

*Translations of Swedish Literature in Italy in the 19th Century: An Outline**

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IN RECENT YEARS SEVERAL STUDIES have been dedicated to the Italian reception of Nordic literature, in an interdisciplinary perspective that draws on translation studies, the socio-cultural approach of Pierre Bourdieu and Itamar Even-Zohar, and translation and publishing history.¹ Translations, as “objects” imported from a literary system to another, are an integral component of the target culture as well as of their source one. They allow “to build not only linguistic and stylistic inventories, but also a corpus of writing models in the ‘national’ languages” (“di costruire non soltanto repertori linguistici e stilistici, ma anche un corpus di modelli di scrittura nelle lingue decretate ‘nazionali’”).² That’s why it is interesting to study the early interactions between two linguistic and literary areas such as Italy and Scandinavia, geographically and culturally far from each other and in a (semi)peripheral position in Heilbron’s core-periphery system.³

Most of the above mentioned studies were focused on single authors, such as Ibsen, Hamsun or Strindberg, or on the interwar period, which for a number of reasons⁴ is particularly interesting for this subject.⁵ This article will instead concentrate on translations of Swedish literature produced in Italy in the 19th century. I have chosen this period in order to go back to when it all started: the first Italian translations from Swedish are two poems which appeared in *Museo Scientifico, Letterario ed Artistico*, an encyclopedic magazine published in Turin from 1839 to 1850: Stagnelius’ *Flytt-Fåglarne* and Tegnér’s *Skaldens morgonpsalm*. Incidentally, the translator was not Italian, but a British polyglot, major William Edward Frye, who “besides knowing Greek and Latin, understood almost all European languages, and was capable of writing correctly in French, Italian and German”.⁶

The choice to limit the scope of my research to a single country, although some research shows that in Italy the Nordic countries are often perceived as a unit,⁷ has instead a twofold purpose: first, even if Swedish literature is now and has been for some time the most translated in Italy among its Scandinavian fellow countries,⁸ no specific bibliographic

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¹ See for instance Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, New York & London: Routledge 1995; Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l’art. Gènese et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris: Seuil, 1992; Itamar Even-Zohar, “Polisystem Studies”, in *Poetics Today*, 1990:1; Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History*, New York & London: Routledge, 1998; Gabriele Turi & Maria Iolanda Palazzolo, *Storia dell’editoria nell’Italia contemporanea*, Firenze: Giunti, 1997.

² Gisèle Sapiro, “Addomesticare lo straniero: le traduzioni letterarie in francese (dal XIX al XXI secolo)”, in Irene Fantappiè & Michele Sisto (eds.), *1945-1970. Letteratura italiana e tedesca*, Roma: Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, 2013, pp. 13-37, here p. 13. Translation mine.

³ Johan Heilbron, “Towards a Sociology of Translation: Book Translation as a Cultural World-System”, in *European Journal of Social Theory* 1999: 4, pp. 429-444.

⁴ The Thirties in Italy have been defined as “the decade of translations” by Italian intellectual, writer and translator Cesare Pavese (Cesare Pavese, *Saggi letterari*, Torino: Einaudi, 1951, p. 223); in addition, when Fascism’s alliance policies made more and more difficult, when not impossible, to translate books by British or American writers, publishers turned to other markets, Nordic countries included, to look for substitutes. See Anna Wegener, “Mondadori as a Publisher of Scandinavian Literature, 1932-1945”, in Bruno Berni & Anna Wegener (eds.), *Translating Scandinavia: Scandinavian literature in Italian and German Translation 1918-1945*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2018, pp. 29-58; Christopher Rundle, *Publishing Translations in Fascist Italy*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2010.



Figure 1: The first edition of Stagnelius’ *Gli uccelli migranti* (*Flytt-Fåglarne*). *Museo Scientifico, Letterario ed Artistico* was an encyclopedic magazine published in Turin on a weekly basis from 1839 to 1847, and fortnightly from 1847 al 1850. Among its contributors were many leading figures of the Italian culture of the 19th century, with articles on the most disparate subjects: history, geography, arts, travels, botany, zoology, astronomy, literature, theatre, militaria, epigraphy, archeology, mythology, religion, medicine, anatomy, etc.

study has been dedicated to it, in contrast for example with Danish and Norwegian ones.⁹ Secondly, by concentrating on a single country I will be able to work on a corpus of manageable dimensions.

The aim of this preliminary survey, to be completed with deeper inquiries in specific subjects that will emerge below, is to highlight the patterns and the dynamics that regulated the selection, translation and publication of early Swedish texts in Italy. When analyzing the period in question, though, we must bear in mind that those were the years when the Italian publishing market gradually shifted from a motley collection of printers and booksellers scattered in unconnected regional markets, to the first examples of publishing entrepreneurship, especially in Milan and Naples. Among the first publishers of Scandinavian literature in Italy, many were still simple printers or typographers (Tipografia Editrice Lombarda or Tipografia Grazioli, for instance), while the first, real publishing houses such as Sonzogno, Treves or Paravia started their activity only in the latest decades of the century. This entrepreneurial evolution, brought about by the attenuation of censorship and the concomitant gradual reduction of illiteracy in Italy, also resulted in a transformation of production, which started to be aimed at satisfying new market requirements.¹⁰ Especially in Milan, true beacon of the budding Italian publishing industry, a new consumption-oriented model started to emerge, offering the new reading audience both entertainment – with popular novels and serials, together with fashion and society papers and magazines – and education, with the first collections

