at providing women with support and tackling violence against them.

Yet, the time was not ripe for a feminist translation of a feminist text like the one written by Woolf. Something that would change over the years and especially from the early 2000s onwards. Soula Pavlidou, a pioneer Greek scholar and linguist and among the first Greeks to address the relationship between gender and language and discuss sexism in the Greek language, underscores that the number of linguistic studies on language and gender was still very small in Greece in the 1990s (2003, 193). Thus, translators would lack support in their attempt to overcome barriers while tackling linguistic challenges associated with social and cultural constraints that would impact the choices and decisions made. However, by the time the second translation came out, in 2019, Greek society had witnessed several changes and “even though restricted or superficial,” as Pavlidou (2003, 190) notes, the dominance of generic masculine forms was questioned and challenged and the need for the use of non-sexist language in various facets of society was stressed. Also, Tzanakari’s translation was published two years after a new law on gender and sexual identity was voted in the Greek Parliament (Law 4491/2017) facilitating the procedures for people to declare their gender in official identity papers, thus drawing attention to the LGBTQIA+ communities and addressing some of their demands. At the same time, “Sexism” and “Gendered Identities” were introduced in the syllabus in Greek schools in the form of “themed weeks” despite the obstacles and opposition organisers had to face (Melissinou 2017, 82–83). Within this context, in May 2018, a new Greek law made provisions for same-sex couples to foster children (Papanikolaou 2018, 425–28). These shifts have been important and have affected perceptions of sexuality, gender role norms and identity/ies. However, in September 2018, a well-known queer activist, drag performer and columnist, Zak Kostopoulos, was brutally beaten to death, in broad daylight in the heart of Athens. It was an event that led people to the streets to protest homophobia, rights violation, violence, and new forms of discrimination generated towards LGBTQIA+ communities and women. Hence, by the time Tzanakari’s translation was published, a “growing and very dynamic radical feminist and queer movement” had begun to “gain unprecedented momentum” (Papanikolaou and Kolocontroni 2018, 144) calling for collective action against discriminatory practices and attitudes, and systemic inequalities witnessed in society.
Greek society had been shaken to its core by these events when a new incident occurred resulting in a flurry of solidarity activities, this time in support of all women who remain silent. On November 13, 2020, Olympic Gold winner, sailing champion Sofia Bekatorou found the courage to reveal that she was sexually abused 23 years ago. Her revelations made no impact at first. There was no reaction on the part of any official body and/or institution. But when, a month later, Bekatorou gave an interview to the Greek edition of the women’s magazine *Marie Claire* repeating her allegations and naming a senior federation member as her abuser, an outpouring of support was prompted on social media under the hashtags #WithSofia and #MeToo. Encouraged by Bekatorou's courageous step, more women—sportswomen, actors, journalists—went public with experiences of sexual harassment and abuse and the conservative Greek society was forced to confront what it kept quiet about. Breaking her silence, Bekatorou led with her powerful testimony a #Greek MeToo movement and drove change.

Vasiliki Petousi, a sociologist, and head of gender research at the University of Crete, stresses that it was "an extremely important moment" and that "the broader political and social climate was finally right for such a breakthrough" (as cited in Kitsantonis 2021). It was indeed a turning point in the discussion around gender equality in Greece. Also, in 2020, the first Queer Liberation March took place in Athens, while the Greek translations of two books—Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (translated by Maria Fakinou, Antipodes Publications) and Bernardine Evaristo’s *Girl, Woman, Other* (translated by Rena Hathout, Gutenberg Publications)—made a sensation and marked the beginning of a new era in queer and LGBTQ literature in Greece with more books, both translated and written, entering the market. In 2021, the first Festival of Queer Approaches was held in the city of Xanthi and in the same year, Μπαταρία (bataría) [=battery], a small publishing group was founded in Athens with the aim of promoting works produced by queer writers and other marginalised groups. It was in this context that Sparti Gerodimou’s translation of Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* came out by Erato Publications in 2021.

**Translating Women and the “Non-Specialist” Readership: Potentials and Challenges of Feminist Paratextual Activism**

Before delving into a comparative reading of the Greek translations of *A Room of One’s Own*, the paper will explore the presence and/or lack of paratextual material, also related to translators’ performative action, seeking to address whether and how the three translators address readers. Do they do it directly? Do they make their presence felt in the text through the use of prefaces, footnotes and/or other notes? According to Luise von Flotow, prefacing and footnoting is one of the three interventionist translation practices adopted by feminist translators (1991, 77) which allows them to claim space, making themselves more visible, and placing emphasis on the process of translation and their very agency. The translation strategies adopted by the three Greek translators will therefore be explored through the lens of feminist translation practices as these were defined and described by Luise von Flotow (1991) and revisited by Françoise Massardier-Kenney (1997). In this vein, drawing on Gérard Genette's concept of *peritext* (1997, 5), textual materials situated within the three translations will be discussed with emphasis placed on those produced by the translators themselves. These “thresholds” between the text and the reader (Genette 1997, 2) are crucial in that “they reveal the messages translators wish to convey, acting as auxiliary channels of communication” (Misiou 2023, 4). They are “intrinsic parts” of the text (Gray, as cited in Brookey and Gray 2017, 102) shaping its reception (Batchelor 2018, 142) and providing the space for translators’ “intention(al)ty to be communicated” (Misiou 2023, 4). They also form readers’ expectations and add to their experience (Gray 2010, 23) while extending the text.

Vasia Tzanakari is the only one of the translators studied here who includes a translator’s introductory note that sits paratextually to the translation. In this peritext, she discusses her engagement with the playfulness of Woolf’s writing and with the feminist message of the text in a way
that the other two translators have not done. Tzanakari’s note consists of two sections in which she shares: (a) “a few words on the translation of Woolf’s text,” and (b) “a few words on women writing today” (2019, 11–19). Both sections are of importance for they reflect the translator’s telos, that is Tzanakari’s goal(s) and “personal motivation” (Chesterman 2009, 17; Baker and Chesterman 2008, 21) to translate the text, and consequently its effect on the decisions and choices made. It is worth mentioning that Tzanakari is a well-known Greek writer. Hence, her decision to write a separate part dedicated to “women writing today” mirrors the close relationship and personal and professional affinities between herself and Woolf which are not restricted to their both being women and/or to the author-translator relationship. They are intriguing to explore also because of Tzanakari’s status as a woman writer.

