



translation
STUDIES

Gender in Translation

**Cultural Identity
and the Politics
of Transmission**

Sherry Simon

ROUTLEDGE

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Gender in Translation

Gender in Translation is the first comprehensive study of feminist issues in translation theory and practice.

Sherry Simon shows how women translators have long acted as literary activists, creating new lines of transmission and contributing to cultural debates. Contemporary feminist translators have had decisive influence in areas such as French feminism and Bible translation.

In investigating the role of gender in translation, Sherry Simon shows how translation studies can be enriched by a cultural studies framework.

Translation Studies

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Gender in Translation

Cultural identity and the politics
of transmission

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Preface and acknowledgments

This book had two different moments of origin. One was relatively recent; it came with my realization that identity politics mattered for translation, and that this encounter had yet to be fully explored. A whole range of issues seemed to be waiting for examination, and an inquiry overdue.

The other beginning dates back some ten years, and takes place on another scene. This was the moment when the idea of feminist translation first emerged, in the specific context of the Canadian cultural dialogue.

There is a special satisfaction in being able to identify the precise moment at which a new idea or intellectual project came into being. The initial impulse for this book came, then, from a panel discussion on “feminist poetics” that I helped to organize in 1986 for a conference on literary translation. Putting together this panel was easy: Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Barbara Godard and Kathy Mezei had all written innovative texts about translation as a feminist practice. They were all active critics and translators of Quebec avant-garde feminist writing. But it was only as our discussions came to an end that we realized that something new had emerged. A practice we could call Canadian feminist translation had come into existence.

During the late 1970s and 1980s the work of translation in Canada was nourished by a remarkable conjunction of elements. A strong movement of French-language feminist experimental writing in Quebec stimulated the desire to promote—and to theorize—activities of literary mediation, and made feminist translators active players in the literary and cultural field. As a new variation in the dialogue between Quebec and English Canada, feminist translation reactivated the political concerns of this cultural exchange. But it transformed them as well, stimulating innovative creative practices and opening up new territories of border writing. Translation became a vital site of cultural production.

While this book goes beyond the Canadian experience to open onto the widest issues of gender in translation, its perspective is marked by this initial context. Translation is considered as a mode of *engagement* with literature, as a kind of literary activism. What will be emphasized is the way in which translators contribute to cultural debates and create new lines of cultural communication. Translators are necessarily involved in a politics of transmission, in perpetuating or contesting the values which sustain our literary culture.

Identity issues, including gender, have become a crucial factor in our understanding of culture today. The relevance of gender questions for translation was first articulated in terms of emotional affinities. The discussions I heard on the subject were intensely personal accounts of the way the identity and motivations of translators affect the work they do. Women translators wondered why they were working on texts which suddenly seemed alien to them, texts whose premises they could not share. At the same time, women were discovering feminist writing with which they felt intense affinities.

These individual reactions reflected a widespread intellectual preoccupation with identity and language. They meshed with other attempts to rethink the fit between social and literary values. It is hardly a coincidence that the period which saw the development of feminist and then gender studies also witnessed a remarkable growth in translation studies. The entry of gender into translation theory has a lot to do with the renewed prestige of translation as “re-writing” and as a bulwark against the unbridled forces of globalization, just as it shows the importance for all the social and human sciences of a critical reframing of gender, identity and subject-positions within language.

Most important, however, has been the decisive impact of feminism, as a political and literary movement, on translation theory and practice. Much of this book is concerned with tracing out the vectors of this influence, as it has disturbed established lines of transmission and rerouted the flow of literary traffic. Feminism has been responsible for creating new intellectual and cultural communities, just as it injected new ideological tensions into longstanding practices like Bible translation. It should be stressed, however, that it is not the gendered identity of the translator as such which influences the politics of transmission as much as the *project* which the translator is promoting. Feminism, in its diverse forms, has become the powerful basis of many such projects.

While the encounter between gender and translation studies was predictable, translation studies have been somewhat slow in fully negotiating the “cultural turn” announced in the mid-1980s. They have

only begun to engage with the complexity of identity, including gender. The aim of this book is therefore double: to cast the widest net around issues of gender in translation; and, through gender, to move translation studies closer to a cultural studies framework.

What does it mean to position translation within cultural studies? It means, principally, that the terms “culture,” “identity” and “gender” are not taken for granted but are themselves the object of inquiry. They are no longer self-explanatory notions which can be used unquestioningly. “Culture,” for instance, has often been used in translation studies as if it referred to an obvious and unproblematic reality. In fact, “culture” is one of the most embattled and ambiguous notions in contemporary thought, the site of much stimulating debate. Translation studies have much to gain from these debates, just as they can bring an important linguistic dimension to them.

The challenge of writing this book was to begin the process of disciplinary hybridization that I am calling for. I would be pleased to feel that this work might convince non-translators that translation involves more than narrow, technical issues, and that it will alert translation theorists to the range of issues suggested by gender.

This book owes a great deal to the enthusiasm and research skills of Anke Rohde. Her help was invaluable to me and I am confident that she will broaden and enrich a field of study which is barely introduced in this book. It is in large part due to the help of Anke, and of Sarah Hall at Routledge, that the manuscript could negotiate its way between London, Montreal and Bangalore, India—where I was on leave—to make it to publication on time. I am grateful to André Lefevere and Susan Bassnett for their initial encouragement. Very warm thanks are due to Barbara Godard, Judith Woodsworth, Lucille Nelson and André Lefevere for their expeditious and useful readings of the manuscript. The General Research Fund of Concordia University and a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada provided much-appreciated support for this work. I must especially acknowledge, however, the work of the translators and theoreticians who are at the origin of this book: Barbara Godard, Luise von Flotow, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood and Kathy Mezei.

I have been stimulated by the warm response of students to this topic. Taken together, translation and gender seem to offer a particularly attractive matrix through which to investigate issues of identity in language.

Chapter 1

Taking gendered positions in translation theory

Because they are necessarily “defective,” all translations are “reputed females.” In this neat equation, John Florio (1603) summarizes a heritage of double inferiority. Translators and women have historically been the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaidens to authors, women inferior to men. This forced partnership finds contemporary resonance in Nicole Ward Jouve’s statement that the translator occupies a “(culturally speaking) female position” (Jouve 1991: 47). And Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood’s echoing self-definition: “I am a translation because I am a woman” (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991: 95).

Whether affirmed or denounced, the femininity of translation is a persistent historical trope. “Woman” and “translator” have been relegated to the same position of discursive inferiority. The hierarchical authority of the original over the reproduction is linked with imagery of masculine and feminine; the original is considered the strong generative male, the translation the weaker and derivative female. We are not surprised to learn that the language used to describe translating dips liberally into the vocabulary of sexism, drawing on images of dominance and inferiority, fidelity and libertinage. The most persistent of these expressions, “les belles infidèles,” has for centuries encouraged an attitude of suspicion toward the seemingly but wayward translation.

Feminist translation theory aims to identify and critique the tangle of concepts which relegates both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder. To do so, it must investigate the processes through which translation has come to be “feminized,” and attempt to trouble the structures of authority which have maintained this association.

What indeed are the processes through which translation maintains and activates gender constructs? To begin to answer this question, I have chosen to move along a number of planes. First, conceptual: how have the sites of translation theory been implicitly gendered and how can this

theory be transformed? This is the task of the introductory chapter, which brings together the work of theorists who seek to disturb the clichéd language used to describe translation, and to replace it with terms which convey the active play of identities within translation practice. They do so through their understanding of the performative, and not simply representational, nature of language. Feminist translation thus reframes the question of “fidelity,” which has played like a stultifying refrain through the history of translation. 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.

Gender difference has been played out not only in the metaphors describing translation, but in actual practices of translation, in the specific social and historical forms through which women have understood and enacted their writing activities. How has this relationship between social and writing roles been articulated ([Chapter Two](#))? On the one hand, translation was the means through which women, beginning in the European Middle Ages, particularly, were able to gain access to the world of letters. Long excluded from the privileges of authorship, women turned to translation as a permissible form of public expression. Translation continued to serve as a kind of writer’s apprenticeship for women into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (George Eliot was first known as the “translatress of Strauss,” before she was known as a novelist.) In addition, translation was an important part of the social movements in which women participated, such as the fight against slavery. First-wave feminism was closely associated with this movement. Women have translated in order to build communication networks in the service of progressive political agendas and in the creative renewal of literary traditions. The great works of nineteenth- and twentieth-century French, Russian and German modernism were translated in part by women who made translation an expression of their political convictions. They believed, as Madame de Staël had so clearly stated, that movements of literary exchange are vital to the democratic life of any nation.

There is an intrinsic interest in unearthing the neglected intellectual and literary work of women: in bringing to light the strong figure of the “translatress” Aphra Behn, in making heard Madame de Staël’s ringing appeal to translation as a cure for the ills of sclerotic literatures, in remembering the remarkable creative accomplishments of Constance Garnett and Jean Starr Untermeyer. The goal of this initial survey, however, is not so much to construct an archive as to suggest the kinds of interrelations upon which such genealogies might be built. Rather than provide a simple listing of women translators, this overview seeks to

highlight a number of moments when translation became a strong mode of expression for women. These moments show to what extent the role of the translator meshes with social values, and how positions in the social hierarchy are reflected in the literary field.

“The location and organization of difference are crucial to a culture’s self-representation and its distribution of power,” observes Mary Poovey (Poovey 1988:199). A mapping of some of the points of interdependence between the literary and social fields illustrates indeed how differences are “organized” through various levels of society. One particularly striking example of such literary and social imbrication is the way translation offered itself as a means of expression for women during the English Renaissance, when the world of letters was otherwise closed to them. Women were encouraged to translate religious texts when they were forbidden from undertaking any other kind of public writing activity. Women were able to use this very limited point of entry for significant ends (Krontiris 1992). This example highlights the way in which the social values of writing roles are intensely contextual, expressing the very specific lines of tension which traverse gendered positions at a given moment.

In what ways have women interpreted their role as translators? Feelings of aggressive rivalry or affectionate fusion have often been evoked to describe the closeness which translators feel for the texts they are working on—and, by extension, their authors. These feelings can be exacerbated when differences of gender are also involved, and when the translation work involves contact between the two writers. While some feminist translators have suggested that they might best deal with the discomforts of a negative legacy by ensuring that women’s texts are translated only by women translators, men’s by men, this solution could not be a long-term one.¹ As Lori Chamberlain argues,

one of the challenges for feminist translators is to move beyond questions of the sex of the author and translator. Working within the conventional hierarchies...the female translator of a female author’s text and the male translator of a male author’s text will be bound by the same power relations: what must be subverted is the process by which translation complies with gender constructs.

(Chamberlain 1992:72)

The creative discomforts of working relationships have been described with considerable wit by major translators of the twentieth century, Jean Starr Untermeyer, Willa Muir, Helen LowePorter and Suzanne Levine.

Beyond their anecdotal interest, and their value as chronicles of the translation process, these accounts show in what ways gender difference has been present—in sometimes productive, sometimes insidious, ways—in the activity of language transfer.

Two especially important areas involving feminist theory and translation are reserved for special examination in this book. The first is the transatlantic displacement of the writings of the French feminists, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, into the Anglo-American intellectual world ([Chapter Three](#)). This exchange brings into light the network of tensions which are so characteristic of our current intellectual context: the conflictual pulls between internationalist feminist solidarity and national affiliations, the deconstructive drive toward attenuation of authorship and the continuing structures of textual authority, the fading of disciplinary borders and their continual reappearance. The “taming” of French feminist theory in the Anglo-American context came about through the gradual interpenetration of philosophical systems, on the one hand the speculative Continental tradition and on the other the more empirical Anglo-American tradition; this process of accommodation was facilitated by various levels and procedures of mediation: commentary, interpretation and translation.

The transatlantic passage of French feminist thought brought about effects of distortion and appropriation. These effects inevitably accompany any important movement of ideas; they result from the diversity of interests and desires which commands the exchange, and from the reformulation and renewals demanded of the target language. The distortion effects of the exchange are perhaps best witnessed in the reception given to the work of Hélène Cixous, which was until recently interpreted on the basis of a very narrow sampling.

The second case study examines contemporary feminist biblical translation ([Chapter Four](#)). What is particularly striking about the feminist intervention in this area is that it does not consider itself, nor is it often considered to be, an aberration in a seamless tradition. Rather, feminism appears as yet another social and ideological stance from which Bible translation can be undertaken—a new face in a long line of competing figures going back to the Septuagint. The debates over feminist and inclusive-language interpretations of the Bible enhance our understanding of translation as a substantial interpretative move, at the same time as they draw attention to the conflictual implications of gendered language. While there are strong and powerful voices calling for inclusive-language versions of the Bible (resulting in the 1995 publication by Oxford University Press of an inclusive-language version

of the New Testament and Psalms), there are equally insistent voices—among feminists—calling for more historically anchored versions. As is often the case with the Bible, the interaction between dogma and meaning becomes particularly intense. The long history of the Bible magnifies the importance of translation issues, showing them to be ideologically saturated. In contrast to most other areas of cultural transmission, where translation is so often treated as a mechanical act, biblical scholarship has always recognized that translation carries with it both the dangers and the promises of interpretation.

In both the transportation of French feminism and new projects of Bible translation there is a particularly revealing conjunction of gender and language issues. Consciously feminist principles are invoked in the choice and manner of the texts translated. These connections allow us to see how translation frames and directs ongoing processes of intellectual transmission. The links of mediation are not automatic; they are not imposed or organized by some dispassionate cultural authority. Rather, translators are involved in the materials through which they work; they are fully invested in the process of transfer.

The final chapter explores the forms which an alliance between translation studies and cultural studies could take. Following recent feminist theory, this section projects gender onto the larger canvas of cultural identity issues. Gender is an element of identity and experience which, like other cultural identities, takes form through social consciousness. The work of theorist Gayatri Spivak, in particular, works as a pivot, engaging the practice of translation with post-colonial theory. Like Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak challenges the meaning of translation within a universe of shifting borders, emphasizing the powers of translation to define and articulate otherness. Postcolonial theory, like the writing of women who invoke the transformatory potential of translation (such as Nicole Brossard, Eva Hoffman, Christine Brooke-Rose), questions the borders between nations and languages.

Each of the chapters investigates one area of the interplay between gender and translation, but makes no claim to exhaust this area. That most of the translators discussed wrote in English is a sign of the preliminary nature of this research.² While the first and last chapters are largely theoretical in nature, the three middle chapters are intended as case studies which will hopefully provide material useful for continued research in these areas. Whether the complicities between gender and translation become the basis of a consciously transformative project (as in feminist translation theory and practice) or whether they emerge out

of social positions and networks, investigation of the interplay between them leads to unexpected views of otherwise familiar terrain.

A final preliminary remark must be made concerning the meaning of the term gender. Judith Butler opens her attempt to “trouble” the meaning of gender in something of an irreverent tone:

Contemporary feminist debates over the meanings of gender lead time and again to a certain sense of trouble, as if the in-determinacy of gender might eventually culminate in the failure of feminism. Perhaps trouble need not carry such a negative valence.

(Butler 1990:ix)

She argues that the search for definition should be abandoned in favor of genealogical critique:

A genealogical critique refuses to search for the origins of gender, the inner truth of female desire, a genuine or authentic sexual identity that repression has kept from view; rather, genealogy investigates the political stakes in designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin.... Precisely because “female” no longer appears to be a stable notion, its meaning as troubled and unfixed as “woman,” and because both terms gain their troubled significations only as relational terms, this inquiry takes as its focus gender and the relational analysis it suggests.