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⁵ On single authors, see for instance Massimo Ciaravolo, “Utgivningen av Strindbergs verk i Italien”, in *Strindbergiana* 2013:28, pp. 16-29; Sara Culeddu, “Hamsun in Italia 1899-1923. La molteplicità di voci e le traiettorie di un precoce tentativo di ricezione: una ricognizione attraverso i paratesti”, in *Studi Germanici*, 2016: 9, pp. 261-283; Giuliano D’Amico, “Editore-traditore? Knut Hamsun lest, oversatt og publisert av italienske neofascister”, in *Edda* 2014:1, pp. 33-51; Giuliano D’Amico, *Domesticating Ibsen for Italy*, Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2010; Franco Perrelli, *Strindberg l’italiano. 130 anni di storia scenica*, Bari: Edizioni di Pagina, 2015; on the interwar period, see Berni & Wegener, *Translating Scandinavia*, 2018.

⁶ William Edward Frye, *After Waterloo: Reminiscences of European Travel 1815-1819*, London: William Heinemann, 1908, p. ix. As a testimony of his unusual linguistic talents, he translated three of Edda’s poems into French, Tegnér’s *Frithiofs saga* into English and Shakespeare’s *Macbet* [sic] into Italian.

⁷ See D’Amico, *Domesticating Ibsen for Italy*, 2010, p. 18; Siri Nergaard, *La costruzione di una cultura. La letteratura norvegese in traduzione italiana*, Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004, pp. 67 and 77.

⁸ UNESCO’s Index Translationum (1977-2007) lists 142 translations from Swedish against 93 from Danish and 72 from Norwegian, cfr. <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans>, last accessed: 30/09/2019; Iperborea, a prestigious Italian publishing house that gives out exclusively Nordic authors, as of September 2019 proposed 122 titles from Swedish (by 32 authors) against 39 from Danish (19 authors) and 41 from Norwegian (21 authors); cfr. <https://iperborea.com/titoli>, last accessed: 30/09/2019.

(“Biblioteche”) of Italian and foreign classics, or of contemporary esteemed novelists such as Hugo and Scott.

This is how Scandinavian literature also appeared on the Italian market. However, who chose what to translate, and on what basis, is still an open question, which I will try to address in this and in following papers. In the middle and late 19th century the dynamics at work in the translation process were still rudimentary: while in a developed publishing market the selection of texts is determined by an editorial policy and implemented by a series of professional figures both inside and outside the publishing house,¹¹ in the period I am analyzing the impulse often came from the authors or translators themselves, as we will see later on.

The corpus

According to Anthony Pym, corpora and lists are the main instrument of the preliminary phase of translation history, the one he calls “archaeological work”, aimed at answering the questions “who translated what, how, where, for whom and with what effect”.¹² To build a list of translations of Swedish literature published in Italy during the 19th century, with the purpose of answering at least to some of the above mentioned questions, I drew on two existing bibliographies of Scandinavian translations: the online database *Letterature nordiche* and a recent article by Anna Wegener, who, although focusing on the interwar period, collected data starting from 1886, when the Italian national bibliography (*Bollettino delle pubblicazioni italiane ricevute per diritto di stampa*) was started.¹³ This list will be progressively verified and integrated by cross-checking data with two extensive Italian inventories, *Catalogo dei libri italiani dell'Ottocento* and *Catalogo generale della libreria italiana*, on one side and the Swedish databases *Äldre svensktryck*, *Svenskt boklexikon*. *Åren 1830-1865* and *Nationalbibliografin* on the other.

So far, I have produced a list of 101 translations of Swedish or Finn-Swedish texts, ranging from single poems to full novels or plays, by 25 different authors, presented in Appendix A. The high text to author ratio is due to the conspicuous presence of lyrics, often several ones by a same author, included in magazines or anthologies, while only 32 of the texts are independent publications, either in book or pamphlet form. There is also a significant presence of reprints (43 out of 101), particularly in the case of poetry, where the same items often appear in more than one collection, and also, although in minor degree, of retranslations (2 certain, 4 dubious). Although in a well-developed market reprints usually testify “to the commercial viability of a given text”,¹⁴ in this particular case their high frequency is due to the fact that the same translator, Solone Ambrosoli, to whom I will return in a moment, edited four different anthologies of Nordic poetry, “recycling” so to say the same materials

⁹ For Denmark: Lene Waage Petersen, *La letteratura danese tradotta in italiano*, Milano: Istituto Danese di Cultura, 1975; Bruno Berni, *Letteratura danese in traduzione italiana. Una bibliografia*, Pisa-Roma: Istituti editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 1999; Bruno Berni (ed.), *Dai Gesta Danorum alla scena del crimine. La letteratura danese in traduzione italiana*, Milano: Iperborea, 2012. For Norway: Cecilie Wiborg Bonafede, *La Norvegia in Italia: Scritti sulla Norvegia ed i norvegesi, opere originali di autori norvegesi, traduzioni dalla letteratura norvegese pubblicati in Italia*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1981; Massimo Ciaravolo (ed.), *Dal mondo delle saghe a quello di Sofia. La letteratura norvegese in traduzione italiana*, Milano: Iperborea, 1999. The only bibliographic record published so far about Sweden is a short pamphlet prepared on the occasion of a book exhibition at Sormani Library in Milan: Massimo Ciaravolo (a cura di), *Da Linneo a Gustafsson. 250 anni di letteratura svedese in traduzione italiana*, Iperborea, Milano 1994.