Unlike Tzanakari, Dalamanga does not insert a preface and/or other notes in the text. She just translates the footnotes inserted by Woolf herself. On the other hand, Gerodimou’s translation is accompanied by a plethora of detailed notes (approximately sixty pages) which, though situated at the end of the book, function similarly to what Flotow defines as footnoting and Massardier-Kenney as commentary (1997, 60). Although Gerodimou does not provide a preface as Tzanakari does, her endnotes show that she too sees translation as a political act that can visibilize women’s work translating their silence into protest, both covert and overt. While exploring these notes, one comes across lengthy information on women which draws readers’ attention to their pioneering work as feminists and/or as women bold enough to contest and deviate from norms and conventions. In chapter four, for instance, when Woolf refers to “fantastical Margaret of Newcastle” (1989, 67), Gerodimou inserts a twelve-line note to offer more information on Margaret Lucas Cavendish presenting her work as a writer, essayist, and playwright, and focusing on the fact that she was one of the first women to write using her own name at a time when women were expected to avoid public attention for fear of shaking up the rigid boundaries of their societies (2021, 257). Gerodimou even adds a quote by Charles Lamb, a male admirer of Cavendish’s literary labors, who has written on her: “as a dear favourite of mine, of the last century but one—the thrice noble, chaste, and virtuous,—but again somewhat fantastical, and original-brained, generous Margaret Newcastle” (257). Gerodimou inserts twenty-six endnotes about women mentioned by Woolf in her text and she carefully cites as much information as possible about those women who may be less known to the target readership, highlighting in all cases the existence of a strong feminist background and progressive (sometimes also intersectional) views, as well as their action in the public realm. It is mostly about women who were the first to enter male dominated fields where they did not traditionally have a place (i.e., Ellen Harrison, Aphra Behn, Ann Finch, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Carter, Emily Davies, Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell, Anna Jemina Clough, Marcelle Germaine Tailleferre) and about women who fought for women’s rights actively participating in the fight for gender equality and justice. Gerodimou looks for ways to shed light on women’s presence and the notes she provides serve as a site for their voices to be heard. Also, by contextualizing women’s contributions, she creates a sense of community shared by women while reinforcing the reconstruction of feminine genealogy built by Woolf (1989, 72).

Woolf herself inserts several footnotes to “show how [she] came to hold whatever opinion [she] does hold” (1989, 8). She wishes to point to her authority, to show that women too can function as authorities. In this context, Gerodimou also adds illuminating detailed notes to expand on Woolf’s ideas and references to other women and to their position and role in society. When Woolf says: “[t]he dinner was not good,’ or to say (we were now, Mary Seton and I, in her sitting-room)” (1989, 23), Gerodimou inserts an endnote to remind readers of the fact that Woolf asks the audience to call her Mary Seton and to emphasize that “the use of names by the writer throughout the text is employed without a pattern aiming at pointing to the universality of the issue, namely that a woman’s name is of no importance since this issue concerns them all” (2021, 241). The translator gently invites readers to identify with Woolf and all other women by presenting women’s issues as universal, human rights issues, drawing on Woolf’s actual words. And then, when Woolf refers to Professor Trevelyan’s conclusion that “neither
Shakespeare’s women nor those of authentic seventeenth-century memoirs, like the Verneys and the Hutchinsons, seem wanting in personality and character (1989, 48), Gerodimou grasps the opportunity to argue that “many of Shakespeare’s female protagonists have a strong personality and character and can play the leading role in the plot. The same is true in the case of so many other heroines in the works of so many other writers” (2021, 247). The translator creates thus the space for another reference to women’s potential and their representation in literature which was in sharp contrast to predominant beliefs in the then contemporary societies that saw them as weak, vulnerable beings, unable to act successfully in the public sphere.

Woolf refers also to *Diana of the Crossways* while discussing a case “where two women are represented as friends” and reflecting upon the fact that “all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen’s day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex” (1989, 89). Upon informing readers in a note that this novel was written by George Meredith in 1885, Gerodimou underscores that it is considered an example of feminist writing and that Meredith is known as an advocate for the rights of women (2021, 263). She points out that his book centers on the injustice suffered by women because of the constraints and limitations imposed on them by society and that Meredith deals with the woman question in a favourable manner. Not only does Gerodimou refer again to women’s deprived status and the fights they have had to fight, but she also presents some enlightening male voices, thinkers, and activists, who openly acted in their support. In a way, Gerodimou’s feminist approach reminds us of Woolf’s determined decision to insert her own annotations into the text while she was copyediting drafts of Leonard Woolf’s and Samuel Solomonovitc Koteliansky’s translation of *The Autobiography of Countess Sophie Tolstoi*, therefore not allowing for “damning accounts of Sophie’s behaviour and mental state” to be included (Davison 2014, 296). Both Woolf and Gerodimou are assertive in their choice of visibilizing women and acting in their defence making language speak for them. They both view translation as a feminist praxis and as a political act; they see it and use it as a means that can help them address, among others, the discrimination and inequality confronted by women while attempting to do justice to women’s intellectual potential and contributions.

**From “Your” to “Her” to “Your” Once Again: The Troubles and Trials of a Translator**

As is well known, Woolf’s text is the outcome of two lectures that she delivered on “women and fiction” in October 1928 at the Arts Society at Newnham, and the Odtara at Girton, two women’s colleges respectively, addressing female audiences. First published as a short essay in *Forum* (1929), it was thereafter revised and published as a book with six chapters. In *A Room of One’s Own* Woolf shares her frustration with women’s (and her) lack of formal education and her critique of the resulting need for dependence on men. Women’s intellect and independence lie at the core of this text. Unsurprisingly, it is considered a canonical text in feminist studies which has never ceased to be studied. As Laura Marcus rightfully comments, “[t]he relationship between Virginial Woolf and feminism, feminism and Virginia Woolf is . . . a symbiotic one” (2010, 142).