(ibid.: xi)

Gender, therefore, is never a primary identity emerging out of the depths of the self, but a discursive construction enunciated at multiple sites. In the context of this particular study, the historical variability of discourses of gender must be emphasized. Although Aphra Behn and Barbara Godard both use prefaces to draw attention to their identity as women translators, the import of that identity is vastly different in each case. While Behn points to her gender to apologize for her lack of a classical education and her ignorance in scientific matters, Barbara Godard emphasizes the ways in which her understanding of the creative project of the author animates her own work.

The ways in which translators draw attention to their identities as women—or more specifically as feminists—are highlighted here in order to explain the affinities or frustrations they feel in their translation work,

and in order to elucidate texts which themselves exploit the resources of grammatical gender for imaginative or political purposes. Gender is not always a relevant factor in translation. There are no *a priori* characteristics which would make women either more or less competent at their task. Where identity enters into play is the point at which the translator transforms the fact of gender into a social or literary project.³

GENDER IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

Some of the most exciting developments in translation studies since the 1980s have been part of what has been called “the cultural turn.” The turn to culture implies adding an important dimension to translation studies. Instead of asking the traditional question which has preoccupied translation theorists—“how should we translate, what is a correct translation?”—the emphasis is placed on a descriptive approach: “what do translations do, how do they circulate in the world and elicit response?” This shift emphasizes the reality of translations as documents which exist materially and move about, add to our store of knowledge, and contribute to ongoing changes in esthetics.

More importantly, it allows us to understand translations as being related in organic ways to other modes of communication, and to see translations as writing practices fully informed by the tensions that traverse all cultural representation. That is, it defines translation as a process of mediation which does not stand above ideology but works through it.

This turn in translation studies prepared the terrain for a fruitful encounter with feminist thought. Feminism has been one of the most potent forms of cultural identity to take on linguistic and social expression over the last decades. “*La liberation des femmes passe par le langage*” was a familiar rallying call of the 1970s: women’s liberation must first be a liberation of/from language. Through the work of feminist scholars over the last twenty to thirty years, there has emerged a clear sense of language as a site of contested meanings, as an arena in which subjects test and prove themselves. And so it is hardly surprising that translation studies should be nourished in important ways by feminist thought.

The consequences for translation have been various and decisive. Over the years, the critique of sexism in language has moved from a largely corrective and action-oriented attention to vocabulary (as we see in the work of Louky Bersianik or Mary Daly) to a broader examination of the symbolic power of the feminine in language. Attention has shifted from critical analysis of a single linguistic code (English, French) to the

conceptual terms regulating the intervention of individual and collective subjects within speech and writing.

The alliance between translation studies and feminism therefore emerged out of a common intellectual and institutional context. As fields of inquiry which emerged during the 1970s and gained increasing institutional recognition through the 1980s, translation studies and feminist thought are similarly grounded in the dynamics of a period which gave strong prominence to language. Translation studies have been impelled by many of the concerns central to feminism: the distrust of traditional hierarchies and gendered roles, deep suspicion of rules defining fidelity, and the questioning of universal standards of meaning and value. Both feminism and translation are concerned by the way “secondariness” comes to be defined and canonized; both are tools for a critical understanding of difference as it is represented in language. The most compelling questions for both fields remain: how are social, sexual and historical differences expressed in language and how can these differences be transferred across languages? What kinds of fidelities are expected of women and translators—in relation to the more powerful terms of their respective hierarchies?

For these fields of study, language intervenes actively in the creation of meaning. Like other forms of representation, language does not simply “mirror” reality; it contributes to it. Translation, we know, refers to a process of interlinguistic transfer. Translators communicate, re-write, manipulate a text in order to make it available to a second language public. Thus they can use language as cultural intervention, as part of an effort to alter expressions of domination, whether at the level of concepts, of syntax or of terminology.

ENGENDERED THEORY

“Le traducteur subit, soumis, subjugué. Femelle, même s’il est parfois amazone. Pris, prisonnier, enferré, enserré. Ne s’appartient plus. Aliené, absorbé, ravi et dépossédé de sa parole propre. Parole de l’autre, l’auteur, la hauteur. Le traducteur est inférieur, postérieur, postsynchronisé. Le traducteur rend en son langage l’auteur publiable, mais il est oubliable.

(Albert Bensoussan, quoted in Levine 1991:183)

Although presented in humorous mode, as a parody of the wordplay fashionable in French writing during the 1970s, Albert Bensoussan’s

description of the translator as female is consonant with a long tradition. Translation is often explained in metaphorical terms, some figures—including the sexist tropes mentioned earlier (p. 1)—assuming extraordinary longevity. Two other popular figures are the “property” and the “clothing” metaphors. Translation is consistently represented as an unequal struggle for authority over the text: the author is the landlord, the translator simply a tenant. Even more persistent is the clothing metaphor, which presents the foreign author as now clothed in new garb (Woodsworth 1986).

Recent discussions of the use of metaphors to describe translation point to the real hermeneutical value of metaphor. It is suggested that there is something about the translating experience that calls for metaphorical language (D’huilst 1992). If this is indeed the case, we can wonder at the persistence of sexist language to describe translation.⁴ If metaphor is to be considered proto-theoretical language, then the language of translation theory has indeed been profoundly marked by gender.

John Florio’s reference to translations as “female” has spawned a rich progeny. In numerous prefaces and critical texts, including work as recent as George Steiner’s *After Babel* (1975), the relation between author and translator, original and translation, is frequently sexualized. Lori Chamberlain suggests that these figures point to a frustrated struggle for mastery of meaning and for paternity rights over the bastard product of interlinguistic transfer. As Lori Chamberlain’s discussion makes clear, the metaphors of translation are a symptom of larger issues of Western culture and in particular of the anxieties involved in establishing and maintaining borders.

What proclaims itself to be an aesthetic problem is represented in terms of sex, family, and the state, and what is consistently at issue is power... I would argue that the reason translation is so overcoded, so overregulated, is that it threatens to erase the difference between production and reproduction which is essential to the establishment of power.

(Chamberlain 1992:66)

The historical continuity of gendered theorizing of translation is remarkable. Chamberlain refers to a particularly violent image taken from Deuteronomy 21:12–14 and used by Thomas Drant, the sixteenth-century English translator of Horace, to explain his method of translating the satirist. He refers to God’s command to the Israelites to shave the heads and pare the nails of captive women they wish to make their wives

in order to remove all signs of beauty from them. Elizabeth Castelli has pointed out that this reference goes back in fact to Jerome, the father of biblical translation, who makes reference to the same scriptural citation to explain his work with secular texts (Fiorenza 1993:195). This example points to the remarkable continuity of the Western tradition of gendered theorizing of translation.

The extraordinarily long career of the term “*Les belles infidèles*” is another case in point. Introduced by the French rhetorician Ménage (1613–1692), the adage declares that, like women, translations must be either beautiful or faithful. Its success is due in some measure to the way it positions fidelity as the opposite of beauty, ethics as the opposite of elegance, the drudgery of moral obligation as incompatible with stylistic (or marital) felicity. It is certainly not fortuitous that the expression was coined at a time when translations were considered as the principal means by which French was to be legitimated as a national language. The strategy used by Nicolas Perrot d’Ablancourt and his school of translators (which was known as the School of “*Les belles infidèles*”) was in fact a notoriously blatant policy of infidelity. He and his fellow-translators, many of them members of the Académie française, sought to enhance the prestige of French literature by providing translations of the Ancients, yet they wished at the same time to consolidate the norms of elegance of a nascent prose style (Zuber 1995; Cary 1963). Their program called therefore for systematically unfaithful translations. This stylistic infidelity has become something of a permanent feature of the French tradition of translation, according to Antoine Berman (Berman 1992). But correcting this cultural bias involves a reconceptualization of the relation between word and meaning, letter and spirit; it also involves a reevaluation of the power of the receiving culture to mold imported works according to its own image.

The conflict between beauty and infidelity, between letter and spirit, reaches far back into the memory of Western culture. The terms which we use to divide production from reproduction include some of the most fundamental concepts of our philosophical vocabulary. Derrida has shown how these recurrent oppositions stem from a complicity between gender conceptions and writing, mimesis and fidelity. The conventional view of translation supposes an active original and a passive translation, creation followed by a passive act of transmission. But what if writing and translation are understood as interdependent, each bound to the other in the recognition that representation is always an active process, that the original is also at a distance from its originating intention, that there is never a total presence of the speaking subject in discourse (Derrida 1979)?

If there is no primary meaning to be discovered, if translation is not in thrall to a deep and distant truth, where is fidelity to be grounded? It is appropriate that “fidelity,” this vexed and much-disputed term in the history of translation, should also have strong resonances in the history of gender politics. The crisis in marriage and the crisis in translation are identical, if considered from the point of view of their initial contract, according to Barbara Johnson.

For while both translators and spouses were once bound by contracts to love, honor, and obey, and while both inevitably betray, the current questioning of the possibility and desirability of conscious mastery makes that contract seem deluded and exploitative from the start.

(Johnson 1985:143)

Absolute fidelity, in this age of electronic reproduction, is reserved to the technologies of the photocopier and the sound system—although even these technologies are constantly confronted with the disappearing horizon of the absolute. When the indeterminations of consciousness are involved, can there be any standard by which fidelity is measured?

FIDELITY RECONSTRUED

The poverty of our conventional understanding of fidelity lies in its reliance on numerous sets of rigid binary oppositions which reciprocally validate one another. Translation is considered to be an act of reproduction, through which the meaning of a text is transferred from one language to another. Each polar element in the translating process is construed as an absolute, and meaning is transposed from one pole to the other. But the fixity implied in the oppositions between languages, between original/copy, author/translator, and, by analogy, male/female, cannot be absolute; these terms are rather to be placed on a continuum where each can be considered in relative terms. As Susan Bassnett points out, contemporary translation studies are struggling against “the old binary concept of translation [which] saw original and translated text as two poles,” seeking in contrast to conceptualize translation as a dynamic activity fully engaged with cultural systems (Bassnett 1992:66). Barbara Godard emphasizes the ways in which this view of translation eliminates “cultural traces and self-reflexive elements,” depriving the translated text of its “foundation in events.” “The translator is understood to be a servant, an invisible hand mechanically turning the word of one language into

another” (Godard 1990:91). It is by destroying the absolutes of polarity that we can advance in our understanding of social and literary relations. Attention must shift to those areas of identity where the indeterminate comes into play. Equivalence in translation, as contemporary translation theory emphasizes, cannot be a one-to-one proposition. The process of translation must be seen as a fluid production of meaning, similar to other kinds of writing. The hierarchy of writing roles, like gender identities, is increasingly to be recognized as mobile and performative. The interstitial now becomes the focus of investigation, the polarized extremes abandoned.

Because it is an activity which has long been theorized in terms of a hierarchy of gendered positions, the rethinking of translation will necessarily upset traditional vocabularies of domination. In particular, the rethinking of translation involves a widening of the definition of the translating subject. Who translates? Fidelity can only be understood if we take a new look at the identity of translating subjects and their enlarged area of responsibility as signatories of “doubly authored” documents. At the same time, a whole nexus of assumptions around issues of authority and agency come to be challenged. When meaning is no longer a hidden truth to be “discovered,” but a set of discursive conditions to be “re-created,” the work of the translator acquires added dimensions.

It is in the context of the need for new vocabularies to describe translation that Barbara Godard argues for women “writing their way into subjective agency” through a poetics of identity which might be called “transformance” (Godard 1990:89, 90). Feminist writing and translation meet in their common desire to foreground female subjectivity in the production of meaning. “The feminist translator, affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. *Womanhandling* the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest-self-effacing translator. [...]Feminist discourse presents transformation as performance as a model for translation.... This is at odds with the long dominant theory of translation as equivalence grounded in a poetics of transparency” (ibid.: 91). Susan Bassnett argues for an “orgasmic” theory of translation, the result of “elements [that] are fused into a new whole in an encounter that is mutual, pleasurable and respectful” (Bassnett 1992: 72).

Faced with texts which themselves challenge the way in which meaning is made, the translator is increasingly aware of her role in *determining* meaning, and of her responsibility in rendering it. Susanne

de Lotbinière-Harwood (1991) and Suzanne Jill Levine (1991), in different ways, explain how their creative inter-action with the work will provoke the emergence of new meanings. De Lotbinière-Harwood puts special emphasis on re-gendering the English language, in response to the provocative gender-consciousness of French-language writers; Levine is attentive to the marks which a conflictual “closelaboration” with text, author or cultural context will leave in the translation.

AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Feminist translation has to do with issues of authority. Who is to determine when the magic moment of equivalence has been reached? Take the following often cited example, from a dramatic work produced by a group of feminist writers in Quebec in 1976: “*Ce soir, j’entre dans l’histoire sans relever ma jupe*” (von Flotow 1991: 69). A literal translation would be something like: “this evening I’m entering history without pulling up my skirt.” The feminist translator Linda Gaboriau ventured the much stronger: “this evening, I’m entering history without opening my legs” (von Flotow 1991: 69). Has equivalence been attained?

Luise von Flotow’s useful discussion of feminist translation opens with this example, emphasizing the fact that the cultural and social context of feminism has had much to do with the vigor and boldness of translation by women in Quebec and English Canada. Von Flotow names and describes three practices of feminist translation: supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and “hijacking.”

Supplementing, which compensates for the differences between languages, calls for interventionist moves by the translator. Von Flotow offers the example of Barbara Godard’s translation (1983) of *L’Amèr*, a novel by Nicole Brossard. “*Amèr*” contains at least three terms: *mère* (mother), *mer* (sea) and *amer* (bitter). Godard’s method of conveying the untranslatable wordplay of the title combines three terms: “The Sea Our Mother” and “Sea (S)mothers and (S)our Mothers” in a graphic play around a large “S”: “The” standing to the left, “e,” “our” and “mothers” vertically lined up on the right, forming “These Our Mothers” or “These Sour Smothers.”

Supplementing, the equivalent of what some theorists call compensation, has always been recognized as a legitimate process of translation. However, in a cultural context like ours, where the predominant mode of translation is transparent and fluent, the foregrounding of such techniques can begin to look like textual exhibitionism.

Prefacing and footnoting, remarks von Flotow, have practically become routine in feminist translation. She points again to the work of Barbara Godard, this time to describe the very didactic role of her prefaces which both explain the intentions of the original text and outline her own translation strategies. Prefaces and footnotes draw attention to the translation process, at the same time as they flesh out the portrait of the intended reader.

Von Flotow's third technique, "hijacking," touches on the more controversial and problematic aspects of translation. She refers to the appropriation of a text whose intentions are not necessarily feminist by the feminist translator. Her example is the feminizing translation of Lise Gauvin's *Lettres d'une autre* by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood. The author used the generic masculine in her text; the translator "corrects" the language, avoiding male generic terms where they appear in French and using "*Québécois-e-s*" where the original was happy with "*Québécois*" in all cases. While it is known that the author has feminist sympathies and worked in collaboration with the translator, Harwood explains in her preface that "My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this translation has used every translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language" (Gauvin 1989:9).

What is remarkable about this explanation is that the signature of the translator is given authority equivalent to that of authorship. As Barbara Godard has remarked, the affirmation of signature in this case is not a deconstructive move, but an attempt to reinstate a position of mastery. De Lotbinière-Harwood's autobiographical style of writing, her emphasis on the signature as the "fixing of a singular, embodied female subject," does suggest an appeal to "personal" rather than "discursive" positioning (Godard 1995b: 80). While we know, in this particular case, that the author seems to have been willing to abdicate her textual authority in favor of the translator's more radical stance toward language, one could wonder what the consequences of such a gesture might be in other circumstances. What would be the result of a translation which blatantly redirected the intention of the original text, consciously contravening its intentions?