¹⁰ Turi & Palazzolo, *Storia dell'editoria nell'Italia contemporanea*, 1997, p. 46 ff.

¹¹ Wegener, *Mondadori as a Publisher of Scandinavian Literature*, 2018, p.31 f.

¹² Pym, *Method in Translation History*, 1998, p. 38 ff.

¹³ <http://www.letteraturenordiche.it/index.html>, last accessed 15/9/2019; Anna Wegener, “Italian Translations of Scandinavian Literature in the Interwar Period. A Bibliographic Overview” in *Analec-ta Romana Studi Danici*, 2018:43, pp. 1-57.

¹⁴ Wegener, “Italian Translations of Scandinavian Literature in the Interwar Period”, 2018, p. 13.

several times.

For one third of translations, no indication is given about the language from which the text was translated. However, the then common practice of indirect translation, together with the other works signed by the indicated translator, allow us to assume that at least a handful of texts were translated from German, and as many from English or French. No such educated guess can of course be made in the 15 cases where the name of the translator is not given.

If we take a look at the names of the authors, the first observation we can make is that many of the writers who were deemed worth a translation in the nineteenth century are now all but forgotten. Apart from a few big names, literary history manuals such as, for instance, Bengt Olsson and Ingemar Algulin's *Litteraturens Historia i Sverige* do not dedicate more than a few lines to them. As a further confirmation, only a handful of these 25 authors have been reprinted or retranslated in Italy after the first decade of the 20th century,¹⁵ and Strindberg is the only one who can boast a long and significant publication history. However, since his production has already been analyzed by other scholars, I will not go into it here.¹⁶

This discrepancy, though, is not so surprising if we bear in mind two considerations: first, that the canon is dynamic and not static, “an evolving creation, not something written in stone”, to quote British poet and critic Sean O’ Brien.¹⁷ The idea of what good literature is varies with time and place, and translations play a not irrelevant part in reshaping it. Secondly, the source culture’s canon which is established in the target culture is not necessarily the same than in the source culture. As Lawrence Venuti stated, “translation wields enormous power in constructing representations of foreign cultures. The selection of foreign texts and the development of translation strategies can establish peculiarly domestic canons for foreign literatures, canons that conform to domestic aesthetic values and therefore reveal exclusions and admissions, centers and peripheries that deviate from those current in the foreign language”.¹⁸ This will prove of use in a moment, when we will look closer at the translation of poetry. However, the question of the establishing of a Swedish canon in Italy is certainly worth further and deeper analysis in the future.

The most interesting observation that can be drawn from our list, however, emerges if we take a look at the genre. The most represented group is poetry, with 72 texts, followed by narrative, where I also include a handful of essayistic writings, most about travels and explorations, such as Nordenskiöld’s books, with a total of 23 texts, while theatre (6 texts) is represented almost exclusively by Strindberg’s works. Since, as already mentioned, I do not intend to address Strindberg’s production here, I will concentrate on the other two categories.

¹⁵ Johan Ludvig Runeberg, *Canti epici* (ed. by Daniela Rosari and Camilla Storskog), Milano: Ariete, 2006; Erik Johan Stagnelius, *La lirica di Erik Johan Stagnelius* (ed. by Maria Ludovica Koch) Milano: Ariete, 1998; Zacharias Topelius, *Sampo il lapponcino ed altre fiabe finlandesi*, Torino: Paravia, 1956; *Il Tonttu del castello di Turku*, Roma: Sinnos, 1999.

¹⁶ Namely Perrelli and Ciaravolo, see note 5.

¹⁷ Sean O’ Brien, “Read poetry: it’s quite hard”, *The Guardian*, 8/3/2008.

¹⁸ Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, Routledge, London-New York, 1998, p. 67.

Poetry: An enthusiasts' work

The 72 Swedish poems translated in the 19th century were often published in miscellanea, together with verse from the whole world, in the “universal” spirit that informed the second half of the century. This is the case of the “lyrical and epical florilegia” attached to the *History of universal literature* in 21 volumes published by Sanskritist and comparatist Angelo De Gubernatis between 1882 and 1885. The work comprises separated sections dedicated to theatre, lyrical poetry, satire, novel, history and philology, each divided into a historical and an anthological part. In the section for lyrical and epical poetry, De Gubernatis included 10 poems by 9 Swedish authors (2 by Snoilsky). Other mixed anthologies, although much more limited in scope, which comprise Swedish verse, are the collection of ballads and legends *Rose e Viole* [Roses and pansies] and the selection of love poems *Il libro dell'amore*. So far I have found no traces of how the editors chose which authors and which texts to include in their compendia, but it is possible that they drew on similar collective works in other languages.

However, the real devotee of Nordic poetry in general and Swedish one in particular is Solone Ambrosoli, editor and translator of four collections of Scandinavian lyrics published between 1879 and 1882.