Nevertheless, Woolf’s feminism “includes not just her explicit feminist politics but her concern and fascination with gender identities and with women’s lives, histories and fictions” (2010, 142). Taking this into consideration, the objections raised by some of the attendees at the International Symposium held in Thessaloniki over the rendering of the text’s title in Greek may be justified. They opposed Tzanakari’s decision to translate *one’s* into *her* arguing that it was a restrictive choice that failed to respond to Woolf’s concern of “how identities and states of affairs are to be conceptualised,” as Marcus herself has also stressed (2010, 151). Given there is no exact equivalent word for *one’s* in Greek, most attendees shared their belief in the need for translators to employ a gender inclusive language.
that would enable more, if not all, identities to be represented—one that would respect Woolf’s choice of gender-unmarked terms like the pronoun one.

The British writer and essayist talks about women and fiction—no objection to this. But, as Marcus notes, A Room of One’s Own “is also caught up with the sexual politics of the 1920s, and with the question of love and friendship between women” (2010, 150). Queerness and feminism intertwine, and it is imperative that readers get the opportunity to explore the interplay between gender identity and sexual orientation and its importance that Woolf’s text brings to light. This needs to be considered by all translators in relation not just to the rendering of the title but to the translation of the entire text itself. It is known that Woolf had a love affair with her friend Vita Sackville-West, who was a great source of inspiration for the gender-fluid protagonist of Orlando: A Biography. More importantly, in A Room of One’s Own, she writes about same-sex desire and love, while discussing the work of a fictional woman writer, Mary Carmichael, claiming that “sometimes women do like women”:

Are there no men present? Do you promise me that behind that red curtain over there the figure of Sir Chartres Biron is not concealed? We are all women, you assure me? Then I may tell you that the very next words I read were these—‘Chloe liked Olivia . . . ’ Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women. ‘Chloe liked Olivia,’ I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature. (1989, 88–89)

Lesbianism is invoked in Woolf’s text and queer elements are present. Howbeit, as Woolf herself had stressed in her diary before A Room of One’s Own came out, she thought she would be “attacked for a feminist & hinted at for a sapphist” upon its publication, being also “afraid it will not be taken seriously” (as cited in Oxindine 1997, 218). Despite the subtlety of humour and the playful tone which permeates her reference to Sir Chartres Biron, the magistrate of Radclyffe Hall’s obscenity trial, her need to be assured that he is not in the audience shows that she aimed at discussing lesbianism discreetly for she was aware of the charges brought against Hall’s lesbian-themed novel The Well of Loneliness (1928) as well as of the uproar created, and did not wish to “appea[r] too disdainful of patriarchy” (Oxindine 1997, 218).

Woolf’s delicate, indirect, and witty approach to addressing lesbianism and representing lesbian attraction in her text could explain why Mina Dalamanga, amidst so many shifts in Greek society and with the second-wave feminism at its height at her time, decided to render the term one’s in the title as your [σου (su)] and not as her. The same could be said also about Sparti Gerodimou’s translation, the most recent one in Greek, the title of which also reads as Ένα δικό σου δωμάτιο [A Room of Your Own] (my emphasis). Hence, in this case it seems that the text’s key features, and the intention of the writer have decidedly affected the final decision(s) made. For, despite the rise of feminist voices and the #MeToo movement in Greek society, both translators have opted for a gender inclusive term and not for the gender-marked her, choosing not to feminize the title of the text. They do not highlight the female, feminine, and/or feminist implicitly present in the title which comes from Woolf’s famous argument that women need a private space and financial independence to write well. They do not “womanhandle” (Godard 1989, 50) the title; instead, they genderhandle it going towards the universal to include everyone with the use of the second-person singular possessive pronoun.

Tzanakari, on the other hand, differentiates herself. She begins the first section of her preface by underlining the “challenges” and mostly the “responsibility” that the translation of Woolf’s text brings which she has “belittled” considering it “her own” (2019, 11). As she informs her readers, the first difficult decision she has had to make was rendering the title in Greek. She had been aware of the previous most widely read translation and the choice made by Mina Dalamanga. Yet, as already noted, Tzanakari did not maintain the existing Greek title, and rendered it instead as Ένα δικό της δωμάτιο [A Room of Her Own]. As she notes:
Woolf addresses young female students; and the text is so vivid and language so passionate that it gives the impression that she addresses each and every one of the students separately and every woman who will read it too. Thus, using the second-person singular possessive pronoun [your] seems to be and it is appropriate, especially if we consider the [generic and] impersonal use of the second-person singular pronoun in Greek and the gender neutrality attributed to the phrase by the use of the pronoun “one” in the title. However, Woolf offers a feminist manifesto on writing and her agony concerns women, and this is related to the famous quote and central axis of the talk: “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” (2019, 12; my emphasis)

Following Tzanakari, the decision to change the title in Greek and use the feminine possessive determiner her [της (tis)] is based on her firm belief that this text is “a feminist manifesto” (12) addressed to female students and written about and for women only. The title offered by Tzanakari reveals her attempt to go towards the particular, that is the experiences lived by women, and only women. It could be seen as a feminist critical intervention.