We might recall here other cases where translation involves similar implications of deviance. In the emergence of new national literary forms, translation can be a means of skewing historical relations of authority. For instance, the *Fables* of Lafontaine were translated into Haitian creole in the nineteenth century; Shakespeare was clothed in the relaxed idioms of Quebec anglicized urban slang during the twentieth

(Brisset 1990). This parodization of elevated forms of writing becomes an instrument of cultural redress. The reader is provoked, forced to measure the distance between the conventional language of prestige and nascent forms of literary language.

Another mode of transgressive reappropriation was deployed by the modernist writers of Brazil. Their movement of “cultural anthropophagy” used translation to perform practices of trans-textualization. The political aims of the work of the de Campos brothers, Augusto and Haroldo, are transparent. They translate only the authors they believe to have revolutionized poetic form, including Pound and Joyce, in an attempt to radicalize the Brazilian literary idiom. Their techniques of “transtextualization” involve a displacing of European literary themes into the vocabulary of Brazilian modernism. This dethroning of literary icons, their displacement from high to low forms, involves a consciously transgressive impulse (Vieira 1994).

These somewhat unorthodox forms of language transfer remind us that literary exchanges can be undertaken in the service of a wide range of cultural agendas. Some of these practices might be understood as “hijacking” in the sense in which Luise von Flotow introduces it. However, the term hardly seems appropriate to describe most practices of feminist translation as they have been recently developed. Everything in these practices seems to point to a willful collusion and cooperation between text, author and translator. Author and translator are operating in a frame of contemporaneity, their work engaging in a dialogue of reciprocal influence. Feminist translation implies extending and developing the intention of the original text, not deforming it. That is why the most successful examples of such practices are to be found in an appropriate match between text and translating project.

CHALLENGING GRAMMATICAL GENDER

Where the feminist project of translation finds its most felicitous applications is in regard to texts which are themselves innovative writing practices. This is the case particularly of the language-centered texts of French feminist writers like H el ene Cixous, and of Nicole Brossard, France Th eoret, Madeleine Gagnon and Louky Bersianik in Quebec.

The novel *L'Eug elionne* (1976) by Louky Bersianik gives rise to a particularly illuminating match between writing and translation strategies. The novel uses satire, parody and allegory in its examination and denunciation of the misogyny of our society and its languages (Scott 1984:2). It is in fact the story of a feminist “Evangelist,” a messenger

carrying news of the overwhelming influence of patriarchy within the institutions and traditions of the Western world. It is a humorous but biting investigation into the sexist nature of human “knowledge,” including the theories of a man designated as Saint Sigmund. A major part of the book deals with how language, that is the French language, plays a role in the oppression of women. Bersianik insists on the numerous ways in which language institutes and maintains social inequalities, and acts as a legitimating tool of patriarchal authority.

Bersianik writes, in effect, to undo a linguistic system and a western philosophical tradition in which women have been continually subdued and silenced by patriarchal law and by a male-oriented grammar and lexicon that have alienated them from their own history, from meaningful patterns of self-expression, and, ultimately, from one another.

(Gould 1990:156)

Though Bersianik’s critique is all-embracing, and, like Mary Daly’s similarly ambitious attacks on language, invokes the phallo centrism of all Western institutions including the Church, she returns persistently to the question of language. Two aspects of language are especially emphasized: naming strategies and grammatical gender-marking. Both involve dilemmas for translation, because they use language-specific devices to foreground these grammatical features of French language usage.

The term gender, usually attributed to Protagoras (Cameron 1992:89), is derived from a term meaning class or kind and referred to the division of Greek nouns into masculine, feminine and neuter. Grammatical gender means that nouns are placed in classes not according to their meaning but according to their form. This form determines the way the word will behave grammatically as regards the agreement of adjectives, articles and pronouns. Grammatical gender is a formal property and has nothing to do with meaning.

Latin and Greek had three genders (as does modern German); there are also languages with two (French) and languages which have a much larger set (Bantu languages) (ibid.: 90). English has “natural” gender rather than grammatical gender. This means that gender is attributed not by form but by meaning.

Gender is not normally considered a “significant” element of language for translation. Because grammatical categories belong to the structural obligations of a language, they are, like the other elements which

constitute the mechanics of a language, meaningless. Roman Jakobson shows, however, that grammatical gender can be invested with meaning in certain cases, as when language is turned away from its instrumental or communicative functions and used in poetry and mythology. Grammatical gender then takes on symbolic meaning, as when the poet wishes to emphasize the mythological origins and gendered identities of the terms for the days of the week, the terms for night and day, or sin and death (Jakobson 1959). In these cases, grammatical gender must be taken into consideration for translation.

While grammarians have insisted on gender-marking in language as purely conventional, feminist theoreticians follow Jakobson in re-investing gender-markers with meaning. The meaning which they wish to make manifest is both poetic and, especially, ideological. They wish to show in what ways gender differences serve as the unquestioned foundations of our cultural life.

That gender differences in language exercise a powerful imaginary role, even in English which has only “natural” and not “grammatical” gender, is clear in the following “thought experiment” reported by Deborah Cameron. Participants were presented with the following pairs of words: knife/fork; Ford/Chevrolet; salt/pepper; vanilla/chocolate; they were asked which word of each pair was masculine and which was feminine.

Strangely enough, people were able to perform this bizarre task without difficulty. Even more strangely, there was near total agreement on the “right” classification. Knife, Ford, pepper and chocolate were masculine, while fork, Chevrolet, salt and vanilla were feminine. This phenomenon is called “metaphorical gender.”
(Cameron 1992:82)

The experiment seems to indicate “that the concepts ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are infinitely detachable from anything having to do with ‘real’ sexual difference” (ibid.:82). They are associated with corresponding contrasts such as strong/weak, active/passive. It shows also that gender is relational, and is in fact an extension of the binary, oppositional structure that pervades all our thinking.

In fact we have been taught to consider as oppositional terms which are really aspects of a continuum, like old and young.

These considerations emphasize that, despite the absence of a strict version of grammatical gender, gender distinctions continue to operate massively through the English language. Indeed, they mark the work of

grammarians who present the masculine as an “unmarked” form, the simple form of the word, a form which can be used generically, and with relative neutrality of meaning (ibid.:97). Componential analysis, an influential approach to the understanding of vocabulary, builds this bias into its very methodology. And examples from common usage show that even when an English pronoun is theoretically neutral, it can carry an implicit gender charge. Formulations like “members of Parliament and their wives” or “the Greenlanders often swap wives” (Scott 1984:13) show that the apparent gender neutrality of English is constantly belied by the identification of the species (mankind) with the male of the species. The absence of “grammatical” gender in English seems to be adequately compensated for by the presence of “psychological” or “metaphorical” gender.

These considerations form the basis for Howard Scott’s work in translating the *Euguélionne*’s critique of gendered language from the French. Scott explains that his role as a translator of the book was not to provide an erudite *explanation* of sexism in the French language for the English-speaking reader, but to provide an equivalent political message. Bersianik’s call for “voluntarist action” on language, for conscious manipulation of the linguistic code to reflect the realities of gender, is to be given equal—but different—actualization in English.

How is this to be done? The Académie française, according to Bersianik, insists on the rule of the predominance of the masculine over the feminine. The grammatical consequence of accepting the masculine as the norm is the humiliating fact that a sentence such as “Three hundred women and one (male) cat walked down the street” would have to be put in the grammatical masculine. After all, the rule says that the masculine takes precedence over the feminine. While the French women in Bersianik’s novel picket the Académie française asking for a change to put an end to the humiliating and illogical superiority of the masculine, Scott’s English-speaking picketers address themselves to the “Guardians of Grammar,” there being no Academy in Anglo-Saxon culture, norms being maintained nonetheless by grammarians, editors, teachers and other assorted pedants (Scott 1984:26). They ask why it is logical to say “Everyone please take off his boots,” when there are 300 women and 1 man in the room (ibid.:112)? They propose that permission be granted for the use of the indefinite “their,” even in the singular. This would allow the request to be rephrased as “Everyone please take off their boots.” Would this not be a more just and logical formulation? They ask further: “Why does a MASTER wield authority, while a MISTRESS waits

patiently for her lover and master to come to her?” “Why are CHEFS male, while most of the GOOKS on this planet are women”? and so on.

In another passage of the book, the question of abortion is raised. The tormenters of a woman who has dared to seek abortion wish to emphasize the responsibility of women as criminals. They say, therefore, “Le ou la coupable doit être punie,” emphasizing the female identity of the guilty person and overturning the rule which would have made the noun masculine. In his translation, Howard Scott does the same in English when he adds the unexpected pronoun “she”: “The guilty one must be punished...whether she’s a man or a woman!” (ibid.:35).

While it might have been assumed that Bersianik’s language-specific critique of male institutional authority would have been untranslatable, Howard Scott shows that the persistence of “natural” gender in English makes many of Bersianik’s critiques equally pertinent in that language. Sometimes the very ease of translation is proof of the way all Western languages are saturated with sexism. In *L’Euguélionne*, there is a long alphabetical listing of hundreds of negative epithets referring to women, which is rather easily replaced by an equally long list of negative epithets in English: “Adulteress, Amazon, Babe, Bag, Battle-ax, Bird, Bitch, Broad, Bunny, etc.” (ibid.: 81–88). As a work of fiction in which humor is combined with didacticism, as an incisive and heady cry of denunciation emerging out of the first years of second-wave feminism, the novel gathers strength in this act of creative conversion.

Scott’s emphasis on the persistence of gender-marking in English is echoed by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood’s insistence that “We need to *resex* language” (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991:117). French texts by Bersianik and Michele Causse (1989) have given Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood the opportunity to develop a translation practice which “aims to make the feminine visible in language so that women are seen and heard in the world.” This belies the apparent neutrality of English. English, too, is a “‘he/man’ language, that is, it too uses the masculine pronoun ‘he’ and generic ‘man’ as universal signifiers” (ibid.:112). When Louky Bersianik asks “Quel est le féminin de garçon? C’est garce!” (literally, “What is the feminine of boy? It’s slut!” *Garce* is not really the feminine form of *garçon* but a derogatory term meaning slut or whore), Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood translates: “What’s the feminine of dog? It’s bitch” (ibid.:118).

The French lesbian writer Michele Causse feminizes words which are not normally feminized in French, writing “Nulle ne l’ignore, tout est langage” (playing on the expression “Nul n’est censé ignorer la loi” or “Ignorance of the law is no excuse”) or “Une muette parle a un sourd”

(de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991:123–124). Adaptations cannot be made here, short of inventing entirely new grammatical terms in English. De Lotbinière-Harwood came up with an original solution: to use a bold e in the English to indicate the foregrounding of gender in French. Thus: “No one ignores [is ignorant of] the fact that everything is language” and “A mute one speaks to a deaf one” (ibid.:123–134). Elsewhere Harwood draws attention to the message of the text through capitalization: “HuMan Rights” (ibid.:125).

And in her translations of Nicole Brossard’s *Le Desert mauve* (*Mauve Desert*), de Lotbinière-Harwood seeks out every expression of gender-marking. Responding to Brossard’s own gender-marking of the text, she constantly sought new ways of transferring these gender-markings to English:

My translation spells “author”: “auther,” as a way of rendering the feminized *auteure* pioneered and widely used by Quebec feminists; and renders the beautiful *amante*, lesbian lover, by “shelove.” To further eroticize the foreign tongue, “dawn,” a feminine noun in French, is referred to as “she” in the sentence: “Dawn attracts, this is certain, dawn fascinates. She is at the edge of night, at the edge of the soul a quiet certitude, an appeasement of the eyes smitten with changes and utopias.”... By being gender-specific about the characters’ interpersonal relations in a way English grammar does not normally allow, these feminization strategies make it possible for target-language readers to identify the lesbian in the text.

(de Lotbinière-Harwood 1995:162)

TRANSLATING THE SIGNIFIER: NICOLE BROSSARD AND BARBARA GODARD

The examples discussed from the translation work of Howard Scott and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood focus on grammatical gender and naming. Other practices of language-centered writing by feminists use the techniques and perceptions of modernism and post-modernism to investigate the very processes through which meaning comes to be. One of the most important contemporary feminist writers to investigate these processes of meaning creation is Nicole Brossard, a Quebec feminist writer who has achieved an international reputation. “More so than any other writer in Quebec, Brossard has attentively mapped the crucial

points of intersection and divergence between literary modernity and contemporary feminist practices of writing and reading” (Gould 1990: 53). Her writing is important here because of its powerful avant-garde techniques, which have engaged the theory and practice of feminist translators, notably Barbara Godard.

It is appropriate that particular attention be given here to Barbara Godard as the translator of Brossard. Godard’s search for innovative modes through which the translator’s position can be spoken make her work central to any formulation of feminist translation. This work has been developed through translations, prefaces, theoretical articles and, most recently, in the form of a translator’s diary.

In addition, the complicity between avant-garde women’s writing and translation was articulated by Godard in the pages of the journal *Tessera*, a Canadian periodical linking English-and French-speaking feminists (see Godard 1994). The journal was in fact founded to nourish dialogue between women writers and theorists from English Canada (in particular the West Coast and the Toronto regions) and from Quebec. Contrary to what might be expected, such literary exchange is not frequent in Canada, where English-and French-language creative writing is usually carried on within entirely separate institutions and traditions. The exchange also differed from other kinds of more clearly symbolic translation projects within Canada. The editors of *Tessera* were working with a strong sense of translation as creative interchange, as work which would carry across ideas and forms, extending into new writing projects. This intercultural challenging of boundaries accompanied a desire to break down the isolation of academic language, to put the accent on innovative forms, and to insist on the speaking subject. Godard’s translation work thus ties into the Canadian context of cultural interchange which imposes necessary attention to the unequal valences of the French and English languages.

To permit an understanding of some of the complexities of interplay between Nicole Brossard’s writing, in particular *Picture Theory*, and the translation process, it would be useful to begin with some excerpts from Barbara Godard’s translation diary (Godard 1995a). In this diary, Godard records the stages of her evolving relationship to the ideas and the forms of the text.

Would keeping a record of the translation process be one way to explore the interdiscursive production of meaning that is translation? The idea came to me in March when I was translating a poem of Lola Tostevin’s... I was having trouble with the

translation—difficulties involving the word play. The plan had been to write a text on the translation of the poem. Both re/writings came together: the essay on the process and the translation itself.

(Godard 1995a:69)

Godard pursues this double path of process and translation on the one hand by reading the texts which are cited in Brossard's novel, texts by Wittgenstein, Gertrude Stein, Joyce, Djuna Barnes, etc., and on the other by discussing specific translation problems—questions of rhythm and repetition being uppermost in *Picture Theory*. By mapping out the theoretical sources, and relating a variety of other serendipitous readings and encounters to the themes of the book, Godard reconstructs to some extent the thought processes behind the writing. Many disparate influences come to shed light on the workings of the text: Bakhtin on double-voicedness and the language clashes of the novel, Derrida on the mime of the masquerading subject, François Jacob on the actual and the virtual, quantum theory for its model of undecidability and parallax. Godard's tracking of her own intellectual footsteps, her attentiveness to the workings of her own mind, restores the reality of translation as a truly associative process, an ongoing appeal to memory and to a private thesaurus, a pingpong of potentially infinite rebounds.

The multiple dimensions of the translation process are part of what Godard understands as the “metonymic or contingent” nature of translation. According to this theory, translation is not a “carrying across, but a reworking of meaning” (Godard 1995a:73). Translation is not a simple transfer, but the continuation of a process of meaning creation, the circulation of meaning within a contingent network of texts and social discourses. Keeping a diary becomes therefore a means of providing a record of the “interdiscursive production of meaning” that is translation (ibid.:2). The writing of Nicole Brossard offers a particularly rich terrain for this mapping of cross-influences, creating many points of entry for the translator.