Ambrosoli, a distinguished numismatist, was certainly familiar with Swedish, although his biographical data do not disclose where and when he learnt the language. His only journey to the Nordic countries, in the summer of 1882, is subsequent to the translations, as is his correspondence with Carl Snoilsky, between 1892 and '95. According to Margherita Giordano Lokrantz, who dedicated an essay to this “Scandinavianist in Milan at the turn of the century” (“skandinavist i sekelskiftets Milano”),¹⁹ Ambrosoli’s interest for the Nordic countries could have originated in Germany, his wife’s home country, which he often visited. His love for poetry and his own verse-writing probably did the rest: in fact, “the group of poets he translated appears as quite homogeneous and maybe he chose them simply because he recognized himself in them and their stylistic ideal coincided with his” (“den grupp av skalders han översatt framstår som ganska homogen och kanske har han valt dem helt enkelt därför att han kände igen sig i dem och därför att deras stilideal motsvarade hans”).²⁰

This in fact applies in some degree to all Swedish poetry published in Italy in the 19th century: the poets who were chosen for translation were those who corresponded the best to the predominant Romantic mood of the times and have now, with a very few exceptions such as Tegnér o Runeberg, all but sunken into oblivion.

It is worth noting that the image of Swedish (and Scandinavian) poetry which began to take form in those years survived at least until the



Figure 2a: Solone Ambrosoli (1851-1906).

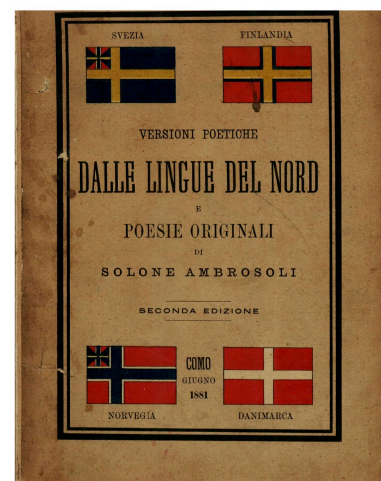


Figure 2b: Cover of *Versioni Poetiche dalle Lingue del Nord* (1881).

¹⁹ Margherita Giordano Lokrantz, “Solone Ambrosoli: en skandinavist i sekelskiftets Milano”, in *Italien och Norden. Kulturförbindelser under ett sekel*, Stockholm: Carlsson, 2001, pp. 151-183. Translation mine.

²⁰ Giordano Lokrantz, “Solone Ambrosoli: en skandinavist i sekelskiftets Milano”, p. 171.

interwar period. In a recent study dedicated to Massimo Spiritini's anthology from 1939, *Poeti dal mondo*, Davide Finco pointed out that the editor's choice of Nordic verse gave an image of the Nordic countries "somewhat stereotypical, highlighting an attitude of melancholy, meditation, celebration of nature and of childlike or even childish view of the world".²¹ It might then well be the case that Ambrosoli's translations contributed to mould an Italian canon of Swedish poetry which survived longer than in the source culture.

However, as already mentioned, further research into this corpus of poetic translations could certainly give more definite insight in the construction of the Swedish and Nordic canon in Italy, in the direction pointed out by Venuti in a worldwide perspective and by Siri Neergaard²² in a Nordic one.

Novels: A women's affair

Interesting food for thought can also be drawn by looking at the list of fictional works translated from Swedish during our target period. If we leave out Nordeskiöld's four expedition accounts, we make a surprising discovery: almost all narrative works *are written by women*. I must confess that this was the piece of information that struck me the most at this early stage of my research, and the one on which I certainly intend to investigate further. Why was Fredrika Bremer translated, and not Carl Jonas Love Almqvist? Why Anne Charlotte Leffler, and not the early Strindberg?

A first consideration to be made is that in the second half of the 19th century Italian women, maybe with some delay in comparison with other countries, started to gain a certain literacy and to develop a budding consciousness of their own role in society, be it mainly as wives and mothers.²³ This produced two effects that mutually amplified one another: on the one hand, the growing public of women readers, formed by projects such as the "pleasant and instructive library for gentlewomen" ("Biblioteca amena ed istruttiva per le Donne gentili") launched in 1822 by Milan-based editor Giovanni Pirota and specialized in translation of fashionable foreign novels for female readers, inevitably produced an increase in demand for publications aimed at satisfying women's specific needs and tastes; on the other, "the Italian domestic fiction and journalism that addressed a female readership contributed to more liberal thinking concerning women's 'proper' roles as wife and mother in the collective consciousness, and in particular among women", revealing "the writers' engagement (conscious or otherwise) with the issues with which the moderate emancipationists were concerned, such as better access to education and the professions".²⁴

Although the increase in demand also led to an increase in women's

²¹ Davide Finco, "Scandinavian poetry as 'World poetry'", in Berni & Wegener *Translating Scandinavia*, 2018, pp. 109-129.

²² Nergaard, *La costruzione di una cultura*, 2004, p. 18.

²³ Antonia Arslan, *Dame, galline e regine. La scrittura femminile italiana fra '800 e '900*, Milano: Guerini e Associati, 1998, p. 20.

²⁴ Katharine Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism*, University of Toronto Press, p. 5 f.

own writings, my starting hypothesis – still to be confirmed by deeper analysis – is that the offer of Italian female authorship grew at a slower pace than demand, urging publishers to look abroad to satisfy the latter. Sweden, together with its fellow Nordic countries, seemed an ideal reservoir of emancipationist issues – and female writers. Even though the 19th century was the period in which “European women of all countries and social classes experienced some of the most dramatic and enduring changes in their familial, working, and political lives”,²⁵ these changes occurred with different timing and scope in the various European countries. In Sweden the women’s right to education and to a role in society started to be discussed in the 1820s, often by male intellectuals such as Lars Johan Hierta or, some years later, Carl Jonas Love Almqvist.²⁶ This was not unknown in Italy, as confirmed by an 1866 pamphlet about the advancement of women in Italy, where Italian journalist and feminist activist Anna Maria Mozzoni wrote commending words about the Scandinavian legislation, underlying at the same time the delay of the local regulations:

While in Italy the law about compulsory primary education meets frequent opposition, when it comes to liberal initiatives; while in France this law, submitted several times to the Legislative assembly, repeatedly succumbed to a triumphant reactionary opposition, in Denmark, which has been benefiting from it for more than fifty years, there is not a single peasant woman who is excluded from the exchange of ideas for ignorance of reading or writing. And this is the country that Latin people, still conceited about their now lost ancient threefold primacy, dare sometimes regard as less cultivated and civil, as the republican Romans regarded the Greeks as barbarians.