However, Tzanakari argues that she has deliberately decided not to employ feminist translation practices (2019, 13), which is an oxymoron by itself considering the strategies she applies in practice. Besides the preface, the footnotes that she inserts, though few in number, reflect her feminist approach to Woolf’s text and its translation. When, for instance, Woolf refers to Oscar Browning and his belief that “the best woman was intellectually the inferior of the worst man” (1989, 59–60), Tzanakari writes in a footnote that “Woolf expects nothing better from men who represent patriarchal institutions (law, religion, medicine), but she would expect something better from Browning who was a man of education” (2019, 123). She brings attention to patriarchal impositions, discrimination, and stereotypes through such footnotes which can also be seen as a form of feminist collaboration between Woolf and Tzanakari “where author and translator are seen as working together, both in the cooperative and the subversive sense,” that is both “articulating women’s [needs] and subverting hegemonic forms of expression” (Chamberlain 1988, 470–71). However, as Tzanakari maintains, she has strived not only “to preserve all the elements of significance in the source text, having the ethical obligation to convey the same message and style as faithfully as possible,” but also “creat[e] a text that runs smoothly in the target language with the ultimate aim to enrich the canon of translated literature” (2019, 14). But a text and its message(s) are always open to multiple readings and interpretations, which explains why for feminist translation “fidelity is to be directed toward neither the author nor the reader, but toward the writing project—a project in which both writer and translator participate” (Simon 1996, 2). This may explain the approach Tzanakari actually adopts in practice which seems in conflict with her statement. Her personal motivation and her views of the translator and of translation brought her close to making the choices she deemed appropriate, acceptable and adequate while also handling the third, as she notes, challenge—that is, the use of stream of consciousness techniques by Woolf which create “variation in style and tone (but also complex meanings),” inviting the translator to face, on the one hand, the use of “‘hard’ syntax” and on the other, “the surprise of encountering thoughts disguised in subtle irony” (2019, 14). Yet, as Tzanakari stresses, these “shifts” are the ones that make the text so “stimulating” (14) along with its content and its still-timely themes.

ReWriting a Feminist Manifesto

In this context, Tzanakari has felt the urge to expand the discussion on the need for a place for women writers in a largely male-dominated literary world. While there are far more women writers nowadays who can live by their pens, many of the issues raised by Woolf remain relevant. This is what Tzanakari contends in the second section of the introductory note where she focuses on contemporary women writers and the challenges they still have to face. As she argues, she would like to suggest that “this text
is outdated, it concerns an era in which women fought for basic civil rights and it has nothing to do with the present” (2019, 15–16). She would also like to “feel empathy or sadness for the difficulties encountered by those women who were called to writing and responded to their calling. Or perhaps be complacent because all these things belong to the past” (16). As she reveals, “these feelings did emerge along with the immense gratitude [she] felt for Virginia Woolf, the text itself, and all those women mentioned in its pages who paved the way for future generations through their fights” (16). Tzanakari, however, does not wish to accentuate this aspect of her interaction and encounter with the text and with other women writers. For, she has “also felt sorrow” (16). She has been shocked at the realisation that what Woolf believed women lacked, namely money and space, are still very much of concern to women writers today, who keep being financially discriminated against men and experiencing gender inequality (16). Even though women writers are paid for their writing, Tzanakari adds, it is not enough for them to make ends meet (17). She agrees with Woolf in that material things contribute to women having the right conditions for writing. Because the lack of space of their own, both physical and metaphorical (having a place in the literary realm), results in their work being hindered and gives the impression that they engage in something that is beyond their means. Unsurprisingly, Tzanakari underscores, “many women writers believe that their sex is to blame for their mistreatment by male writers and/or critics” (18). Women writers today “may not be ridiculed,” she notes, but “they feel that they have to prove every day their worth, that they can be as good writers as their male peers” (18).

What Woolf wants and what is a major issue even today, Tzanakari emphasizes, is “the transmutation of women’s experience in writing. . . . Women writers today can draw on the literary past of their sex, on women’s remarkable work and rich activity that involves all genres and can be a beacon for contemporary women writers (19). Tzanakari clearly attempts to construct a female lineage, a feminist genealogy in the words of Rosi Braidotti (1994, 233), by pointing to other women writers who act a source of inspiration and support. Yet, she warns that “these are not enough;” and women writers should “keep claiming more space and time” because, despite the obstacles faced, “their passion for creativity will always make its way to the surface” (2019, 19). Thus, Tzanakari seizes the chance to discuss the current situation of women writers and protest stereotypical ideas about women (writers) while calling for action. This section of her note reminds us of Massardier-Kenney who cites de Lothinière-Harwood’s claim that feminist, in the context of translation, means taking “women’s experience as a starting point” (1991, 73). Tzanakari uses translation as a tool for the transmission of feminist ideas. In a way, she offers her own feminist manifesto for writing and women, shifting, just like Woolf did, the emphasis of feminism to women’s everyday life too.

Woolf’s Journeys of Translation and Transformation into Greek

A comparative reading of the translations enables us to investigate the ways in which the three translators respond to a canonical text by a major feminist writer and how they tackle gender/feminist issues while addressing the target readership—a wide, non-specialist, reading audience, as Tzanakari herself stresses (2019, 13), but now much more gender-informed. The analysis will shed light on choices and/or potential interventions made, “emphasizing the importance of gender categories” and revealing “the mechanisms through which the ‘feminine’ is excluded or is valued” (Massardier-Kenney 1997, 66). Special emphasis is placed on the assigning of gender in the personal pronouns one and you, that is the subjects, both addressing and addressed, portrayed in the text along with the narrator (I). It will be shown whether the gender identity assigned to these subjects by the Greek translators is in accordance with the author’s intention(ality) and in collaboration with her project, and whether and how the translations allow for the relevance of Woolf’s feminist writing to today’s societies to be revealed.

Before discussing certain examples, it is important to point out that Greek is a grammatical gender language which includes three distinctions: masculine–feminine–neuter (Triantafyllidis [1941]
It is inflected in several linguistic items, such as nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and participles (Pavlidou 2003), in all cases (nominative, accusative, and vocative), and in both singular and plural number. Translators’ choices thus do matter because linguistic items marked by grammatical gender “categorize referents as typical/most representative members of the category of male or female sex, organize participants’ knowledge about the dominant gender order and are inference rich” (Alvanoudi 2014, 89–90). These inferences, as Angeliki Alvanoudi notes, do not include just “speakers’ covert assumptions about referent’s gender” but also “speakers’ knowledge about the stereotypic association of man with the norm, and gender hierarchy” (2014, 90). That is, language is not “a transparent medium for communication about an objective world, nor is it a reflection of a stable social structure, but it promulgates a set of versions of reality and thereby works as a constantly operative part of social processes” (Fowler, as cited in Malmkjaer 1995, 118).