This attentiveness to the interdiscursive dimensions of writing, the need to restore the text to its social and intellectual context, does not prevent Godard from also scrutinizing the surface of the text: verb forms, wordplay, rhythm.

Each word here is important in itself yet is only one instance in the web of prose. Each word, each group of words, is used again and again with new words, the words making new contexts for the word, the phrase. These are the “sonorous liaisons” confounding

two words, linking one sound after another in the spiral which turns around and around on itself. “A rhythm is a rhythm is a rhythm,” Brossard echoes Stein, reading, writing, “in the heart of a suffering that was not mine in the sentences I prolong-”... Since the words construct reality, each word needs to be carefully constructed in itself, carefully reconstructed in translation, to build up the sonorous as well as syntactic, semantic chains for wor(l)ding.

(Godard 1995a:72)

Repetition is one of the problems she finds most vexing: how to remember the words chosen to translate a word which is ritually repeated in the original, and therefore must be repeated in the translation? The diary form echoes, in turn, the rhythms of the translator’s work as her moods change from the tedium of the forced effort of the daily task to the exhilaration of sudden insight. The ragged shapelessness of the diary emphasizes the ongoing movement of writing and translation as “arts of approach”:

No final version of the text is ever realizable. There are only approximations to be actualized within the conditions of different enunciative exchanges. As such, translation is concerned not with “target languages” and the conditions of “arrival” but with the ways of ordering relations between languages and cultures. Translation is an art of approach.

(ibid.:81)

In her preface to *Picture Theory*, (Brossard 1991), Godard exposes the difficulty of translating a text which unfolds at the intersection of science, philosophy and postmodernism, a text held together not by narrative but by networks of signifiers, constantly redeveloped in new combinations. *Picture Theory*, published in 1982, is an ambitious synthesis of Brossard’s innovative work until that point, a body of work comprising more than fifteen volumes of poetry and experimental prose. Karen Gould describes this work as a “probing meditation on the invisibility of women’s desire made visible through fiction, on the unrepresentable *extase* of a lesbian love scene rendered emotionally ‘real’ through abstraction” (Gould 1990:86). Godard places *Picture Theory* in the tradition of the “great modernist books of the night,” especially Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* (Godard 1991:7). And yet it is a book about light, about perception, a fiction of science, developing the narrative function

as hologram. The novel's first chapter involves four attempts to rewrite a scene of lesbian love, a scene whose profoundly revelatory truth is impossible to render into language. The text then moves between memory and the scene of writing, the luminous scenes of pleasure and the sites of urban obligation. There is constant interplay throughout the text of emotional intensity and the possibility for abstraction, the unbridgeable gap between the ecstatic moments of lived experience and the possibility for thought and abstraction which they release. Between these zones is the illusory surface: skin, screen. In this reframing of the relations between "reality" and "words," *Picture Theory* foregrounds a theory of the signifier as a "network of sliding signs," a theory deploying the "surrealist 'drift' of the sign" (ibid.:10).

The challenge of translating *Picture Theory* is to orchestrate the repeated themes and developments in the same way as is done in the original, reactivating fragments and themes. Godard emphasizes the "transferential process" of translation, the reading subject becoming the writing subject. Like the author, the translator uses disjunctive strategies, breaking with a unified language. For example, Brossard uses English words in her French text in order to disrupt the code and to enhance the power of certain terms. Godard indicates the passages which Brossard wrote in English in boldface. Elsewhere, she introduces French into her own text, this time with-out italics or boldface, in order to reproduce Brossard's strategy. The following sentences, for example, are part of the English text: "Habiter rue Laurier dans les bras de Claire Derive, lightly dressed, thinking of writing"; "Le poème hurlait **opening the mind**"; "Il neige, rue Laurier, our arms are crossed in such a way that the words we utter resonate from inside our breasts" (Brossard 1991: 128, 153, 144).

The interventionism of the translator is by no means gratuitous but solicited and oriented by the text itself. Godard's translation follows the mode of meaning generated by Brossard rather than the strictly surface phenomena which result. These strategies include using graphic modes of representation—in *These Our Mothers*, particularly, where a single French word is translated by two variants ("défaite" becoming "defeat" or "de facto" (Brossard 1983:17)), and "mère" occasionally becomes "mother" (ibid.:19), and in the recreation of semantic ambiguity in English. "Pour écrire, rêver est un accessoire" (21) becomes "Dreaming is an accessory to writ(h)ing" (17). "Chaque fois que l'espace me manque a l'horizon, la bouche s'entrouvre, la langue trouve l'ouverture" (26) becomes "Each time I lack space on the her/i/zon, my mouth opens, the tongue finds an opening, (her eye zone)" (22). "La mère recouvrant la

mer comme une parfaite synthèse” (29), becomes “(Mère) She covering (mer) sea like a perfect synthesis” (23). Only very occasionally does Godard use footnotes, as in an explanation of the French word *élan*, referring both to a burst of feeling and to a moose, the second meaning being important in Brossard’s reference to hunting (81). There is no sense here of the translator’s note disturbing the tranquil transparency of the page: Brossard herself uses many kinds of graphic devices to complicate the visual aspect of the page.

Godard’s own devices confront the reader of the English text with the ambiguity of the meaning of the signifier, just as polysemy leaves the meaning of the signifier ambiguous in the French. “Florence and Claire were lo(u)nging on the sand” (71) does not translate any particular word in the French sentence, which, how-ever, suggests the quality of emotion exchanged in the looks between the two women, stretched out on the sand. Godard underlines the complicities between matter and thought in “text/ure t/issue” (150). The same impulse motivates “the (f)actuality of words” (152). When Godard writes “Lang uage is feverish like a polysemic resource” (153), we understand that the disjunctive space separating the letters within the word itself refers to the impulse which drives Brossard’s own text, its own self-conscious foregrounding of the power of language.

Although these explicit graphic interventions are not quantitatively important (they are scattered sparsely throughout the text), they clearly mark the presence of the translator within the text. The reader is reading Nicole Brossard and Barbara Godard together. This presence is clear as well in the wordplays with which Godard translates other titles by Nicole Brossard. *Amantes* (female lovers) becomes *Lovhers* (a particularly happy find!), and *L’Amér*, as noted earlier, is *These Our Mothers*. These plays on words move right through the text, and so in *L’Amèr*, “*J’ai tué le ventre et fait éclater la mer*” (20) becomes “I have killed the womb and exploded the Sea/ Sour mother” (14).

Like other works by Brossard and by other feminist writers, *Picture Theory* foregrounds the work of translation within its own writing. This is done through repetition (with difference), as the same scene is rendered in various ways, emphasis being placed on the “angle of vision.” The section of the book called “Screenskintoo” is an echoing of “screenskin.” This echoing becomes the very basis of Brossard’s later novel, *Mauve Desert* (see pp. 158–161), and under-pins the critique of forms of representation. In *Picture Theory*, it is the hologram which becomes the privileged symbol of this self-conscious process of representation, “a superposition of multiple images from successive exposures, an

overlapping, a trope of intertextuality, of the interaction of discourses,” a virtual image displaying its trans-formation of fact.

The screen of representation is the white space or the gendered bodily surface on which desire inscribes its fiction. The hologram as figure for meaning making moves beyond Wittgenstein’s understanding of picture as fact. The hologram does not depict its pictorial form iconically, it performs it.

(Godard 1991:11)

In this way, the project of the feminist translator concords with the impulse of the text, questioning the most basic relationship of word to object, word to emotion, word to word. The writing of Nicole Brossard places transformation at the very center of its complex attention to the mechanisms of representation. It sets into play a dynamic of multiplicity and mimicry which makes linear and transparent meaning impossible. This conflation of writing with translation and transformation is clearly at odds with a long-dominant theory of translation as equivalence of fixed meanings. Feminist writing and translation practice come together in framing all writing as re-writing, all writing as involving a rhetoricity in which subjectivity is at work.

These perceptions of the active nature of language and of the determining role of the writing subject are not exclusive to feminist theory. They are central to the tenets of literary semiotics, post-modernist theory and critical practices included under the general rubric of deconstruction. It has been the feminist project, however, which has most cogently brought these perceptions to material realization with respect to translation. The combined work of Barbara Godard, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Carol Maier, Suzanne Jill Levine, Kathy Mezei, Luise von Flotow and others offer a fresh, sometimes purposefully provocative, take on the power of words.

THE VIOLENCE OF APPROPRIATION

It is not surprising that the ideas and practices of feminist translators have met with some opposition. It is perhaps surprising, however, that one of the most cogent critiques of feminist translation has come from the point of view of radical deconstructionism. For Rosemary Arrojo, the idealism of feminist translation appears simply to be a reverse-image of masculinist configurations. She wonders what makes a “feminist translator’s affirmation of her delight in interminable re-reading and re-

writing” the text some-thing positive and desirable whereas Steiner’s “masculine” model is merely “violent” and “appropriative” (Arrojo 1995: 73). Why is a masculinist interpretive model a betrayal while a feminist one is enriching? Arrojo’s critique goes further. Is the search for a “pacifistic” theory of translation not incompatible with the human need to “make reality (and consequently, also texts and objects) our own, the need to fight for the power to determine and to take over meaning”? Are these moves and desires not in themselves inevitably violent, “since they always intend to replace, or at least to supplement, other moves or other theories” (ibid.:74)? Arrojo suggests that “otherness” cannot only be projected onto the practices of those we reject but recognized as it faces us “in our own territory.”

There must indeed be a revaluation of the dialectic between translator and text. How is this movement between reading and rewriting, reception and appropriation, to be reconfigured in such a way as to avoid re-imposing the violence of subjectivity? Can there be a version of the female subject which does not re-introduce new but still vigorous dichotomies?

Arrojo’s critique underlines the ineluctability of violence in any act of interpretation or writing. Nietzsche, on the one hand, psychoanalysis, on the other, show that there is no escape from the violence involved in any attempt to make sense of the world, any attempt to use language in order to master the disorder of what lies beyond language. But beyond this all-englobing understanding of the drive to meaning as the expression of a will to power, there must be exploration of specific writing relationships. Surely what is to be most criticized in many of the masculinist formulations of fidelity in translation is the fact that they suppose a “universal” subject. Steiner’s translator is never explicitly defined as masculine, never inserted into a specific historical context. The model that Steiner provides is presented as gender-free, and yet the whole “thrust” of Steiner’s argument supposes the perspective of masculine sexuality. The power of feminist reformulations of the translating subject has been to give clear recognition to the specific conditions of the translating relationship, one of those conditions being the gendered nature of the text and of the subject. The feminist translator affirms her role as an active participant in the creation of meaning. In theoretical texts, in prefaces, in footnotes, she affirms the provisionality of meaning, drawing attention to the process of her own work.

What feminist theory highlights is a renewed sense of *agency* in translation. This agency cannot be understood as that of a free and unfettered writing subject. Rather, this agency must be understood in

relation to the various sites through which the translating subject defines itself. How are these sites to be defined? We can speak of a geographical position, a historical moment, of the relationship between translator and author, etc. But perhaps the most important aspect of the “enunciating position” of the translator is the *project*. Far from being blind to the political and interpretative dimensions of their own project, feminist translators quite willingly acknowledge their interventionism. This recognition gives content to the “difference” between original and translation, defines the parameters of the transfer process, and explains the mode of circulation of the translated text in its new environment.

IDEOLOGICALLY UNFRIENDLY TEXTS

The principles of feminist translation are, as we have shown, best illustrated when applied to texts which call for an active process of re-writing. The corollary question then becomes: what happens to the feminist translator when she is faced with less writerly texts, or, worse, texts which are esthetically or ideologically antipathetic to her?

This question suggests a larger one: should translators work only on “sympathetic” rather than “antagonistic” texts? The debate between the advantages of affinity versus friction has been a persistent one in Western letters. It has been recognized that translation is a way for writers to gain creative stimulation. It allows them to step out of their writing selves and take on the voice of another author. Seeking out authors whose work is different from one’s own, whose work even challenges one’s own, would be part of the logic of this operation.

Women translators have added some new dimensions to this well-rehearsed theme, pointing to gender as a new axis around which writing relationships are created. Frequently described in celebratory terms, the encounter of subjectivities framed by feminist translation is not without its frustrations. Luise von Flotow’s description of her attraction to the writing of Anne Dandurand and Elfriede Jelinek, and her attempts to move their aggressive eroticism into English, situates the strength of that encounter in a common sensibility. Not so in her two subsequent experiences with France Théoret’s *L’Homme qui peignait Staline* and Bianca Zagoline’s *La Femme a la fenêtre*, where she felt compelled to make changes to the text in accordance with her own esthetic and feminist sensibilities. These reactions of frustration are operative in all experiences of translation, and yet a feminist sensibility allows von Flotow to analyze them in a particularly sensitive and revealing way (von Flotow 1995).

In one of the first reflections on this question, in the early 1980s, Carol Maier speaks of the translator's attempt to "give voice, to make available texts that raise difficult questions and open perspectives." She believes that women translators should get "under the skin" of both antagonistic and sympathetic works. In so doing, they become independent, "resisting" interpreters of these works (Maier 1985:4).

Maier gives an example of the way in which the translation can accompany the work, guiding it into its relationship with its second public, and also providing a voice for the translator. Referring to the poetry of Octavio Armand and in particular to the shadowy presence of women in it, she describes the development of her own relationship to the text. As she became a "stronger, more antagonistic reader and translator," her identification became less submissive (Maier 1985:6). Her initial merging with the text develops into a need to be seen, to address the taunts. Antagonism does not lead to rupture, but to increased engagement.

Maier's experience is to be contrasted with that of Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood who recounts her experiences of translating macho poetry by the rock poet and singer Lucien Francoeur as the point of tension which impelled her forward into a feminist agenda. In 1979, in her preface to her translations of the poems of Francoeur, de Lotbinière-Harwood takes up the idiom and the cause of Francoeur:

lucien & moi, nous sommes québécois. from the opposite sides of the track, we met through rock & roll/the american dream, we are the pepsi generation, wired for sound and vision, we are the white niggers of america, rock is our culture, elvis, jerry lee, eddy, hank, gene, roy, johnny, black roots/red-hot rhythm, stopped anapestic: magnetic, marginal, subversive, rebel music, urban guerilla music. historically, we ARE that.

(de Lotbinière-Harwood 1995:57)

Harwood's total identification with Francoeur and with the nationalist rebellion against the imperialism of the English language is superbly described in the poetic introduction she provides for *Neons in the Night* (Francoeur 1981). Harwood re-creates the tone and the spirit of Francoeur's original blend of American rock culture and French poetry of transgression. Here is the beat of French America, transferred from hybridized French back into English, but transformed again through this additional border crossing.

Harwood explains that Francoeur was the first and last male poet she translated. During the three years she spent on his poetry, she realized that she was being forced by the poems' stance, by language, to "speak in the masculine...as if the only speaking place available, and the only audience possible, were male-bodied" (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1995: 64). But the new context of feminism, and feminist analysis of women's relationship to language, made her aware of the coercion of language positions and moved her affiliation from the spirit of rock 'n' roll to "the spirit of sister-hood" (ibid. 1995:64).