Mentre in Italia la legge sull’insegnamento primario obbligatorio (sic) incontra resistenze troppo frequenti quando trattasi di liberali iniziative; mentre in Francia questa legge più volte proposta al Corpo Legislativo soccombe ripetutamente davanti ad una retriva e sempre vittoriosa opposizione, la Danimarca, che da oltre cinquant’anni ne gode i vantaggi, non si trova avere una contadina che si vegga esclusa dal commercio delle idee per ignoranza di lettura e di scrittura. Ed è questo il paese, che le genti latine, tronfie ancora del triplice antico primato che si sono lasciate sfuggire di mano, hanno talora delle velleità di riguardare siccome meno colto e civile, non altrimenti che i romani della repubblica chiamavan barbari i greci.²⁷

With this kind of considerations in mind, it should not be surprising that the Scandinavian countries were taken as a model, together with France and England, also in the field of women’s writing for the advancement of women.

²⁵ Rachel G. Fuchs & Victoria E. Thompson, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 1.

²⁶ See for instance Ulla Manns, *Upp systrar, väpnar er! Kön och politik i svensk 1800-talsfeminism*, Stockholm: Atlantis, 2005, and Christina Florin & Lars Kvarnström (eds.), *Kvinnor på gränsen till medborgarskap. Genus, politik och offentlighet 1800–1850*, Stockholm: Atlas, 2011.

²⁷ Anna Maria Mozzoni, *Un passo avanti nella cultura femminile. Tesi e progetto*, Milano: Tipografia internazionale, 1866, p. 49. Translation mine.

Fredrika Bremer

It is not by chance that the first Swedish woman novelist to be translated in Italy, in 1846, was Fredrika Bremer. Her name was known among Italian erudites: she was in fact mentioned and praised in the very first outline of Swedish literature, which – curiously enough – was published in Italy even before any (known) example of translated work. Jakob Gråberg's *Sunto della letteratura svezese nei tre ultimi anni 1829-1830 e 1831* dates in fact from 1833, followed in 1841 by the more exhaustive and scientific *Storia della letteratura in Danimarca e in Svezia* by French traveller and scholar Xavier Marmier.

Jakob Gråberg from Hemsö was a Swedish diplomat who spent most of his adult years in Italy, where he filled several highly regarded duties, such as vice-consul in Genua and rector of the Palatine Library in Florence. For all of his life he cultivated his interests in the most diverse subjects, from statistics to geography, from history to foreign languages. In 1832, spurred by love for his mother country, he wrote the above mentioned *Sunto*, only a third of which is actually dedicated to literature – in the chapters “Language and Literature (II)” and “Poetry (III)” (“Lingua, e belle lettere” and “Poesia”) – while the rest draws a broad outline of Swedish society with chapters dedicated to “Periodical Press (I)”, “History and Geography (IV)”, “Sciences (V)”, “Philology (VI)”, “Fine Arts (VII)”, “Scholarly and Literary Institutions (VIII)”, “Public and Private Libraries (IX)” (“Stampa periodica”, “Storia e Geografia”, “Scienze”, “Filologia”, “Belle Arti”, “Istituti Dotti, e Letterari”, “Librerie Pubbliche, e Private”). In the pages devoted to literature, marked by a somewhat outdated taste,²⁸ he speaks in highly commending terms about Fredrika Bremer:

After these productions of academic and philological eloquence come the novels and short stories, among which the Sketches, that are pictures from everyday life, *Teckningar utur hvardags-lifvet*, by Miss Federica Bremer, [which] are a favourite reading of the romantic public, and of which three parts have already been published, with almost unbelievable sales, unique so far in the Swedish book market.

Appresso queste produzioni dell'accademica, e filologica eloquenza vengono le novelle, ed i romanzi, fra i quali gli Schizzi, ossia disegni della vita quotidiana, *Teckningar utur hvardags-lifvet*, della signorina Federica Bremer, formano sempre una lettura prediletta del pubblico romantico, e dei quali furono già pubblicate tre parti, ch'ebbero uno smercio pressoché incredibile, ed unico finora nella libreria svezese.²⁹

A decade later Gråberg's outline was also included in Marmier's literary history, with a concise addendum relating the more interesting developments occurred between 1833 and 1841, where Fredrika Bremer is named again:



Figure 3a: Jakob Gråberg of Hemsö (1776-1847). Pencil drawing by C. E. Liverati (1841).



Xavier Marmier (1808-1892).

²⁸ Fulvio Ferrari, “Jakob Gråberg e la Svezia”, in *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 1996: 7, pp. 241-252, here p. 251.

²⁹ Jacopo Gråberg da Hemsö, *Sunto della letteratura svezese in questi ultimi anni*, Pisa: (n.p.), 1833, p. 19. Translation mine.