Example 1: “one”—Woolf’s use of impersonal pronouns

Woolf deliberately avoids the use of first-person pronouns; she opts for other means to assert her authority as a narrator, as a writer, as a critic, as a woman publicly expressing her views and sharing her experiences. She rejects the use of “I,” refusing to conform to grammatical expectations inextricably linked to norms imposed by patriarchy thus subverting notions of authority and value. To Woolf, “‘I’ is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being” (1989, 8). Thus, she uses one systematically throughout the text which forms one of its main stylistic features. In chapter two, for instance, when she refers to a visit to the British Museum and to the many questions that inundated her mind, she employs the use of the gender-neutral pronoun one instead of the first-person singular pronoun I: But one needed answers, not questions (30).

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<td>Αλλά εκείνο που χρειαζόταν κανείς ήταν οι απαντήσεις κι όχι τα ερωτήματα (40)</td>
<td>Αλλά χρειαζόμουν απαντήσεις, όχι ερωτήσεις (68)</td>
<td>Όμως, χρειαζόμουν απαντήσεις, όχι ερωτήσεις (56)</td>
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<td>But what someone [masc. indef. pron.] needed was answers, and not questions.</td>
<td>But I needed answers, not questions.</td>
<td>Yet I needed answers, not questions.</td>
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However, in Tzanakari’s and Gerodimou’s translations, it is Woolf who needed answers and not people in general; that is, they both render one with I, using first-person singular verbs and pronouns (χρειαζόμουν [χρειαζόμουν “I needed”). As Tzanakari claims, rendering in Greek the word one, which is repeated so many times throughout the text, has been the second challenge she has had to face. Initially, her “thought was to translate it as κανείς [κανίς, masculine indefinite pronoun]” but this choice would affect the “naturalness” of the target text in terms of “rhythm, syntax, and flow” (2019, 13). Tzanakari does not consider this choice appropriate also because of its grammatical gender which “contradicts Woolf’s choice of a gender-neutral term” and at the same time “attributes a gendered perspective to the text, which differs from the one that Woolf would want it to have” (13). The feminine indefinite pronoun καμία [καμία] would also be “an interesting choice in the context of feminist translation practice,” as Tzanakari underlines, but the target text would “give the impression of being sophisticated despite being
addressed to a wider reading audience which is not expected to be familiar with feminist translation practices” (13). Tzanakari thus adopts various strategies and does not opt for a single term only. Scarce ly does she use the pronoun κανείς; instead, she uses second-person singular and first-person plural verb forms which both “give a sense of naturalness” (13) to the text and do not require the use of a subject. Moreover, in cases where it is clear that one refers to Woolf herself, Tzanakari mentions that she “took the courage to render it by using the first-person singular pronoun” (13).

Dalamanga, on the other hand, tries to stay close to Woolf’s use of the third-person singular pronoun and uses the indefinite pronoun κανείς (kanís—less colloquial form of kanénas) which is used in affirmative, interrogative, and negative sentences. In this example, it has a positive meaning, and it means someone/one. Dalamanga chooses the masculine nominative form of the pronoun probably complying with the practice of using the masculine grammatical gender for generic reference, that is to refer “to female plus male referents or to referents whose sex is unknown” (Alvanoudi 2014, 27). Nevertheless, as Alvanoudi stresses, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic studies show that grammatical gender is closely associated with the interpretation of referent’s sex and the generic use of the masculine gender is most often interpreted as referring to male referents only (6). In this light, by applying a practice seen as exclusionary by feminist linguists, Dalamanga’s use of κανείς (un)intentionally reflects an androcentric perspective related to the “perception of people as male (or male as people)” (Engelberg 2002, 114), making women less visible and leaving out their personal experience. Equally importantly, such a choice goes against Woolf’s intention and her text which brings a stinging indictment to the impact of patriarchy on women’s literary development.

Example 2: “I”—Woolf and the use of definite personal pronouns

Yet, it cannot be argued that the use of the first-person singular pronoun “I” by both Tzanakari and Gerodimou is more appropriate, for, many pages later, Woolf returns to the problematic use of “I” by male authors by referring to a new novel by Mr. A: “But after reading a chapter or two a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter ‘I’” (1989, 107). A letter that made one be tired: “Back one was always hailed to the letter ‘I.’ One began to be tired of ‘I’” (108).

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<td>Ξαναγύριζε κανείς πάντα στο γράμμα «Ι» κι αυτό το «Ι» άρχισε να τον κουράζει. (152)</td>
<td>Επέστρεψες συνέχεια στο γράμμα Ι. Κουράζοσουν με το γράμμα Ι. (212)</td>
<td>Πάντα έπεφτα στο γράμμα «Ε». Άρχισα να κουράζομαι από το «Ε». (204)</td>
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<td>Someone [masc. indef. pron.] always returned to the letter “I” and this “I” started to make him be tired.</td>
<td>You (sing.) constantly returned to the letter I. You (sing.) were tired with the letter I.</td>
<td>I always encountered the letter “E.” I started to be tired with the letter “E.”</td>
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As shown, Dalamanga remains consistent and translates one into the masculine indefinite pronoun κανείς; a choice that inevitably leads to the use of the masculine third-person singular objective pronoun him [τον (ton)] the second time one is used in the sentence, strengthening once again verbal androcentrism. Tzanakari, on the other hand, employs second-person singular verbs that do not require an overt subject in Greek, being thus closer to Woolf and her text. As for Gerodimou, she resorts to the use of the first-person pronoun I again. But the letter “I” also made Woolf be bored: “But why was I bored? Partly because of the dominance of the letter ‘I’ and the aridity, which like the giant beech tree, it casts within its shade” (1989, 108). Thus, Woolf makes clear that she does not wish to employ the arid
“I” which indicates male writers’ need to cast their shadow, smother women, and “protest against the equality of the other sex by asserting [their] own superiority” as Mr. A did (109). Woolf’s well-thought-out use of one within the text to avoid the use of “I”, also associated with its use in the title, asks translators to use gender inclusive linguistic alternatives and avoid generic masculine forms. Thus, Tzanakari’s use of second-person verb forms with which anyone can identify could be a possible choice to render the pronoun one which functions in an impersonal, generic way. As for the use of the letter “I”, both Dalamanga and Tzanakari maintain it in the Greek text. Whereas Dalamanga does not offer any explanation as to its meaning with the risk of “I” being read as the Greek vowel yota [uppercase: Ι, lowercase: ι] and not the English first-person singular pronoun, Tzanakari inserts a footnote in which she explains that “[t]he letter I, which means ‘Εγώ’ (εγώ) in Greek, symbolizes the male author’s I” (2019, 211) thus making explicit Woolf’s intent. Gerodimou, on the other hand, uses the Greek letter “Ε” and in an endnote she informs readers that “Ε” stands for ‘Εγώ [(εγώ)= I in English] (2021, 266).