Were Harwood's translations affected by the different subject positions which she has adopted? Certainly they were. Especially as she takes on the writing of self-consciously transgressive feminist writers, Harwood feels increasingly authorized (or, in her vocabulary, authorized) to valorize the signs of the feminine in the translated text—even if this involves some infractions to normative grammar.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

It is a feature of contemporary feminist literary transmission that increased attention is being given to the politics of translation. The very idea of an international feminist community cutting across barriers of national identity brought with it a necessary concern for the work of translators. One example of such a project is the anthology *Women Writing in India* (Tharu and Lalita 1993). This is a magnificent collection of writings, the result of a major scholarly effort to rediscover forgotten texts and to re-excavate the foundations of the Indian literary establishment. The second volume, published in 1993 and devoted to twentieth-century literature, consists mainly of translations from Indian languages. I would argue that the attention to language shown in the anthology is not the chance result of the particular sensitivities of the editors. There is in the feminist project of restoring forgotten voices a necessary sensitivity to the material conditions of writing. It makes sense that such attentiveness extend to the conditions of transmission of the work.

While most introductions to translations are content to vaunt the accuracy and readability of the texts, the editors of this anthology present a careful analysis of the problems involved. Their criteria for judging a translation included the fact that "translation takes place where two, invariably unequal, worlds collide," emphasizing the inequalities between the worlds represented (Tharu and Lalita 1993:xx). There is

often a reductive process in play when local, regional languages are turned into versions of international idioms like English.

We have tried, therefore, in the translations (not always successfully) to strain against the reductive and often stereo-typical homogenization involved in this process. We preferred translations that did not domesticate the work either into a pan-Indian or into a “universalist” mode, but demanded of the reader too a translation of herself into another sociohistorical ethos.

(*ibid.*:xx)

This does not mean that abundant glosses are provided. The reader is to work her way into these universes, learn slowly, “as she relates to the objects, the concerns, the logic of the worlds women have inhabited over the years.”

Most interesting is the admission by the editors that some texts could not be integrated because of the “failure” of their translations. In one case, a leading contemporary Hindi writer’s dialect, using earthy, lewd diction, was considered untranslatable into standard English. A story by a leading Urdu writer was left out “because of disagreements over the translation” (*ibid.*:xxi xxi). Unfortunately there is no additional information given concerning these failures.

Attention to the specificity of the source languages of their texts is also reflected in another failure recounted by the editors. They had at first intended to reproduce through transliteration the specific pronunciation of Indian words as they existed in their original languages. The idea was to re-anchor these terms within the regional languages, thus respecting their various origins. In the end the visual result of this effort was considered excessively foreignizing and confusing. Recognizing that the tradition they were most wary of reproducing was the erudite distancing of the Orientalist gaze, the editors chose to abandon this project. The same decision underlay the decision to italicize an Indian-language word the first time a reader meets it, but not later. “What we had gained as a result of all this was a ‘reader-friendly’ page that did not look like an Orientalist text. What we had lost—and we are sad about it—was the variety of the regional languages” (*ibid.*:xxii).

The sometimes irreconcilable conflict between ideological concerns and the demands of successful transmission is highlighted in this discussion. A desire to respect cultural specificity comes up against the need to take these Indian texts out of the Orientalist tradition and reframe them within the new internationalism of women’s writing. As we will

see in Gayatri Spivak's politics of translation in [Chapter Five](#) of this book, the postcolonial context imposes its own constraints on the translation process. Attention must be given not only to the gendered aspects of the exchange, but to the heritage of inequality inscribed into the very languages of contact.

THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION

The contradictory pulls of different ideological pressures can also be a problem in translating texts which are historically, as well as culturally, distant. So far we have discussed the relationship between the translator and contemporaneous texts. Adding a historical dimension to this question introduces additional complexity. Consider the dilemma of a translator facing a text whose ideological position seems discordant with what we today consider correct but which was thought radical in its own time. This is the case for eighteenth-century French anti-slavery writings by Olympe de Gouges, Claire de Duras and Germaine de Staël, writings recently collected and translated under the title *Translating Slavery* by a group of scholars under the direction of Doris Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (Kadish and Massardier-Kenney 1994). In a series of essays, the contributors foreground issues of gender and race, questioning the position of both writer and translator. How is the translator to inscribe her ambivalence toward the text, her enthusiasm for the political activism of these important French women writers, as well as the need to contextualize the ambivalent message which they deliver? How is the translator to mediate between two historical moments which do not frame the representation of race in the same ways?

The editors of the volume show how these texts, though progressive in their time, are nourished by what we now recognize as Western condescension and by exoticizing forms of cultural imperialism. None of these women, in their political lives or in their fiction, argued for the total abolition of slavery, but only militated for the attenuation of the cruelty associated with it. Their texts use what we today consider derogatory epithets for describing foreign cultures. Is it sufficient, asks Massardier-Kenney, to acknowledge this distance in the preface, or should a recognition of the progressive nature of the text in its time become part of the texture of the translation (ibid. 14–15)?

Though the contributors for the most part acknowledge the delicate nature of the issues involved, the desire to valorize the anti-slavery writings of these women without imposing an anachronistic grid on their work, there is also some discussion of possible textual interventions by

translators. One highly original suggestion is proposed by the translators of Madame de Staël's *Mirza*. They suggest that some of the exoticizing dynamics of de Staël's text could be attenuated if the text were more concretely grounded in African reality. At a few strategic moments in the text, the translators introduce a new language: Wolof. They choose to translate not from French to English, but from French to Wolof, the language in which the African characters represented in the text would have "realistically" spoken. The English translation of these few Wolof phrases is given in parentheses. The translators thus introduce into the text a language whose presence was only implicit in Madame de Staël's story. They have restored the voice of characters whose ability to communicate was constrained by a passage through the imperial language. Code-switching becomes a way of inscribing multiplicity in a text governed by universalizing modes of representation.

The positions of the translators are mapped out perhaps only too explicitly in relation to both historical and contemporary understandings of cultural difference. In opting for a more complex representation of language itself than is present in the original text, they call attention to their own intervention in it. Their intrusive presence as translators is clearly foregrounded in the critical apparatus of the volume. In its double attention to gender and race, their translation seeks to reverse effects of cultural domination, using language to draw attention to patterns of oppression.

We might call this a strategy of "supplementing," in the vocabulary provided by Luise von Flotow (see pp. 14–15), although opponents would perhaps prefer to call it "hijacking." It is certainly a very visible and explicit form of interventionism, not necessarily demanded by the text itself, but rendered pertinent by the dissonance between the value and intention of the text in its time and contemporary perceptions. A historical preface would no doubt have been sufficient to underline this disparity, yet the introduction of code-switching into the text has an additional performative thrust. The historical integrity of the text is not respected, but the text now opens onto a plurality of languages which might well have been pleasing to the polyglot cosmopolitan, Madame de Staël.

ETHICS AND THE TRANSLATING SUBJECT

Why is this strategy acceptable? An answer to this question is possible only within the very broadest discussion of the ethics of translation. No writer has contributed more forcefully to this discussion than Antoine

Berman, the French translator and philosopher whose premature death has deprived translation studies of a vital source of inspiration. His ethics of translation takes into account the total context of mediation in which translation takes place, privileging translation moves which are buttressed by a comprehensive critical project (Berman 1995). The grounds for the evaluation of translations, according to Berman, are at once ethical and poetic. The “poeticity” of a text is defined by the translator’s success in having created an esthetic object: Berman uses the expression “*faire texte*” or “*faire oeuvre*” (Berman 1995:92). There is no particular esthetic mold that the translation must fall into, there is no particular method which is obligatory. What matters is that the translator has created an esthetic object.

The ethical character of translation is defined by “respect” for the original, an attitude which according to Berman includes dialogue and even confrontation. It also includes respect for the reader, and for the reader’s need for complexity. And therefore Berman can offer this lapidary formula: “Translators have *all the rights* as long as their game is played up front” (ibid.:93).

In other words, in contradiction with the position which he maintained in his influential first book, *L’Epreuve de l’étranger (The Experience of the Foreign)*, Berman suggests that there is no absolute locus for truth in translation. In that book, published in 1984, he resolutely took a position against ethnocentrism in translation, and in particular criticized the French tradition of edulcorating translations. His latest work (*Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*, 1995), however, somewhat modifies this position. To the extent that the translator makes explicit his or her project, and constructs a translating relationship based on coherent esthetic and ethical principles, the translation can be considered successful. Of course, these principles necessarily imply a translation which opens, amplifies and enriches a work; reductive, ethnocentric translations would not be acceptable within this framework.

Dismissing the longstanding but sterile standoff between literalism and freedom, source-oriented and target-oriented translation, Berman argues that “Every significant translation is grounded in a project, in an articulated goal. This project is determined by both the position of the translator and by the specific demands of the work to be translated” (Berman 1995:76). These goals do not necessarily have to be set out in verbal form, but they are part of the larger processes of mediation through which literary works and cultural movements are transmitted from one site to another. In addition, Berman points to the “horizon” which determines the parameters of the translating project. It is this changing

horizon which accounts for the necessity of re-translations, and the continually changing ways in which social movements come to nourish the work of linguistic exchange.

In particular, Berman emphasizes the creative role of the translating subject. He argues against the functionalist approach of the polysystem theorists, who defer to the overarching authority of the “norm” to explain the interaction of translation with writing practice. The translator, for Berman, is far more than a passive relay through which the norms of the receiving culture are reproduced (*ibid.*: 50–63). The subjectivity of the translator must be understood as part of a complex overlay of mediating activities, which allow for active and critical intervention.

To the extent, then, that Berman emphasizes the power of the translating subject to formulate ethical and esthetic goals, to the extent that he recognizes the translating project as a formative influence on the resulting text, his outlook is consonant with that of much feminist translation theory and practice. Would he have approved of the innovative translation of Madame de Staël’s text, its deliberate anachronisms, its unexpected extension of the horizon of translation? This question nicely points to the very different horizons which separate Berman from critics working within the perspective of identity politics. While Berman would certainly agree with feminist translators that the translating subject carries critical authority, he might not agree to the specific contents which could be conveyed by such authority. In particular, it is not entirely certain that the very conscious intervention into identity politics which gives rise to the alternative translation of Madame de Staël’s text would fit the definition which Berman gives to the creation of an esthetic object. When Berman speaks of the “position” of the translating subject, he is not referring to the categories of identity politics familiar to the Anglo-American milieu, but to the building of the self-awareness of the translator within the domain of the “scriptural” (*ibid.*: 74–75).

Nevertheless, his call for a theory of the “translating subject” (*ibid.*: 75) has resonance for theoreticians of feminist translation. This subject is not to be confused with the person of the translator herself, who would be a self-declared authority, sole source of responsibility for meaning creation. Nor is it to be grounded in an atemporal or prediscursive essence. This elusive and complex position cannot be given a content-based definition. It is perhaps best approached through overlapping descriptions like the ones attempted by Barbara Godard, Suzanne Jill Levine, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood or Luise von Flotow, in their personalized forms of critical writing. In mapping out the cognitive and

affective components of translation, they provide a view of the territory within which the translator maneuvers. Exploring the lie of this land, we understand that it is the ongoing relation of the translator to her writing project—and not a single predetermined imperative—which creates the conditions for successful translation.

Chapter 2

Creating new lines of transmission

Translatress (1638), Translatrix (1892): a female translator.
(*Oxford Historical Dictionary*)

Despite its historical status as a weak and degraded version of authorship, translation has at times emerged as a strong form of expression for women—allowing them to enter the world of letters, to promote political causes and to engage in stimulating writing relationships. What will be considered in this chapter is the way in which women have used translation to open new axes of communication, to create new subject positions and to contribute to the intellectual and political life of their times.

An opposite tack could just as well have been pursued. It could be argued and certainly demonstrated that the persistent historical association between women and translation has also meant that women have been *confined* to a subordinate writing role, that they were “only” translators when they might have been enjoying the privileges of full authorship, “bearers of the word” (Homans 1986) rather than creators. This tension must indeed be read into any consideration of the interaction between gender roles and writing positions. But it need not imply that the link between the social role of women and the literary position of the translator led only to negative results; nor should it obscure the potentially dynamic and inter-ventionist dimensions of translation. As Lori Chamberlain remarks, “Feminist and poststructuralist theory has encouraged us to read between or outside the lines of the dominant discourse for information about cultural formation and authority; translation can provide a wealth of such information about practices of domination and sub-version” (Chamberlain 1992:72). Investigation into the historical activities of translation by women provides a fresh vantage-point into literary practices and their social grounding.

The social inscription of the translatrix will be explored here principally through a series of exemplary figures including Aphra Behn, Germaine de Staël, Margaret Fuller, Eleanor Marx, Constance Garnett, Jean Starr Untermeyer, Willa Muir and Helen Lowe-Porter. The fact that all of these women combined their interest in translation with progressive social causes is more than coincidental; they understood that the transmission of significant literary texts was an essential, not an accessory, cultural task. The translation of key texts is an important aspect of any movement of ideas. This is evident for first-wave feminism and for the causes to which it was allied, especially the anti-slavery movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Although a great deal of research over the last decades has done much to unearth the previously neglected writing activities of women, the influence of translation has not been sufficiently stressed. Indeed, history has not been very mindful of translators, whatever their gender. If their names are remembered, it is rarely because of the task they have performed as cultural mediators but rather because of some other source of notoriety. One exception to that rule is the historical figure known as *la Malinche*. She is one of the most powerful and intriguing characters in the history of cultural relations, a Mayan slave who became the interpreter of Cortes, and who participated in the negotiations leading to the European conquest of Latin America. Whether decried as the Eve-like traitress who helped deliver the great Aztec empire into the hands of the Spaniards, or reclaimed as a part of the Mexican heritage, *la Malinche* has the signal honor of being one of the few women who is remembered for her work as a cultural intermediary, a translator.¹

The reasons why she has been remembered, however, are largely negative. We know of *la Malinche* because she became a convenient victim upon whom Mexican historians, and other chroniclers of the Conquest, could vent their anger. As the double and reverse image of *Guadalupe*, who is revered as the goddess of the sublime, *la Malinche* was a sexualized figure, associated with the rape and betrayal of the indigenous population of Mexico. She continues to be “on trial” for speaking the enemy’s language and bearing the enemy’s children (Alarcón 1989:86). History tells only of the moments she spent in the limelight of conquest; once her historic task of mediation was accomplished, her usefulness exhausted, she disappears from the record. There is no place for her in the world which grows out of the new order.

Yet *la Malinche* is a figure who is constantly being reinterpreted. In the latest and most positive reassessment of her role by Chicana women, *la Malinche* has become a symbol of the cross-breeding of cultures,

glorifying mixture to the point of impurity, representing the powers and the dangers associated with the role of intermediary. Her experience speaks of the continuing temptation to cross over, to transcend or to use the boundaries which continue to separate identities. For contemporary Chicana (Mexican-American) writers, *la Malinche* has become a key to understanding the double victimization of the Chicana within the context of colonization and patriarchy. Her story illustrates the temptation to “pass over” to the other side but also the power which can come with knowledge of two cultures. As an ambiguous model for Chicana women, *la Malinche* figures in feminist literature as a sign of the tensions generated by cultural diversity (Alarcón 1989).²

Fresh incarnations of *la Malinche* have been born within the new context of cultural hybridities in the New World. Performance artists and theorists like Coco Fusco have become “cultural translators” of a new sort. Caught between two worlds, Fusco uses media-based art, performance and other experimental forms to dramatize “the process of cultures meeting, clashing and mixing” (Fusco 1995: x). The dilemma of being caught between two worlds becomes the basis of the struggle to make art.

The legend of *la Malinche*, and the contemporary variations on its theme, suggest the points of tension which mark the dynamics of translation between unequal partners: the conflicts between loyalty and authority, agency and submission. The Mayan slave’s story presents a particularly dramatic version of the double-bind situation which traps cultural intermediaries between conflicting systems of values, and brings into play the Judeo-Christian association of sexuality, language and betrayal. Her modern descendants’ more playful enactments of this dialogue are yet profoundly motivated by the inequalities of the new international order. Their combined story reminds us that, as mediators standing between nations, translators occupy an uncomfortable and often uncategorizable position.