Among the many original historical novels or short stories published in Sweden from 1832 to 1840, I believe the best can be considered to be: [...] *Presidentens Döttrar*, The President's Daughters, by the above-mentioned Federica Bremer, one of the prettiest and most pleasant productions of its kind.

Fra i molti romanzi, o racconti storici originali svezzezi degli anni 1832 fino al 1840, pare che si possano citare come i migliori: [...] *Presidentens Döttrar*, le Figlie del presidente, dell'anzidetta Federica Bremer, una delle più gentili, e graziose produzioni del suo genere.³⁰

No certain information has been found so far as to how the publishing house Borroni & Scotti decided to translate and print Bremer's *Presidentens Döttrar*.

In her short foreword to the novel, the then 19-year-old translator, Francesca (Fanny) Lutti, seems to claim the initiative for herself: "Since there is not, as far as I know, an Italian version of this book, I decided to offer it to the young readers translated into our language" ("Non essendovi, per quanto io sappia, una versione italiana di questo libro, mi sono determinata a offerirla alla gioventù voltato nella nostra favella").³¹ Lutti – who was later to become herself an author, albeit of modest success, and the host of a very successful literary salon – goes on by declaring her admiration for the Germans' (sic) "admirable ability to portray the philosophy of life" ("ammirevole attitudine a ritrarre la filosofia della vita")³² and her intention to offer that "booklet" for the domestic education of the readers. The hint to the "Germans" – albeit contradicted by the adjective "Swedish" added to the subtitle of the book, "Tale of a Swedish Governess" ("Racconto di un'educatrice svedese") – lets us suspect that she read the book in, and translated it from, German. This suspicion finds further support in a letter to Alessandro Manzoni, where the historian Federico Odorici asks the acclaimed novelist to receive the young lady, whom he presents as the translator of *Le figlie del presidente* from German.³³ A textual comparison of the Italian text and of its possible German source³⁴ could hopefully shed light on this question. However, it is interesting that, although so young, the translator felt the need to explain her purpose (an instructive and moral one) and her treatment of the text (a free adaptation), showing a high consideration of her mediator's role. However, what seems clear at this stage of the research is that in a foreign novel Lutti thought she could find something that was missing in the Italian ones, that is the ability to portray the philosophy of life and to teach young women to follow their natural disposition (in the introduction she does not say what that amounts to, but the novel argues for women's right to education and to a certain degree of freedom).

The same novel was retranslated 34 years later by another publisher,³⁵ Brigola, at that time one of the most important in Italy and very ac-

³⁰ Saverio Marmier, *Storia della letteratura in Danimarca e in Svezia*, vol. II, Firenze: Piatti, 1841, p. 72. Translation mine.



Figure 4: Fredrika Bremer (1801-1865). Painting by John Gustaf Sandberg (1843).

³¹ Federica Bremer, *Le figlie del presidente*, Milano: Borroni e Scotti, 1846, p. 6. Translation mine.

³² Bremer, *Le figlie del presidente*, p. 5. Translation mine.

³³ Quoted in Ernesto Travi, "La corrispondenza tra Federico Odorici e Manzoni", in *Commentari dell'ateneo di Brescia per l'anno 1996*, Brescia: 1999, pp. 45-61.

³⁴ Fredrika Bremer, *Die Töchter des Präsidenten: Erzählung einer Gouvernante*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1841.

³⁵ Federica Bremer, *Le figlie del presidente*, Milano: Brigola, 1880.

tive in publishing Italian women writers such as Neèra, Matilde Serao, Marchionéss Colombi, etc.³⁶ The frontispiece does not show the name of the translator but only, apart from the title and author's name, that of the collection editor, Salvatore Farina, himself an author of sentimental novels in Dickensian mood. This could possibly suggest that it was him who chose the book for publication, this time “translated from Swedish” (“Tradotto dallo svedese”) if we are to trust the frontispiece. Also the changes that transformed Italian society and publishing industry in the elapsed decades support the hypothesis that this time the impulse to publish came from the publisher, prompted by the increased market demand for women's writing for female readers. To further corroborate it, a few years later the same publisher also released, with the same scanty cover information, a novel by Emilie Flygare-Carlén, *Splendide nozze* (*Ett lyckligt parti*).³⁷

Emilie Flygare-Carlén

This however was not Carlén's first book to be published in Italy: before Brigola, also Treves and Tipografia Editrice Lombarda put into prints several of her works. The most interesting one is the first, *Un anno di matrimonio* (*Ett år*), published by Treves in 1869,³⁸ since the translator Clemente Mapelli, as young Francesca Lutti before him, explains his motives for proposing the book to the Italian reader.

After stating that foreign books must be chosen both for their aims and for their style, he announces the theme of the book: family and its reflections on society. After a short digression about “Anglo-Swedish” literature (which incidentally gives us a clue as to which language the book could be translated from), he gives some information about the author, whom he describes as one of the most eminent Swedish writers together with Fredrika Bremer. Finally, he goes on to say that women writers are the most suited to handle womanly themes, as they share the same needs, the same aspirations, and the same goals. Although he does not go as far as to deny the modern woman's right to a broader and freer education, he is convinced that her role and position in society are those of wife and mother, and he seems to believe that this should also be Carlén's opinion. I wonder whether she would have approved of this introduction to one of her novels, but these words are nevertheless a proof of the relevance of her authorship to the debates about the woman question, abroad as well as in Sweden. In the next phase of my research, however, it will be interesting to see whether later translations, probably by different, albeit unspecified, translators, do her and her ideas more justice.

