



Charlemont grant report

Recipient name:	Dr. Cecilia Benaglia
Discipline and subject area:	Humanities and Social Science
Amount and year awarded:	€1,495 in 2023
Title of project:	Women Writers-Mediators in the 20th Century: Michèle Causse, Feminist Translator

Summary of findings:

The grant enabled me to travel to the Swiss Literary Archives in Bern, which host the unpublished correspondence between Causse and Ceresa, as well as the press coverage of the publication of *La figlia prodiga* in Italy and in France and other materials (manuscripts, letters, articles) pertaining more broadly to Causse's and Ceresa's relationship with the French, Swiss and Italian feminist movements.

This visit has been essential for me to contextualise better the works of Ceresa and Causse, and to gain a much stronger understanding of these writers' trajectories and positions within the international literary and intellectual field. Notably, the archives contain numerous unpublished works by Alice Ceresa, a writer who published very little during her lifetime. Accessing these materials allowed me to gain valuable insights into her writing process, but also into her feminist beliefs, which now appear more multifaceted compared to what could be gleaned solely from her published work. Furthermore, the correspondence between Ceresa and Michèle Causse, though less informative than anticipated regarding the translation of *The Prodigal Daughter*, was still of great importance. It provided insight specifically into the relationship between the two writers, their identities as lesbians and how this aspect influenced their understanding of literary conventions and traditions.

I would like to briefly describe three of the documents that I was able to consult and explain their significance for my research:

1. The archives contain a brief exchange between Ceresa and the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. This correspondence dates to 1963, a time when Beauvoir was becoming a prominent figure for Western and International feminists. In these letters, Ceresa expresses her concerns about the publication and reception of *The Prodigal Daughter* in the Italian literary field, which she perceived as unprepared to engage with topics related to the condition of women. Ceresa's connection with Beauvoir was facilitated through the mediation of Causse, highlighting the vitality of international feminist networks in general and the French-Italian connection specifically in shaping the confidence and literary ambitions of the young Swiss writer.
2. The archives also house Ceresa's Italian translation of 'Sisterhood is Powerful', an article by the American feminist activist Susan Brownmiller, published in 1970. Ceresa likely completed this translation around 1971 and discussed her work in a letter to the Women's Liberation Association



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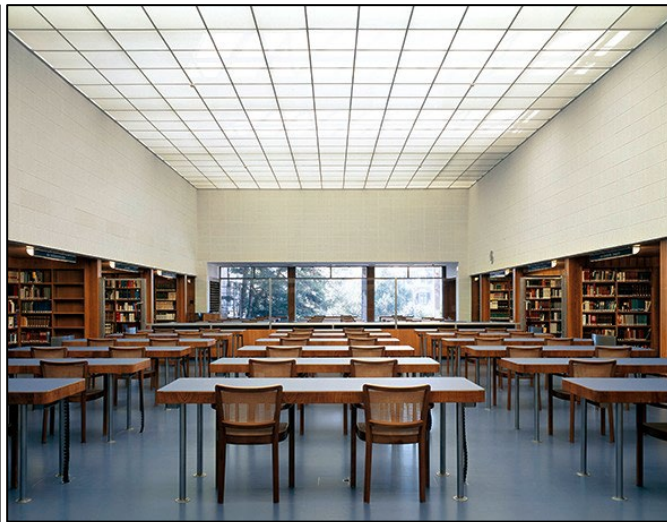
of New York (to which I also had access). Through the analysis of the translation and of its reception among Italian feminist groups, my aim is to contribute to the study of the relationships between Ceresa and American feminism, a topic on which little has been published.

3. During my time in Bern, I also had the opportunity to read and request reproductions of an unpublished manuscript of an exceptional short story by Alice Ceresa. This manuscript shed light on the published novel I am currently researching, *The Prodigal Daughter*. I plan to use this short story in one of my articles and explore the possibility of publication of this text, which deserves to be accessible to the wider public.

In conclusion, this visit has provided me with a much more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the works of Ceresa and Causse and will significantly influence my scholarly output on these writers.



Alice Ceresa (à g.) et Michèle Causse à Rome dans les années 60.



Plans for continuing collaboration:

While in Bern, I was able to consult the majority of documents pertaining to my research, so I believe I won't need to revisit it in the future. The ASL organises events related to the writers whose works are housed there, so I will certainly maintain contact with them in case they plan events or initiatives around Ceresa's archive.

Publications associated with this project that you have been involved in:

1. I am currently working on an article on the French translation by Causse of Ceresa's *The Prodigal Daughter* and more in general on her translation practice. I currently have an advanced draft of the article that I plan to submit to the journal *Feminist Translation Studies* or the journal *French Studies* by the beginning of 2024.
2. Based on the unpublished materials I found in the archives, I am also developing a comparative study looking at the work of three writers, Michèle Causse (France), Alice Ceresa (Italy) and Louky



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Bersianik (Quebec), who all use in their fictions the trope of the stranger and the alien, as well as the literary technique of estrangement, to explore the position of the feminist subject within society and with regards to patriarchal language.

Dissemination and plans for future dissemination:

I am preparing an abstract for a paper to be presented at the next Women in French UK-Ireland conference in 2024.

I am planning to get in touch with two of Alice Ceresa's specialists in Italy and Switzerland to explore the possibility of the publication of one of her unpublished short stories.

Outreach and engagement activities:

Although I haven't started the work on this yet, I intend to write a piece for RTÉ Brainstorm on feminism, translation and language. This article will talk about feminist translation, its history in Western Europe and the USA, as well as the ways it is practised today. I will present and briefly discuss a series of translators and of case-studies, which will include Michèle Causse and Alice Ceresa. In preparation for this, I intend to participate in the next RTÉ Brainstorm workshop organised by the University of Limerick.