Despite the importance of their work, then, cultural translators have not enjoyed a particularly prominent role in history. Except for certain spectacular exceptions, like *la Malinche*, they do not often figure prominently in public space. Their “in-between” status is reflected even in the physical space given to their name as the authors of translated works. Readers intimate with the history of literature might be unable to name a single translator. That is because, in contrast to the name of the author, the name of the translator has neither meaning nor function in the world of letters. It is used neither to identify nor to catalogue books; it is

only exceptionally considered as conveying any particular information to the critic or reader.

There is an intrinsic interest, then, in rescuing translators from their shadowy existence, in making their work visible. As Lawrence Venuti has forcefully argued,

to make translation visible today is necessarily a political gesture; it at once discloses and contests the nationalist ideology implicit in the marginal status of translation in universities, forcing a reevaluation of pedagogical practices and disciplinary divisions which depend on translated texts.

(Venuti 1992:10)

But as well as contributing to this new affirmative stance, reconstructing the role of translation opens onto new areas of research. In particular, it allows us to investigate the historically diverse points where gendered social roles intersect with gendered writing roles. The productions of women translators are to be studied for what they can tell us about their intervention in cultural and intellectual movements of their times, and for the ways in which they themselves construe their gendered identities as relevant.

WHAT IS A TRANSLATOR?

What follows is not intended as a history of women translators or a complete listing of all women who have been identified with the task of translation. Such a comprehensive project is beyond the scope of this book; but, equally to the point, it is not consonant with the historical perspective I would like to develop. To postulate a single figure of the “translatrix” would tend to flatten the role of the translator into a single transhistorical function, and project the apparent unity of a contemporary subject position onto a more disorderly past. In fact, it is important to stress that the meaning given to the role of the translator is itself historically and socially constructed, the significance of the work of cultural mediation tied to the dynamics of the connections which it enacts.

To clarify this point, it would be useful to examine briefly what is meant by the term “translator.” To translate is not necessarily to “be a translator.” Many individuals may re-write a text in a new language without wishing to be identified as a translator.³ The meaning attributed to the task of the translator is circumscribed by a series of tensions which are continually rearticulated: tensions between “high” and “low” genres,

between the prestigious languages of antiquity and national vernaculars, between creative and derivative writing, between dominant and subordinate cultures.

What, then, is a “translator”? We ask the question in echo to Foucault’s “What is an author?” His essay (Foucault 1977) showed that the designation of authorship is historically determined and subject to variable criteria of application. Consider the dramatic reversal which affected scientific texts. During the Middle Ages, Foucault explains, an essential condition for the truthfulness of a scientific text was that it was signed—that it carried the name of an author considered to be authoritative, to belong to the *auctoritates*. With the modern era, the conditions are reversed. A scientific text, in order to be truthful, must be anonymous. That is, a condition of its truthfulness is that it must be made up of statements which could have been proffered by *anyone*. The guarantee of their truthfulness lies in the quality of the demonstration.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a totally new conception was developed when scientific texts were accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification. Authentication no longer required reference to the individual who had produced them; the role of the author disappeared as an index of truthfulness.

(Foucault 1977:126)

There are many other kinds of complexity which enter into the definition of authorship. For instance, is Nietzsche to be considered the “author” of laundry lists? Does authorship pertain only to texts or can it be extended to modes and systems of discourse, such as Marxism or psychoanalysis? The definition of authorship and the critical meaning which we attribute to the identity of the author have a lot to do with regimes of literary property, with the romanticized equation of authors with heroes, and with the terms which are used to evaluate literature. Our conceptions of authorship, despite the “death” of the author in twentieth-century literature, were given formative impulses by Renaissance conceptions of individualism and Romantic notions of subjective empowerment.

What of the translator then? We define translation today as referring to any kind of translinguistic activity: a translator is someone who transfers texts from one language to another—regardless of the type of text. Technical translation is distinguished from literary translation, but

both are considered to fall into the same overall category. This idea of translation as an essentially *translinguistic* activity seems to have been suggested first by early Italian Humanists when they introduced the term *traducere* to replace a variety of already existing terms. Before this moment, translation was considered a *transtextual* operation, separate terms in Greek and Roman antiquity as well as during the Middle Ages reflecting the specificity of the task of translating different literary genres. The Greek *hermeneuein* means both to “explain” and to “translate”; the Latin *interpres* refers both to the translator and the exegete. The activity of linguistic transfer was thus intimately tied to processes of explanation and explication (Berman 1988:28; Cave 1979:35). Folena explains that the cultural concept of translation hardly exists for the Greeks until the Alexandrine period. The Romans, on the contrary, had many expressions to designate poetic and literary translation: “*verto, converto, transverto, imitari, explicare, exprimere, reddere* and later *translatate*” (Folena 1973).

For the Middle Ages, translation was multidimensional. A great deal of literature has drawn attention to the astoundingly elastic boundaries which prevailed between discourse and commentary, textual transmission and transformation (Guillerm 1980; Monfrin 1964; Bakhtin 1981). During the Middle Ages, the boundary between one’s own words and those of another was fragile, equivocal, often purposely ambiguous. Except in those areas where the texts of the *auctoritates* were scrupulously respected, writing and glossing are continually blurred. The procedures and protocol of translation were variable according to the prestige of the source language (a “high” or a “low” language), and the cultural level of the text (religious or didactic, poetic or historical). The terms reflecting this diversity in Italian were *volgarizzare* and *transporre*, in French *espondre, translater, turner, metre en romanz, enromanchier* (Folena 1973:65).

The introduction of the term *traducere* by Leonardi Bruni in 1420 (*De interpretatione recta*) put an end to this diversity by defining all translation finally as a translinguistic activity (Folena 1973:120; Norton 1984). In French, this word will produce *traduire* and evince the existing term *translater* (Berman 1988:30). In its passage from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the modern conception of translation becomes linked to the establishment of a series of boundaries: boundaries defining national languages as complete and circumscribed units; boundaries surrounding the individual text and its meaning, and identifying the author as exclusive proprietor of the text. Antoine Compagnon refers to the “immobilisation” of the text, a process of enclosure which, beginning

in the seventeenth century, assimilates the literary text to a model of property (Compagnon 1979:349–356).

It is within these clearly delimited zones, then, that our modern understanding of the task of the translator took root. In fact, translation as we know it today depends on the security of bounded identities: the boundaries of authorship, language and text. At the same time, translation serves historically as a means to fix and consolidate these boundaries. From the Renaissance on, prefaces to translation insist on the patriotic functions of translation and on the role of language transfer in the processes of legitimizing national vernaculars. Subsequently, there will develop differing national models of translation, as Antoine Berman shows, the German mode developing in opposition to the French mode, further mobilizing translation in the service of nationally distinct cultural projects (Berman 1984).

ENTER THE TRANSLATRESS

It is also during the period of the Renaissance that the voice of the “translatress” first comes to be clearly heard. Women had been important translators before this time. Alexandra Barratt notes that of the five women whose names we know who wrote in Middle English—Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Juliana Berners, Eleanor Hull and Margaret Beaufort—three were principally known as translators (Barratt 1992:13).

In an intriguing argument, Douglas Robinson suggests, however, that the sixteenth century sees the beginnings of what he calls the “feminization” of translation, a process by which women use the discourse of the translator to give themselves a public voice and to ensure themselves a place in the world of writing (Robinson 1995). This identification of women with the role of translator at this time carries a progressive charge, as it challenges the confinement of women to the purely private sphere, and gains them admission into the world of letters.

During the Renaissance, particularly in England, translation was one of the only modes of intellectual activity considered appropriate for women. We are led to wonder whether translation condemned women to the margins of discourse or, on the contrary, rescued them from imposed silence. Are we to understand that translation remained a totally marginal form of activity, “adding” nothing to the intellectual circles into which it was introduced? Or did translation provide women with a socially sanctioned opportunity to exert influence? While some commentators assume that this work had little impact, others have seen

in translation a real contribution to the spiritual life of the times and a site from which dominant norms could be challenged and resisted.⁴

An initial difficulty in understanding the import of the translator's work resides in the words of the translator herself. Like her male colleagues, she regularly had recourse to the modesty topos: she would ritually claim the difficulty of her task, and the inadequacy of her means to face it. But while translators *profess* extreme subservience to their author, the reality of the translation can be entirely different.

We must recall that to publish or to appear in print was considered aggressive behavior for females during this period in Western culture. Authorship was considered a distinctly male activity and the female writer, exposing herself to the public eye, was vulnerable to accusations of presumption (Krontiris 1992:17–18). Translation offered women an involvement in literary culture, as both producer and consumer, that did not directly challenge male control of that culture. It provided a camouflage for involvement in text production and an opportunity for some degree of creativity. Investigation into this translation work provides a means of getting at some of the possible discrepancies between the public image of women and the oppressive social regulations, and their culturally productive activities (Krontiris 1992:3).

Paradoxically, religion (which reinforced female subservience) emerges as an area through which some women were able to contribute to the cultural activities of their age.

Religion actually creates one of the paradoxes of the sixteenth century: on the one hand women were enjoined to silence while on the other they were permitted to break that silence to demonstrate their faith and devotion to God. In the name of the word of God, women could and did claim their right to speak independently from men. They wrote, translated, and published many religious works. Religion probably prevented many women from writing on secular subjects, as most female authored material in this period consists of religious compositions and translations. None the less, religion gave them a legitimate voice and an opportunity to be heard.

(Krontiris 1992:10)

In England, for example, during the Reformation, women were strongly discouraged from writing, but they were permitted to translate religious texts. And so the great majority of existing texts and translations by English women of the period are on religious subjects.

Debarred from original discourse by the absence of rhetorical training, urged to translation for the greater glory of God, women did translate an extensive body of religious work, usually at the prompting of father, brother, or husband, and usually works which would be particularly useful to the state or to a political faction. When their work was published, it was often anonymous; if it was known to be by a woman, it was usually restricted to manuscripts in the family circle.

(Hannay 1985:9)

Even the learned women at the very center of cultural life of England published only translations: this is the case of Margaret More Roper (1505–1544), daughter of Thomas More, of the Cooke sisters, of Jane Lumley (1537–1576) and most notably of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke (1561–1621), sister of Philip Sidney and revered patroness of letters. Mary Sidney's literary accomplishments, in addition to the revisions of her brother's work, are largely composed of translations of contemporary religious works: Mornay's treatise *Discourse of Life and Death*, Petrarch's *Triumph of Death* and a versification of the Psalms; also a secular play, *Antonie* by Garnier (1592), which portrays Cleopatra in a positive light. It is the translation of this play which constitutes the unlikely deviation in the trajectory her work had followed until then. *Antonie* was the first secular play to be translated by a woman; it questions conventional definitions of masculine and feminine virtue, and offers a sympathetic view of the adulterous lovers. Krontiris admits that we cannot be certain that the translator was aware of the play's oppositional potential. There is little evidence either way, but it seems hardly likely that she was unaware of the fact that she was introducing the English audience to a favorable view of Cleopatra (Krontiris 1992:76).

Mary Sidney's translation work also had political implications in the context of the religious conflicts of the time. Her translation of Mornay's *Discours* was part of a series of translations undertaken by her brother, Sir Philip Sidney, and his Continental friends to support Mornay and the Huguenot cause. These were political gestures in favor of Protestantism (Hannay 1990:61). Even though Mary Sidney's translation work was quite evidently tied to the dynamics of culture and politics of her era, the very fact that she did confine herself to translation was regarded with approbation. Her example was used as a weapon to silence her goddaughter, Mary Wroth, who had the pretensions of being a writer and publishing the first known full-length work of fiction by a woman. Wroth was admonished to imitate her "vertuous and learned Aunt, who

translated so many godly books” rather than create “lascivious tales and amorous toyes.” Translation, not creation, was the province of a learned woman (Hannay 1990:208–209).⁵

The name of Margaret Tyler is of special importance in this discussion of translation as the point of entry for women into the public sphere of writing. Tyler was not a noblewoman, and very little is known about her life. Her work stands out for two reasons. First, the translation she is best known for was not a religious work but a Spanish romance entitled *A Mirrour of Princely Deeds and Knighthood* (1578) by Diego Ortuñez de Calahorra. Tyler’s work seems to have introduced this genre into England; its immense influence created the fashion for Spanish chivalresque romances in England and it was the first of many similar works to appear after it in English.

Equally important to her significance as a woman and translator in the sixteenth century is the vigorous preface which accompanies this translation. It has been compared to a feminist manifesto and called a “landmark in feminist literary history” on account of its being

both the boldest criticism of patriarchal ideology by a woman writer up to that time and one of the very few female-authored documents before the eighteenth century to deal with the problems of the literary woman whose imaginative voice is inhibited by patriarchal divisions of genre and gender.

(Krontiris 1992:45)

Tyler, who was apparently not of aristocratic birth, defended the right of women to read and translate works which are not restricted to the area of “divinitie” and in particular to take on the daring deeds of chivalry and romance. She asks the reader to accept “a storye prophane, and a matter more manlike than becometh my sexe” (quoted in Robinson 1995: 159). Her justification compares translators to “buglers” in a situation of combat, or those who wish to have the land tilled but do not hold a plow: that is those who participate rhetorically or symbolically in an activity without necessarily assuming the consequences. It is not entirely surprising, given the aggressive tone of the preface, that the romance by Ortuñez de Calahorra itself proposes images of women which do not conform entirely to the norms of the times. Although little is known about the circumstances of Tyler’s life, Krontiris feels justified in asserting that she must have consciously approved the oppositional tendencies of the fiction she was translating—given the ringing tones of her preface and the terms she used in her translation. Krontiris reads in the translation

“direct and indirect expressions of opposition to the sixteenth-century dominant ideology and social practice” (Krontiris 1992:61), including the absence of adjectives depicting women as dainty and coy, and the absence of any language denoting subordination. “Tyler did not expurgate her text. This fact as well as her mention of Garidiana [the Amazon] in her Preface to refute traditional divisions of experience suggest that Tyler was approvingly conscious of the *Mirror’s* oppositional tendencies” (ibid.: 62). Ortuñez de Calahorra’s narrative gave women more power and initiative than was generally the case in Renaissance England.

In addition, the *Mirror* must have been dedicated to a woman because Tyler invokes the argument that: “if men may and do bestow such of their travails upon gentlewomen, then may we women read such of their works as they dedicate unto us, and if we may read them, why not farther wade in them to the serch of a truth” (quoted in Robinson 1995:160). She will end this chain of reasoning with a triumphant declaration of license for women to take up the pen: “it is all one for a women to pen a storie, as for a man to addresse his storie to a woman” (quoted in ibid.).

Douglas Robinson’s reading of this preface, and particularly these last words, suggests that Tyler operates a radical—if logically faulty—reversal of the rhetoric of patronage in order to justify the independence of women as writers. She affirms that if it is acceptable for a man to dedicate his work to a woman, then it is quite correct for a woman to take up the pen in response. Robinson places his analysis of the preface within the context of the rhetorics of sub-version by which women accede to public voice in the sixteenth century. He shows how the hesitant translator’s prefaces by Lady Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, and of Anna Cooke, one of the five learned and prolific Cooke sisters (and mother to Francis Bacon), demonstrate the “complex rhetorical gestures” of defense and disclaimer by which “sixteenth century women begin to lift themselves up by their own discursive bootstraps” (ibid.: 158). Translator’s prefaces were the means by which women found a public voice; and they did this, he argues, by “working sub-versively within established rhetorics of submission, working to transform those rhetorics into surreptitiously empowering channels of expression” (ibid.: 2). In particular, women used the rhetoric of morality where the rhetoric of submission had been most prominent.