³⁶ Neèra, pseudonym of Anna Radius Zuccari (1846-1918), is the author of several novels where she advocates a deeper spiritual life for women as a reaction to the rampant materialism of the times, while keeping equally distant from the opposed excesses of feminism and sentimentalism; Matilde Serao (1856-1927), journalist and novelist, author of more than 40 among novels and short story collections in the naturalist mood, was the first Italian woman to found and direct a newspaper, *Il Giorno*; Marchionéss Colombi, pseudonym of Maria Antonietta Torriani (1840-1920), is the author of more than 40 novels, republished in the 1970s by the prestigious Italian publishing house Einaudi, where she portrayed a great number of women from the most diverse social conditions, from peasants to servants, from middle-class to noblewomen.

³⁷ Emilia Carlén, *Splendide nozze*, Milano: Brigola, 1883.

³⁸ Emilia Carlén, *Un anno di matrimonio*, Milano: Treves, 1869.



Figure 5: Emilie Flygare-Carlén (1807-1892).

Charlotte Leffler

The third Swedish woman writer whose books were translated in Italy in the 19th century is Anne Charlotte Leffler.

The story of her Italian publication, however, is easier to retrace: being married to a Neapolitan nobleman and mathematician, Pasquale Del Pezzo, and having settled in Italy with her husband, Leffler herself actively promoted the translation and publication of her works. In doing so, she had the friendly collaboration of the couple's intellectual circle, which included among others the poet and playwright Salvatore Di Giacomo and the eminent critic and philosopher Benedetto Croce. Di Giacomo worked side by side with Leffler on the translation of *Hur man gör godt* (*Come si fa il bene*). Leffler translated orally from Swedish to French, while Di Giacomo wrote down the Italian version.³⁹ Croce, on his part, wrote an introduction to *Come si fa il bene*, later also published as an independent pamphlet,⁴⁰ where he in fact offered a short outline of modern Scandinavian literature. Croce analyzed the Nordic literatures as a single whole, which he then labeled as realistic, or “problem-art” (“arte-problema”), that is, an art that asks relevant questions and gives original answers, as opposed to the thesis novels and plays typical of French or Italian literatures, crystallized in examining “the *casuistry* of adultery or similar questions” (“la *casuistica* dell’adulterio e quistioni analoghe”).⁴¹ After introducing to the Italian public writers such as Ibsen and Björnson from the Norwegian “group” (Croce’s definition), Jacobsen and Brandes from the Danish one, Rydberg and above all Strindberg from the Swedish one, he went on presenting Charlotte Leffler’s works, which he praised for “their deep feeling for the problems of modern life, their subtle psychological analysis, their clear and straightforward exposition” (“per il profondo sentimento dei problemi della vita moderna, per la fine analisi psicologica, per la esposizione semplice e schietta”).⁴² He also underlined the controversial themes of her works, such as *En Sommarsaga* (which in his translation becomes “Summer dreams”, “Sogni d’estate”), where she debates whether a woman

really has to leave everything behind, every single thing, to follow her husband; or whether she has the right to live her own life, to claim that this life be totally respected, and even, in some particular cases, the right to bring her husband to renounce his vocation to allow her to follow hers.

debba veramente sempre lasciar ogni cosa, qualunque cosa, per seguire suo marito; o se essa abbia il diritto di vivere la sua propria vita, di esigere che questa sia perfettamente rispettata, e, finanche, in certi dati casi, il diritto di condurre suo marito a rinunciare alla propria vocazione per seguire la sua. E la soluzione è in quest’ultimo senso.⁴³

This was certainly a far cry from the Italian view of women’s conditions, if the most famous women writers themselves chose protagonists



Figure 6: Anne Charlotte Leffler (1849-1892).

³⁹ Margherita Giordano Lokrantz, “Anne Charlotte Leffler i Neapel (1888-1892)”, in *Italien och Norden. Kulturförbindelser under ett sekel*, Stockholm: Carlsson, 2001, pp. 95-149, here p. 135. Di Giacomo’s testimony is included in his article “Figure nordiche”, published first in «Giornale d’Italia», 3 dicembre 1912, and later as an introduction to Anne Charlotte Leffler, *In lotta con la società*, Napoli: Alvaro, 1913.

⁴⁰ Benedetto Croce, *Letteratura moderna scandinava*, Trani: Vecchi, 1892.

⁴¹ Croce, *Letteratura moderna scandinava*, p. 8. Translation mine, italics in the original.

⁴² Croce, *Letteratura moderna scandinava*, p. 16. Translation mine.

⁴³ Croce, *Letteratura moderna scandinava*, p. 21. Translation mine.

who were “not marked as transgressive” but “entirely conventional”,⁴⁴ and often were “ideologically opposed to the ideals put forward by the emancipationists”.⁴⁵

In conclusion, the first information gathered so far seems to corroborate my hypothesis that the striking ratio of women novelists among the early Italian translations of Swedish literature is related to the strong request for novels addressing the woman question, coupled with the belief that these kind of writings could be best dealt with by women, and with the fact that in Italy writing women, although more and more numerous, were still not enough to satisfy this demand. My next steps will therefore be a) to analyze and compare the social and cultural conditions of women in Sweden and in Italy; and b) to verify to what extent and effect the Swedish authoresses listed here really contributed with their books to the progress of the woman question in Italy.

⁴⁴ Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers*, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Mitchell, *Italian Women Writers*, p. 10.