Example 3: “You” and the gender of its forms

Throughout the text Woolf addresses female students at Cambridge University, using the pronoun you. Rendering you in Greek is complex as it can be translated into both second-person singular and plural pronouns (known as the T/V distinction) —εσύ (esí) and εσείς (esís)— which “index social proximity and distance between speaker and addressee respectively” (Alvanoudi 2014, 79). That is, the T form (εσύ in Greek) expresses familiarity, proximity and/or lower status and the V form (εσείς) formality, distance and/or higher status. Both forms are genderless and the verbs that follow are conjugated in the second-person singular and plural form accordingly. Also, Greek is a null-subject language with rich inflection and the subject need not be expressed overtly. If the second-person singular pronoun is replaced with the second-person plural pronoun (εσύ with εσείς), “the information on social distance between speaker and addressee . . . changes. Yet, the referent remains the same” (1989, 79). This is the case with the three Greek translations of Woolf’s address to the audience: “But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction” (7).

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<td>Μα, μπορείτε να πείτε, εμείς σου ζητήσαμε να μιλήσεις για τις γυναίκες και την πεζογραφία – (7)</td>
<td>Μα εμείς, μπορεί να πείτε, σας ζητήσαμε να μιλήσετε για τις γυναίκες και την πεζογραφία – (23)</td>
<td>Μα, θα μου πείτε, σου ζητήσαμε να μιλήσεις για τις γυναίκες και το μυθιστόρημα – (11)</td>
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<td>But, you (plur.) may say, we asked you (sing.) to speak about women and prose writing.</td>
<td>But we, you (plur.) may say, we asked you (plur.) to speak about women and prose writing.</td>
<td>But you (plur.) may say to me, we asked you (sing.) to speak about women and the novel.</td>
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The pronoun you is employed twice in this sentence. The first time it is used it refers to Woolf’s exclusively female audience, whereas the second time to Woolf herself, on behalf of the audience. Rendering the first you in Greek creates no problem. But, when it comes to the second you (the address of the audience to Woolf), as shown above, Dalamanga and Gerodimou render it with the second-person singular pronoun [ου (su) you], whereas Tzanakari with the second-person plural pronoun [ους (sus) you]. Tzanakari’s rendering encodes social distance between the speaker and the addressees. It is employed as a politeness strategy together with indirectness. This choice has been prioritised perhaps due to the social relationship Woolf held with the female students in the audience and the communicative purpose Tzanakari possibly thought Woolf had. It may have been used also as an aspect
of context to create some sort of hierarchy between Woolf and the students. Nonetheless, the use of the second-person singular pronoun would mean Woolf wanted them to be able to relate to her easier, cover the social distance, create a sense of familiarity, and build a more intimate relationship with her. It would enable them to feel members of a communicative group, a community formed by Woolf herself and the women present in the audience.

Additionally, sometimes the reflexive pronoun *yourselves* is used in the text to refer to the subject of the sentence it describes. In the first chapter, for instance, while addressing the audience, Woolf says: “I will not trouble you with that thought now, though if you look carefully, you may find it for yourselves in the course of what I am going to say” (1989, 9). Although the translation of the pronoun *you* has not challenged the three Greek translators, the verb phrase *find it for yourselves* and particularly that of the reflexive pronoun *yourselves* has led to different translation approaches, as far as gender is concerned.

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<td>αν κοιτάξετε προσεχτικά μπορείτε να την ανακάλυψετε και μόνοι σας καθώς θα μιλάω. (10-11)</td>
<td>με λίγη προσοχή μπορεί να την ανακάλυψετε μόνες σας, καθώς θα λέω όσα πρόκειται να πω. (28)</td>
<td>αν προσέξετε, μπορεί να τη βρείτε μόνες σας, κατά την πορεία αυτού που έχω να σας πω. (16)</td>
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<td>if you look carefully you may discover it alone [nom. masc. plur.] while I will be speaking.</td>
<td>with a little attention you may discover it alone [nom. fem. plur.] in the course of what I am going to say.</td>
<td>if you look carefully, you may discover it alone [nom. masc. plur.] in the course of what I am going to say to you.</td>
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Tzanakari renders it by choosing the feminine plural adjective *μόνες* (mόnes) [alone], clearly alluding to the female students comprising Woolf’s audience. On the other hand, both Dalamanga and Gerodimou use the masculine plural adjective *μόνοι* (mόnoi) [alone], obviously for generic reference. Yet in this way, they do not resist and/or reject hegemonic forms of expression; rather they reproduce the patriarchally enforced rule that masculinity as category stands for universality. When it comes thus to linguistic items in which the referent’s sex is grammaticised, such as adjectives and participles, translators in Greek (and other grammatical gender languages) need also be cautious. These items, like the adjective “alone” in the example cited and analysed above, are gender member categories and their use does not allow for the established androcentric language to be contested.