Indeed, the terms of Tyler’s preface follow this dynamic in that a previously existing rhetoric of submission and subservience (the model of literary patronage as shown in dedications) is overturned. The existence of the literary dedication, from a male writer to a female patron,

becomes the justification for “a women to pen a storie.” One might agree with Robinson (*ibid.*: 162) that there is a logical gap in this argument, and that its message is really “give us an inch and we’ll take a mile.” The links in Tyler’s reasoning are not much less tenuous in the comparisons previously cited, where she compares the female translator to the bugler, or to the narrator who speaks of plowing without doing it. Here she affirms the un-certain status of symbolic actions: they are and are not actions; they report on deeds which are undertaken in reality, but they do not make the speaker responsible for these actions. How can the translator be considered “guilty” when her activities are so ambiguously inscribed in reality?

More than demonstrating the “moralization” of discourse by women, Tyler’s preface suggests that there were few discursive foot-holds available for women writers or translators to occupy. Faced with a well-established rhetoric of authorization, women were forced to adapt these same terms to their own ends. That there were logical cracks in their arguments, as we see in Tyler’s preface, is consonant with the poverty of the discursive formulations at their disposal. It is interesting to note, consequently, that Aphra Behn (c. 1640–1689) uses a rhetorical device similar to Tyler’s in a translation published in 1688. In the “Translator’s Preface” to her translation of Fontenelle’s *Entretiens (A Discovery of New Worlds)*, Behn explains her own motivation: she had been prompted by the author’s having introduced a “Woman as one of the speakers in these five Discourses.” “I thought an English Woman might adventure to translate any thing a French Woman may be supposed to have spoken” (Todd 1993:73). More than a century after the publication of Tyler’s preface, Behn is not asking for permission to translate, as Tyler was; but she puts to rhetorical use the fact that a male writer has himself brought a woman into the text. This becomes an invitation for the translator to express her own gendered identity.

A close examination of the translations of English Renaissance women shows, then, that the choice of works and their manner of translation did contribute significantly to contemporary intellectual life. Though not necessarily as radical as Tyler’s work, the translations of Renaissance women produced certain subtle shifts in characterizations of women and their literary activities. In particular, as Krontiris argues, access into the world of translation through religion became the means for some women to undertake tasks which would have been otherwise forbidden. This was apparently the case for Mary Sidney who, having gained a “respectable name” through her versification of the Psalms could then take on a secular

play like *Antonie* (Krontiris 1992:21). Translation therefore was a means through which women gradually acceded to the status of authorship.

This progression is illustrated to some extent in the writings of Katherine Philips (1631–1664), whose *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus* (1705, written in the early 1660s) contain considerations on theoretical aspects of translation. The collection of letters addressed to her patron Sir Charles Cotterell discusses her translation of Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée* (1643). Though they maintain a self-deprecating and fawning tone, the letters express the “circuitous routes” by which women were building forms of written subjectivity (Robinson 1995:164).

APHRA BEHN: “THE TRANSLATRESS IN HER PERSON SPEAKS”

Though her lifetime was roughly contemporary with that of Katherine Philips (she was already born when Philips completed her translation, *The Death of Pompey*), the rhetoric of Aphra Behn is light years distant from that of her more conventional precursor. Her writing career indeed marks the beginning of a new discursive regime for women. Aphra Behn is the most famous and prolific of early women writers; she was the first professional woman writer (Spender 1992:39) and in her own time was as famous as William Wycherley or John Dryden. That she was an active translator is not entirely surprising. Translation was considered an important creative activity for Restoration writers, and, even if Behn did take up translations principally for financial reasons, there is considerable evidence that she went about her work with the same diligence and passion that she invested in her other writing activities. Her own work gained a tremendous readership, to a large extent through translation, as her own novel *Oroonoko* when translated into French in 1745 went quickly through seven successive printings. The novel was one of the most popular books in eighteenth-century France (Goreau 1980:287).

Recent research has recovered from oblivion the work of a remarkably large number of early women writers who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries established the foundations of a women's literary culture. British women writers, for example, were extremely active novelists, but also wrote in a wide variety of genres: letters and journals, autobiographies and biographies, poetry, plays, criticism, guidebooks, politics, travel, history and translation. Reference works like the *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660–1800* (Todd 1985), which provides extensive information on hundreds of women writers of the period and their extremely varied writing activities, and

The Feminist Companion to Literature in English (Blain et al. 1990) group translation with travel and history writing as especially popular genres for women and as sources of both pleasure and remuneration.

The outstanding line of demarcation which separated women's translating activities from those of men was access to classical languages. Women translated predominantly from contemporary European languages,⁶ but exceptionally some women did "invade the scholarly languages, regarded as peculiarly male" (Todd 1985:18). Susannah Dobson, Mary Arundell, Lucy Hutchinson and Elizabeth Carter translated from Latin; Elizabeth Smith and Ann Francis from Hebrew. Elizabeth Elstob (1683–1756), against many odds, was able to learn and translate important works from Anglo-Saxon. Many of the translations of professional women authors of the period were anonymously published, so that this list would be impossible to complete. Elizabeth Carter's (1717–1806) translations of Epictetus long remained the standard English version. She also translated a volume explaining the philosophy of Isaac Newton, and one on Pope's *Essay on Man* (1739). Another remarkable exception to the exclusion of women from classical languages and learning was the French scholar Anne Dacier (1647–1720), who was renowned for her prose version of the *Iliad*, published in 1699. Anne Dacier was the daughter and wife of celebrated Hellenist scholars. Her *Iliad* became the center of an important controversy, which set Dacier against the poet Houdar de la Motte. At issue was the most effective means of translating the great masters of classical antiquity (Cary 1963:29–59).⁷

Though not known as a classical scholar, Aphra Behn translated from Latin as well as French. There is some question as to whether she was able to translate directly from the Latin text, or whether she used interlinear "cribs" provided by others. It was highly unusual for women of Behn's time to know Greek or Latin. During the Elizabethan era, feminine education had enjoyed a brief renaissance in which women were both respected and admired for intellectual accomplishment, but by the time Aphra Behn came of age, standards of education for women had declined (Goreau 1980:24). In general, if women were taught to read, their reading material was confined "within the compass of the mother tongue" (ibid.: 25). While all accomplished males were expected to know the classical languages, and while translation of the classics was considered a necessary complement to original writing, women were debarred from these activities. Literary translation of the classics was indeed very much in vogue in Behn's day, and her colleagues were busy turning out new versions of poems, satires and essays from both Latin

and Greek literature. Abraham Cowley translated odes from Pindar and Horace; Edmund Waller, part of Virgil's *Aeneid*; Thomas Creech, Lucretius' *De rerum natura*; Henry Higden, Juvenal's *Satires*; and John Dryden, Ovid and Virgil (Goreau 1980: 30–31).

That Aphra Behn translated Ovid's *Epistle of Oenone to Paris* is therefore of unusual significance. And that the poem was chosen by Dryden, or the publisher Jacob Tonson, for inclusion in *Ovid's Epistles, Translated by Several Hands* (1680) is a strong indication of the prestige of this work. Dryden's preface to this collection, which includes his now classic definitions of metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation, includes an allusion to Behn: "I was desired to say that the author, who is of the fair sex, understood not Latin. But if she does not, I am afraid she has given us occasion to be ashamed who do"(quoted in Goreau 1980:30–31). Behn's version is "a loose paraphrase," very much according to the style of the time, and Behn is able to introduce some characteristic themes of her own writing (Link 1968:116–117).

In a poem written for Thomas Creech to preface his translation of Lucretius, Behn describes women's exclusion from classical learning in this way:

Till now, I curst my birth, my education
 And more the scanted customs of the nation:
 Permitting not the female sex to tread,
 The mighty paths of learned heroes dead.
 The God-like Virgil, and great Homers verse,
 Like divine mysteries are concealed from us.
 We are forbid all grateful themes,
 No ravishing thoughts approach our ear,
 The fulsome gingle of the times,
 Is all we are allowed to understand or hear.
 So thou by this translation dost advance
 Our knowledge from the state of ignorance,
 And equals us to man!

(Goreau 1980:31)

The final lines of the poem, praising Creech for a translation which will allow women readers to attain equality with men, are in bitter counterpoint to the preceding indictment of women's lot. Because they are forbidden access to classical education, women are kept away from the most exalted poetry and the most uplifting themes of literature; they are forbidden "divine mysteries" only to be submitted to the "fulsome

gingle of the times.” Only translation can give women access to the marvels of learning. But this gift is tainted by the “scanted customs of the nation” which reduce women to childlike dependence and second-hand knowledge.

Most of Behn’s translations were from the French, and these included works of both fiction and prose. Behn undertook translation work rather late in her career, probably because she was not making enough money writing for the theater. Behn had an unusually adventurous life for a woman (or man) of her time. She set off to Surinam in her early twenties with her family, and was involved in an uprising of slaves led by Oroonoko. She later became a spy in Antwerp, was briefly imprisoned for debt in London and then set about earning her living as a playwright. The very varied nature of the works she chose to translate suggests that she engaged in this kind of work more for money than love (Link 1968: 116–129). At the same time, she chose authors with whom she had common opinions. Beyond financial necessity, she may well have been attracted to the medium of prose translation for intellectual and personal reasons. Translating prose provided an opportunity for Behn to enter into controversies on science, religion and philosophy which, as an unlearned female, she would have had to avoid in her poetry (Todd 1993: ix). Behn often inserted references to contemporary politics into her translations, as she did into her poetry (*ibid.*: xvii).⁸

All of Behn’s translations have been commended for their sophisticated development of the original. Her work was much praised in commendatory poems during her lifetime (*ibid.*: xiv). Her rendering of Abbé Paul Tallemant’s sentimental fantasy *Le Voyage de l’isle d’amour* (originally published in 1663) has been called an adaptation worthy of independent consideration. In the eighteenth-century manner, she expands one paragraph telling tersely of the death of Aminta into sixty-three lines of verse, lamenting the evil day and the shortness of human life, adding a tender farewell speech by Aminta and detailing every aspect of Lysander’s grief (Link 1968: 120).

Behn’s translation of *La Montre* or *The Lover’s Watch*, an adaptation of the work by Balthasar de Bonnacorse, published in two parts (1666 and 1671), is fully twice as long as the original. Link notes that occasionally Behn inserts quite new material, adding her own royalist opinions and topical allusions to English society. The year 1686, one of the most prolific in her career, saw the publication of no less than four full-length adaptations by Behn.

Perhaps the two most important works Behn translated are by the moralist La Rochefoucauld and the philosopher Fontenelle. Her

rendering of 400 maxims by La Rochefoucauld, entitled *Seneca Unmasked; or, Moral Reflections*, was appended to the *Miscellany* of 1685. This is work of a totally different sort from that required by the previous texts; Behn's version is remarkably accurate and force-ful, carrying the same epigrammatic wit as the French.

Particularly noteworthy as a contribution to reflection on translation in the eighteenth century is Behn's preface to her translation of Fontenelle's *A Discovery of New Worlds* (1688). Behn first explains the reasons why she chose it for translation, including "the general applause" which this little book had received, the novelty of treating scientific subjects in the "vulgar languages" and the fact, which was mentioned above in relation to Margaret Tyler's preface (p. 51), of the author's having introduced a woman as one of the speakers in the text (Todd 1993: 73). But she admits that the task of translating from the French turned out to be more difficult than she had expected, because of the differences between English and French temperament, the great changes in the French language in the previous hundred years, and the fondness of the French for "words they steal from other languages" (ibid.: 75).

Interestingly enough, Behn declares that Italian and English are far more close than French and English, because of the mixture of Latin and Teutonic common to them both. In fact, this is no more true of Italian than it is of French, but the link to the Roman empire seems to have been important in Behn's reasoning (ibid.: 74). The "accent and phrase" of French are most distant from both Latin and English.

But as the French do not value a plain suit without a garniture, they are not satisfied with the advantages they have, but con-found their own language with needless repetitions and tautologies; and by a certain rhetorical figure, peculiar to themselves, employ twenty lines, to express what an Englishman would say with more ease and sense in five; and this is the great misfortune of translating French into English: if one endeavours to make it English standard, it is no translation. If one follows their flourishes and embroideries, it is worse than French tinsel...I have endeavored to give you the true meaning of the author, and have kept as near his words as was possible; I was necessitated to add a little in some places, otherwise the book could not have been understood. I have used all along the Latin word axis, which is the axle-tree in English.

(ibid.: 76)

Behn is therefore not only concerned with the type of work she has chosen to translate but with the general, structural problems of equivalence between languages. A few of her facts are inaccurate (perhaps reflecting the linguistic knowledge of her time), but the main thrust of her argument relating to the non-symmetry between language structures provides a knowledgeable basis for her work. It especially indicates that Behn places her translation work within a scholarly framework. The rest of her preface consists of a partial critique of Fontenelle's work, as well as a spirited defense of a rational critique of the Scriptures. She argues that the "design of the Bible was not to instruct Mankind in Astronomy, Geometry, or Chronology, but in the Law of God" (ibid.: 79) and provides numerous examples of scriptural texts which are scientifically incorrect. Concluding finally that she would have been happy to provide "the subject quite changed and made my own" (ibid.: 86), but for want of time and good health she has resigned herself to providing a translation.

The last of Behn's translations, like the first, is from the Latin. She was one of the translators of Abraham Cowley's *Six Books of Plants* in 1689, having translated Book 6 which came to some 1750 lines in her version. She was probably furnished with a prose transliteration, and her version is nearly three-fourths as long again as the original. Most interesting in this translation is an interpolation into the text, which she clearly marks in the margin with the indication: "the translatress in her own person speaks." The passage comes when reference is made to the laurel and those who wear it:

After the Monarchs, poets claim a share
 As the next worthy they prized wreaths to wear.
 Among that number, do not me disdain,
 Me, the most humble of that glorious train.
 I by a double right thy bounties claim
 Both from my sex, and in Apollo's name:
 Let me with Sappho and Orinda be
 O ever, sacred nymph, adorned by thee;
 And give my verses immortality.

(Link 1968:129)

This intervention makes reference to Behn's combined identities as woman, poet and translator. The "I" in the text, combined with the marginal note, acquires a richly layered ambiguity—that of the translatress, claiming the right for her own immortality as woman and poet, the same immortality which has been gained by Sappho and Orinda

(Orinda was the pseudonym of Katherine Philips). As is frequent in her work, Behn reminds the reader that the speaker behind the text is a woman. As is also her wont, she interrupts the flow of the translation to interpolate her own voice, to get her own message across. The “translatress” is also a poet and an author.

Behn was hardly a passive or mechanical translator. Her work carries with it the authority of a mature writer and thinker. She holds the work of translation in esteem, as her age did generally, especially when dealing with classical texts. The creative effort she invested makes her translated works very much an integral part of her work as a writer, but shows as well that the translatress can speak “in her own person.” That Behn could not enforce a strict separation between her voices as author and translator was typical of her time. The overlapping literary functions of translation and creative writing result from the neo-classical valorization of the arts of imitation. At the same time, however, Behn’s forceful assumption of her identity as translatress gives remarkable vigor to a voice which had, until then, been largely subdued.

WOMEN AND ANTI-SLAVERY WRITINGS

Behn’s work as a translator, indeed her immense contribution as a writer, would be progressively forgotten over the course of the centuries—only to be fully rediscovered in the twentieth century (see Goreau 1980). But her link with feminist writing of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is to be found in the social movements to which her novel *Oroonoko* contributed. As part of an international effort on behalf of the anti-slavery movement, Behn’s novel—immensely popular in its French translation—would be a stimulus to further anti-slavery writing in French. *Oroonoko* is considered the first important abolitionist statement in the history of English literature (Goreau 1980:289).