*APPENDIX A: Translations of Swedish or Finno-Swedish texts
appeared in Italy in the 19th century*

YEAR	AUTHOR	ITALIAN TITLE	PUBLISHER	TRANSLATOR	GENRE
1845	STAGNELIUS, ERIK JOHAN	GLI UCCELLI MIGRANTI in "Museo scientifico, letterario ed artistico"	Alessandro Fontana	William Edward Frye	POETRY
1845	TEGNÉR, ESAIAS	INNO MATTUTINO DELLO SCALDO in "Museo scientifico, letterario ed artistico"	Alessandro Fontana	William Edward Frye	POETRY
1846	BREMER, FREDRIKA	LE FIGLIE DEL PRESIDENTE. RACCONTO DI UNA EDUCATRICE SVEDESE	Borroni e Scotti	Fanny Lutti	NOVEL/SHORT STORY
1851	TEGNÉR, ESAIAS	FRITHIOF. POEMA	Vicentini e Franchini	Alessandro Bazzani (inglese/tedesco)	POETRY
1856	BREMER, FREDRIKA	LA SOLITARIA	Naratovich	Malvina Frank	POETRY
1865	ARLIA, COSTANTINO	ROSE E VIOLE (Canti e leggende popolari di varie nazioni)	Favale (Torino)		POETRY
1865	RUNEBERG, JOHAN LUDVIG	IL RUSCELLO, AMORE, I TRE PENSIERI, L'EPITAFFIO DELLA FANCIULLA in Rose e viole. Canti e leggende popolari di varie nazioni	Tipografia Favale e Comp.	Costantino Arlia (tedesco/inglese)	POETRY
1869	FLYGARE-CARLÉN, EMILIE	UN ANNO DI MATRIMONIO	Treves	Clemente Mapelli	NOVEL/SHORT STORY
1873	BREMER, FREDRIKA	LA CIECA in "Romanzi e racconti dati in dono alle associe del Giornale delle Donne"	Direzione del Giornale delle Donne		NOVEL/SHORT STORY
1875	FLYGARE-CARLÉN, EMILIE	LA SIGNORINA NANNY	Tipografia Editrice Lombarda		NOVEL/SHORT STORY
1876	FLYGARE-CARLÉN, EMILIE	SEI SETTIMANE	Tipografia Editrice Lombarda		NOVEL/SHORT STORY
1879	AAVV	ALCUNE POESIE SVEDESI	Tipografia Grazioli	Solone Ambrosoli	POETRY
1879	GRAFSTRÖM, ANDERS ABRAHAM	L'ARPA in "Alcune poesie svedesi"	Tipografia Grazioli	Solone Ambrosoli	POETRY
1879	KLOCKHOFF, DANIEL	IL MONILE DI PERLE - LO STUDENTE MORIBONDO in "Alcune poesie svedesi"	Tipografia Grazioli	Solone Ambrosoli	POETRY
1879	NICANDER, KARL AUGUST	LA SERA in "Alcune poesie svedesi"	Tipografia Grazioli	Solone Ambrosoli	POETRY

APPENDIX B: Italian translations of Swedish novels or short stories written by women

YEAR	AUTHOR	ITALIAN TITLE	ORIGINAL TITLE	PUBLISHER	TRANSLATOR	LANGUAGE
1846	BREMER, FREDRIKA	LE FIGLIE DEL PRESIDENTE. RACCONTO DI UNA EDUCATRICE Swedish	Presidentens döttrar: berättelse af en guvernant (1834)	Borroni e Scotti	Fanny Lutti	German
1869	FLYGARE-CARLÉN, EMILIE	UN ANNO DI MATRIMONIO	Ett år (1846)	Treves	Clemente Mapelli	English?
1873	BREMER, FREDRIKA	LA CIECA in "Romanzi e racconti dati in dono alle associate del Giornale delle Donne"	liberamente tratto da Familien H (1831)	Direzione del Giornale delle Donne	?	?
1875	FLYGARE-CARLÉN, EMILIE	LA SIGNORINA NANNY	Familjen i dalen (1849)	Tipografia Editrice Lombarda	?	?
1876	FLYGARE-CARLÉN, EMILIE	SEI SETTIMANE	Inom sex veckor (1853)	Tipografia Editrice Lombarda	?	Swedish?
1880	BREMER, FREDRIKA	LE FIGLIE DEL PRESIDENTE	Presidentens döttrar (1834)	Brigola	?	Swedish
1880	CARLÉN, CATHARINA ROSAURA	TRE ANNI E TRE GIORNI	Tre år och tre dagar, 1864	Brigola	?	?
1881	THOMASSON, PEHR	LA FEDELTA' NEL NORD	Troheten i Norden	Loescher	Nicola Lundborg	Swedish
1883	AAVV	LA RAGAZZA DALLE PIUME DI CIGNO (NOVELLINA POPOLARE SVEDESE)	?	Raimondi	Mattia di Martino	?
1883	FLYGARE-CARLÉN, EMILIE	SPLENDIDE NOZZE	Ett lyckligt parti (1851)	Brigola	?	Swedish?
1884	AAVV	QUATTRO NOVELLINE POPOLARI SVEDESI in "Archivio per lo studio delle tradizioni popolari, Volume 3	Saggio di una traduzione delle Svenska folksagner samlade samt försedda med historiska och etnografiska anmärkingar af Herman Hofberg	Forni	Mattia di Martino	?