**Example 4: English gender-neutral terms**

In chapter three, when Woolf emphasizes that history mentions no Elizabethan woman and that this woman “never writes her own life” either, she asks: “why does not some brilliant student at Newnham or Girton supply” (1989, 51) this information instead? This sentence did pose a challenge to the translators studied here as the gender-neutral terms “some,” “brilliant,” and “student” become gender-specific in Greek. Considering that Woolf addresses female audiences at Newnham and Girton, one would expect that when the above sentence is translated in a grammatical gender language, such terms take the feminine gender. For, Woolf’s linguistic style allows for her feminist arguments to be expressed, the interpretation of which “requires close, careful scrutiny of how her phraseology and her pairing and multiplying of subjects, verbs, tense, and moods challenge reality, subjectivity, and hegemony” (Vandivere 1996, 231).
Indeed, both Tzanakari and Gerodimou make explicit the presence of a female subject and use the equivalent female noun σπουδάστρια (spudástria) [student] in Greek. By extension, they also use the feminine indefinite pronoun κάποια (kápia) as well as the feminine adjective εξαίρετη (exéreiti) [exceptional] and λαμπρή (lamprí) [brilliant] respectively to modify the noun σπουδάστρια. To feminize this term and reinscribe the feminine subject in the target text does justice to Woolf’s intended message. Dalamanga, on the other hand, renders it with the masculine noun σπουδαστής (spudastís) [student] modified by the masculine indefinite pronoun κανένας (kanénas) and the masculine adjective λαμπρός (lamprós) [brilliant]. She also changes the punctuation mark used in the source text and, by extension, the effect achieved. Instead of using dashes, as Woolf and the other two Greek translators have done, she uses parentheses. However, parentheses are inserted to gently add information to the point made and they are less dramatic than dashes. Dashes indicate a strong interruption from the rest of the sentence and are used to emphasize additional information and/or to indicate a change in tone. In a way, Dalamanga attributes lesser importance to Woolf’s claim that women can and should write the history of women.

Example 5: “Women and fiction”—challenging dominant stereotypes

As discussed, Woolf opens her talk by directly addressing the audience’s and their expectations: “But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction—what has that got to do with a room of one’s own?” (1989, 7). Fiction is a word repeatedly employed by Woolf in the text aiming to vigorously refute the popular belief of her time that women could only write novels. Women were considered to be “by nature attracted to novels as they were more prone to emotion than men”—the experiences shared by “the heroines of the novels, with which readers could identify, the feelings and emotions evoked, the human relationships unravelled” (Misiou 2023, 46), everything contributed to women developing a close relationship with this literary genre which many women writers had come to dominate since the early 1720s (Williams 2010, 113).

But Woolf believes that women are not capable only of writing novels, and in chapter four she shares her views on the reasons that led to the dominance of this form by her peers. By invoking the words of Florence Nightingale and referring to Jane Austen, Woolf stresses that due to living conditions and the prejudice they had to fight against, often concealing their engagement with writing, women found it “easier to write prose and fiction . . . than to write poetry or a play” (1989, 73). Writing without privacy and being “subject to all kinds of casual interruptions” (73), women could write but novels. Novels that were “young enough to be soft in [their] hands” (84) and thus shaped by them. Largely, also, because of their “literary training” that was limited to “the observation of character, [to] the analysis of emotion” and “the influences of the common sitting room” (73). But Woolf contends that women are capable of engaging with any writing project in any genre they want. Within this context, it becomes
clear that the word fiction should not be translated into novel. Considering the three Greek translations of Woolf’s opening sentence, both Dalamanga and Tzanakari opt for the word πεζογραφία (pezografía) [prose writing], which is limiting but not as much as the word μυθιστόρημα (myhistória) [novel] used by Gerodimou which perpetuates the very same belief that Woolf wishes to dismantle. Woolf points to the need to break down sexist hierarchies and translators are called to contribute to the fight for a fairer, more inclusive world.

Conclusion

The translation of A Room of One’s Own in Greek symbolizes not only the importance of feminist theory but also the rising emphasis placed on gendered meanings and the need to explore them and rewrite them. Trying perhaps to address a wide, universal audience, Dalamanga adopts patriarchal practices (using generic masculine forms) thus reproducing verbal androcentrism and silencing both the genderless and female voices of the source text. However, Woolf addresses female audiences and speaks of a mainly feminine experience. To eliminate the feminine means women’s experiences are not brought into consideration and feminist ideas are not enabled to spread and flourish. The use of normative grammar is not neutral but bolsters ideological foundations on which the alleged universality and neutrality of the masculine grammatical gender is built. Certainly, the translation of gender unmarked terms in Greek necessitates a decision that is by default interventionist in nature. Each intervention differs of course and so do the effects achieved. Translators (re)create meaning while striving not to assign sex to genderless forms. Therefore, the way translators and readers read and (re)tell stories matters in that if affects meaning making and reception (Ergun 2023, xviii). Both translators and readers are part of an ocean of interpretation(s), exposed to the flow of its (un)predictable currents that they can redirect and shape.

Contrary to Dalamanga, Tzanakari re-sexualizes the translation in the target language to the gender of the person(s) referred to. And therefore, she uses feminine nouns, adjectives, and participles, conveying the message intended by Woolf herself. When this is not feasible, she uses second-person singular and plural verb forms, or she resorts to impersonal forms in her effort to voice what has been hushed up in the previous translation. Having made clear her interrogation of grammatical gender in the introductory note with which she prefaces her translation, she has managed to spotlight the presence of the feminine and extend the narrative of Woolf’s text. But she is not consistent throughout the text, and she sometimes employs masculine grammatical forms for generic reference too. Perhaps her having in mind a non-specialist audience hindered her from being steadfastly loyal to her belief that this text is “a feminist manifesto.” The same is true for Gerodimou. Despite using first-person singular and plural verb forms to avoid ascribing sex to referents and construct gender identities, she too occasionally employs the masculine grammatical gender for generic reference, inadvertently invoking stereotypical associations. However, they can be both seen as “woman-identified translators” (Maier, cited in Pilar 1998, 161), in that they have identified themselves with “woman” in one way or another and their decisions as translators have been made based on that identification.

They can also be seen as gender-aware translators who have tried to question dominant values in the target language and culture, reminding us that translation and language are political acts and can become means of resistance and protest. Tzanakari and Gerodimou state their presence in the text—Tzanakari mainly in the preface and Gerodimou in the notes that accompany their texts. Both translations are politically framed for they have made women more visible in the text and have challenged fixed constructions of gender and sexuality identities. Tzanakari addresses readers from the very first page, discussing translation as a writing practice and expressing her views on women’s writing and experiences. She intervenes in the source text to visibilize women and remains loyal to Woolf’s project, while drawing attention to her subjectivity as a translator. The feminine in her translation is
not “excluded” but it is “valued” (Massardier-Kenney 1997, 66). In this vein, her translation is feminist. Gerodimou’s translation is feminist as well, if we consider that besides prefacing, another technique adopted in feminist translations is that of footnoting, or to use Massardier-Kenney’s terms, commentary. As Santaemilia rightly argues, both strategies (or types of commentary) are “the most visible indicator[s] of feminisation” (2011, 134). And if we follow Massardier-Kenney again, “it is not the strategies themselves that are feminist . . . but rather the use to which these strategies are put” (1997, 57). This certainly applies to Gerodimou’s case.

All translations are new, autonomous texts, and all translators engage in various complex negotiations that contribute to a rewriting of the source. All translations are performed, to a certain extent, according to the telos and/or teloi of translators and the personal agenda they pursue. In the case of Tzanakari, much like in the case of feminist translators, the agenda followed is also political. She did not attempt to “correct” the source text, but the deliberate use of the metadiscourse surrounding her translation reveals her decision to “make explicit the importance of the feminine or of woman/women ([both] in terms of structural constraints [and] in terms of women’s agency) in the translated text” (Massardier-Kenney 1997, 60). The carefully crafted and confessional note she writes to accompany her translation and address readers acts as a space where Tzanakari is enabled to acknowledge not only Woolf’s and other women writers’ work but also her own work as a female translator and writer, and justify the reasons for reintroducing this text into the Greek language and culture, while also sharing her views on translation. The same is true for Gerodimou—the commentary provided in the form of endnotes allowed her to visibilize herself as a translator. But it is not only that. The section of 155 endnotes and twenty-page long biographical information on Woolf at the end of the translation, this abundance of notes, is about women writers, historical figures of the time, places the author describes in the text, and the major themes present in all her novels. Through the notes inserted thus Gerodimou outlines important elements and aspects while enabling “the transnational and transhistorical circulation of feminist ideas that come both before and after [Woolf] crystallizes them in tropes like Shakespeare’s sister and a room of one’s own” (Stanford Friedman 2016, 199). That is, Gerodimou, much like Tzanakari, has enabled the dissemination of Woolf’s feminist discourse while using translation “as an essential tool for the recovery of a feminine cultural genealogy” (Pilar 2014, 84).

What is certain is that “Virginia Woolf’s story is reformulated by each generation. She takes on [various] shape[s] . . . depending on who is reading her, and when, and in what context (Lee 1996, 758). And thanks to translation, generations of readers can access this text in their own language. Much like Emek Ergun, I too believe in the importance of “continuing the cross-border dialogue, no matter how difficult, tentative, and unpredictable it is” (2023, xix). For, translation can be seen as dialogic expansion, as a vehicle for transmuting the silences of the past into an active present, rooted in awareness, while shaping a resonant future. The transformative power and role of translational and translational journeys invite us to be part of the change and transformation(s) performed.

Notes

1. The Symposium was held in Thessaloniki, Greece, in October 2022. For more information, see: https://www.new.enl.auth.gr/feminism-in-translation/

2. Marianthi Makri-Tsilipakou, who attempted to record the changes witnessed in the Greek language, “attest[ed] to the hesitant, often dubious, nature and slow pace of non-sexist modifications in terms of both linguistic and social practices” (1996, 435).

3. In March 2018, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality in Greece issued “A Guide for the Use of Non-Sexist Language in Administrative Documents,” the fruit of the collaboration between the Greek Ministry of Interior and the General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality. A few months later,
the European Parliament also released updated guidelines on “Gender Neutral Language in the European Parliament.”

4. Édouard Louis’s *Combats et métamorphoses d’une femme* (2021) was translated in Greek and published by Antipodes Publications in 2021. In that same year, AUThors, a group of students from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, held the first Greek Feminist and Queer Literature Contest and published a collection of the works awarded. Sam Albatros’s *Defective Boy* was also published in 2021 (Hestia Publishers) and it was the first openly queer novel to become a best-seller in Greece. Last but not least, Evá Papadakis made their debut with the poetry collection *meraklina|koukibiberissa|obladi* (Stigmos Publications) aiming at “revolutionis[ing] tradition and fram[ing] society’s response to current gender, equality, inclusion, and belonging narratives by re-shaping collective memory” (https://www.evapapadakis.com/work). The collection was warmly received by critics and readers alike.

5. https://infompataria.wixsite.com/mpataria?fbclid=IwAR3ig56URMBkod9Rwx26iGWF6kJFogvKh9pv0%20BD4vD5_AimAZ-OWqf9_MI

6. *A Room of One’s Own* was first published by the Hogarth Press in 1929. The citations in this article are from the 1989 edition.

7. “Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please—it is not a matter of any importance)” (1989, 8–9).

8. There were also few female attendees that expressed the wish for Woolf “to speak to them, to write only for and about them” (that is, heterosexual women). They maintained that the use of *her* becomes a loaded term carrying additional weight and significance. On the other hand, there were a couple of genderqueer attendees who, despite acknowledging the importance of using inclusive pronouns which they see as connected with their struggle, pointed to the necessity for alternative terms. It would be interesting if future research could address the response of the broad target audience to these translations focusing on what they hear in the difference between the use of “your” and “her” or any other term that renders “one’s” in Greek.


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**References**