Translation was important to the networks of solidarity formed around progressive causes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One of the most important of these was the anti-slavery movement, in which women played an important part. In the United States, there was a close relationship between abolitionism and the fight for women’s rights in that some of the most active women abolitionists saw the fight for equality as applying to all ranges of the human condition. Women were active in anti-slavery organizations like the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society in the 1830s; an Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women was held in New York in 1837 (Hansen 1993:20).⁹ Like contemporary second-wave feminism which was an offshoot of the civil rights

movement, political organizing for the rights of others led to a recognition of the need for women to organize for their own rights.

Cultural historians have yet to bring to light the networks of writers and translators who ensured the transmission of feminist and other emancipatory texts across national frontiers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Various international organizations of anti-slavery associations existed, and translation was considered a task important to them (Kadish and Massardier-Kenney 1994:37). Madame de Staël's parents were members of the Amis des Noirs, and her father Jacques Necker's book *De l'administration des finances de la France* (1784), which expressed outrage over the fact that 20,000 Africans were subjected to inhumane treatment, was one of the works translated into English; it was published in 1787 as *Treatise on the Administration of the Finances of France* (ibid.: 38).¹⁰ Joseph La Vallée's novel, *Le Nègre comme il y a peu de blancs* (1789), was translated by the celebrated emancipated slave Phyllis Wheatley (*The Negro Equalled by Few Europeans*, (1791)) (ibid.: 38).

The translation of *Oroonoko* (published 1696) into French in 1745 by Pierre Antoine de La Place, for instance, had far-reaching consequences in French humanitarian thought, three years before the publication of Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*. The translation was one of the most popular books in eighteenth-century France and went through seven new editions between the date of first publication in 1745 and 1799 (Goreau 1980:289). The translator, however, who also translated a number of Shakespeare plays in very free versions, takes enormous liberties with Behn's text. La Place changes the tragic and melodramatic ending of the novel from Oroonoko's murder of wife and child (in order to prevent them from being bound in further slavery) to a long denouement leading to a happy ending in Africa. He edulcorates an English work that a French eighteenth-century audience would have found excessively direct, descriptive and violent. Kadish points to the features of Behn's work that the neo-classical French style would tend to avoid: highly concrete language, violent and indelicate expressions. In addition, La Place omits references to the specifically "African" beauty of the heroine. Kadish argues that the omission of certain key passages exhibiting these features diminishes the power not only of the "style" but also of the political clout of the text. "La Place unquestionably weakens the abolitionism of the original by omitting some of the accusations levelled against slave owners in this passage and, most notably, the cry for revenge at the end" (Kadish and Massardier-Kenney 1994:32).

Despite the ideological ambiguities of the original (Oroonoko's willingness to trade slaves for his own release), and the modifications which occur in the translation, Kadish contends that within their respective milieux both the original and the translation were relatively radical in their criticism of slavery (*ibid.*: 26–61).

By contrast, Kadish points to the much closer translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* into French. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* stands as a striking example of the collaborative and overlapping efforts of women in the production, translation, criticism and promotion of progressive literature. Translated into French by the Irish writer Louise Belloc, in collaboration with Adélaïde de Montgolfier (*ibid.*: 52), this work was praised by Mrs Stowe. But the novel's overwhelming popularity resulted in eleven translations appearing within ten months of publication, and Belloc's translation is not the best known. The most successful version was by La Bédollière (1852), and it is a more abbreviated and dramatic version (*ibid.* 1994).

Other elements of the traffic in political writings beginning in the late eighteenth century converge around Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), an immensely important writer on women's rights. She herself translated a book by Jacques Necker, *On the Importance of Religious Opinions* (1788), as well as Madame de Cambon's *Young Grandison* (1790). This work seems to have served as a kind of political apprenticeship for Wollstonecraft. These books expressed leading themes of the bourgeois cultural revolution, as a European and not just a British movement. By translating them Wollstonecraft was able to form herself as a political writer, and refine her critical skills (Kelly 1992:75). In her translation of the fictionalized conduct book by Christian Gotthilf Salzmann, *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children* (1790–1791), Wollstonecraft made the stories English, adapting the book to her own experience and renaming central characters for members of her own family (Todd 1976). According to her biographer Gary Kelly, the work of translation gave Wollstonecraft not only the confidence of completing an arduous task but also the sense of participating in a truly European cultural revolution. The work gave her familiarity with important intellectual currents in France and Germany (Kelly 1992:74–79).

Wollstonecraft's own tremendously influential *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) was of course widely translated. The 1832 translation into German by Henriette Herz (1764–1847) helped pave the way to the later women's movement in Germany. Like Rahel Varnhagen (1771–1833), a leading Jewish-German intellectual, Herz played an active part in the life of the Berlin salons. Bertha Pappenheim (1859–

1936), a leading Jewish feminist and social reformer in Germany, founding president of the *Judischer Frauenbund* (1904–1924)—and the “original” Anna O. analyzed by Breuer and discussed by Freud—also published a translation of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Among her other works of fiction and plays, Pappenheim translated the *Memoirs of Gluckl von Hameln*, the *Mayse Bukh*, a collection of medieval folk tales and biblical and Talmudic stories, and the *Ze’enah U’Reen’nah* or “Women’s Bible,” a popular version of the Five Books of Moses, the Five Megillot and the Haftarat, from Yiddish into German. Pappenheim was a charismatic, dedicated feminist and a religious Jew. Her translations from the Yiddish were clearly an attempt to bring the vibrant culture of East European Jewry into the mainstream of German culture. Much of the religious material available in Yiddish was prepared especially for women who were not given as thorough an education in Hebrew as men (see Kaplan 1979). The line of transmission linking Mary Wollstonecraft to Bertha Pappenheim shows how translation reframes and reactualizes the struggle for women’s rights.

CULTURAL MEDIATORS

As influential cultural mediators of the nineteenth century, Madame de Staël, Margaret Fuller and Eleanor Marx also used translation in the service of explicitly political causes. That is, all three understood the acts of creating and transmitting literature as having political consequences. Each embraced cosmopolitanism as a value necessary to social progress.

Madame de Staël (1766–1817) did not herself publish translations, but her fiction and theoretical writings initiated a new translational sensibility in European letters. She articulated the interconnections between literature and society, formulating the terms of an intellectual liberalism which would be decisive for Romanticism and influential far into the twentieth century. As a militant cosmopolitan, Madame de Staël forced her audience to become aware of the interdependence of national traditions.

A fervent supporter of the French Revolution and of republican ideals, and a prominent writer and thinker, Madame de Staël became an enemy of Napoleon and was forced to spend many years in exile outside of France. She wrote influential works about the philosophy and literature of Italy and Germany, and truly opened France to an understanding of the most vital intellectual developments in these countries. She was the central member of a group which, especially between 1805 and 1810,

formed and met at her Swiss domain of Coppet, a group comprising Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), August Wilhelm Schlegel (1765–1845), Sismonde de Sismondi (1773–1842) and other prominent literary French and German literary figures of the time. Translation was an important activity of the group which made it an instrument of communication among cultures and peoples, as well as an object of reflection. This focus on translation was responsible, according to Stephen Bann, for a virtual revolution in literary and philosophical knowledge in France (Bann 1977). At last, translation was used in France to create new ideas, new literary forms—not simply to confirm the superiority of French writing.

While Madame de Staël did not herself publish complete translations, she included translated passages in her theoretical works. An important case in point is her somewhat abbreviated rendition of Goethe's *Faust* which is included in her *De l'Allemagne*. While Madame de Staël may not have intended this version to be a "translation," but rather a critical description, it was nonetheless extremely influential. According to André Lefevere, "Byron and his generation did not read Goethe's *Faust* in German, but in the abbreviated French version contained in the...best-selling *Del'Allemagne*" (Lefevere 1992a: 5).

The beginning of the eighteenth century was a period of grace for translation in Germany. Goethe, Johann Heinrich Voss, Hölderlin and August Wilhelm Schlegel were undertaking their decisive translation work (Bann 1977:221) and, at the same time, integrating a reflection on translation into Romantic philosophy (Berman 1992). That Madame de Staël had interiorized this German passion for translation, its willful concern with complexity, is evident in her writings.

As well as being a mediator between national traditions through her novels and essays, and in addition to the translation work which she initiated and pursued at Coppet, Madame de Staël wrote in 1816 an important essay entitled *De l'esprit des traductions* (de Staël 1821). Because of the explicitly political role given to literature and especially to translation, and because of the conception of nation which is involved, the article still has resonance today. Contrary to opinions often voiced on translation in her time, Madame de Staël gives a pre-eminently positive role to translation. During an era when translation would be increasingly denigrated as a derivative and non-productive activity, de Staël insists that, far from conveying an impoverished impression of a foreign literature, translation can enhance its beauty. A well-made translation can procure "familiar and intimate pleasure," and can "more

efficiently than any other means, keep a literature from falling into the banality which is a sure sign of decadence.”¹¹

She begins her essay by extolling the practice of translating, explaining that literary perfection is so rare that no modern nation can afford to be content solely with the works of its own writers. There is no more “eminent service” that one can render to literature than to “transport from one language to another the masterpieces of the human spirit.” Of all kinds of commerce, there is none whose “advantages are more certain than the circulation of ideas” (de Staël 1821). De Staël’s use of the metaphors of commerce and exchange are revealing of the framework of political and economic liberalism which she sees as sustaining the work of literature. The national spirit, for de Staël, is created through political participation; this spirit is vital to the production and circulation of literature.

Arguing that it is futile to expect readers to have a knowledge of all the languages in which great poets have expressed themselves, de Staël advances the surprising claim that, in any case, a reader derives more intimate pleasure from reading a work in a good translation in his or her native tongue than in the original language. Literary sterility at a national level, she suggests, indicated by the universal use of hackneyed expressions and imagery, is best combated by translation of the poets of other countries. She shows that she has been influenced by the Schlegels and by German thinking on translation when she makes clear that the translations she recommends should not be made “in the French way,” that is by subordinating novelty to literary tradition, by dressing the foreign product in the garb of familiar elegance; rather they should bring about a renewal of literary form. The point of translation, she argues, is not to impose your own “color” on everything you translate, but to seek novelty. And then she makes her main point to the audience to whom she is addressing her article: the Italians should be actively translating the literatures of the North in an attempt to free themselves from the sclerotic state of Italian letters. That her article did indeed have an effect is shown by the rather explosive reaction which followed its publication in 1816. Debates and even riots testified to the kindling of the Italian nationalist spirit, manifestations which are said to have been the spark which lit the fire of Italian Romanticism. Madame de Staël achieved her intended goal, for it is obvious that her plea for translation is at the same time a conscious attempt to provoke social and literary changes in an Italy dominated by the Austrians after the defeat of Napoleon.

De Staël clearly rejects the French tradition of translation, just as she objects to literalism. The vocabulary she uses to describe literary

exchange is grounded in the principles of liberalism which encourage the free circulation of ideas and forms. Literary exchange, she suggests, is just as necessary to the life of society as it is to literature: it rejuvenates and enriches the national spirit; it helps to develop political liberalization and national autonomy. For Madame de Staël, literary creation and political vigor are necessarily tied. Foreign literatures can produce their regenerative effect only when there is an energetic political life in the receiving nation, a political life which can revivify the national spirit. She denounces the belief that the source of future literary glory lies in the past, in a mimicking of tradition. Literary cosmopolitanism means that there is no absolute standard of good taste, and that nations must guide one another by throwing different light on literary creation.

We see, then, in the writings of Madame de Staël the theorization of translation as an essential instrument of national affirmation. In formulating this theory, de Staël is at the same time enacting its principles, by becoming the French echo of Goethe and the German Romantics' thinking on translation. Some of de Staël's terms are exactly those used by Goethe. In his *Schriften zur Literatur*, published in 1824, Goethe emphasizes, as does de Staël, the commercial utility of the translator in the great enterprise of literary exchange: "What-ever you may say about the deficiencies of translation, it is and remains one of the most important and dignified enterprises in the general commerce of the world" (Lefevere 1992b: 25).

Though de Staël's translating efforts are exemplary for their promotion of cosmopolitan values, it remains that they are also firmly anchored in a "nation-building" enterprise. Writers are to exploit the resources of foreign literatures in order to invigorate and redirect their own national forms. That is, translation does not disturb or invalidate the nation as the ultimate frame for producing and understanding literature, but rather encourages it. The ambiguity of the Romantic stance is illustrated by Goethe's wish that German literature become in itself a vehicle of world literature: "Those who understand and study German find themselves on the market place where all nations offer their wares" (Lefevere 1992b: 24). In this view, certain national literatures find themselves uniquely designated by history to become the recipients of the universal spirit.

This understanding of translation as an essential component in the construction of strong, national literatures will permeate literary study throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The discipline of comparative literature, which came into being under the impulsion of the ideas of both Goethe and Madame de Staël, indeed studied translation as a process contributing to the distinctions of national consciousness. To

trace the reception of a foreign author, to analyze the influence of the work in the new language, was to insist on the constraints of the nation which operated in both original and secondary contexts. Only in the late twentieth century has this basic disciplinary model come to be challenged—as has the assumption of a foundational link between language, literature and nation. This effort involves understanding literary exchange as an incomplete and contestatory process, one which challenges the exclusive authority of the nation to frame and define culture.

One of the most important lessons left by Madame de Staël which remains vital today is her insistence on the reinvigorating action of translation for literary creation. This idea has gained force in the postmodern world, as writers work against the bounds of national self-enclosure, and look to open new dialogues within literary traditions. Implicit in this idea is the capacity of translations to intervene within their new milieu, to act as a ferment to new productions.

The resemblances between the careers of Madame de Staël and Margaret Fuller are not hard to find. Margaret Fuller (1810–1850) was known during her lifetime as the “Yankee Corinna” (Durning 1969:19) in reference to the heroine of Madame de Staël’s novel about Italy, and to her support for internationalist libertarian causes. She consciously patterned her life after that of Madame de Staël, setting up a “Conversation” group in Boston which was to be a replica of the Coppet salon. And Fuller’s activities as a promoter of literary cosmopolitanism, her support of Italian nationalism, and her devotion to German literature make her an exemplary follower of de Staël.

Margaret Fuller used translation to further a combined political-cultural agenda. She was an important American woman of letters, a brilliant conversationalist, a close friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and an intermediary between the worlds of American and European letters. She was also closely allied with the movements for national liberation in Europe and participated in the failed 1848 revolution in Italy. She died in a shipwreck upon her return from a four-year stay in Italy. She also worked toward women’s rights, her most important book, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), arguing that men have deliberately kept women in a subordinate position (Blain *et al.* 1990:402). This major work was a stimulant to the feminists of the time, and is said to have led directly to the first meeting of American feminists in 1848 (Durning 1969:30).

Strongly influenced by French literature, Fuller was also deeply attached to German and to Italian literatures. Her combined activities as a critic, reviewer, conversationalist and translator were largely

responsible for the penetration of European literature into America during this time (ibid.: 77). She translated Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* (1839), *Tasso* (completed in 1834 but published only after her death (ibid.: 101)), parts of *Iphigenia* and *Egmont*, as well as several lyrics (ibid.: 89) and Bettina von Arnim's correspondence with Karoline von Gunderode (1842). Fuller was a fervent defender of Goethe. The years 1840–1842 mark the height of her study and translation of German literature. As editor of and chief contributor to the *Dial*, she published in this journal articles and translations from the German. Her affinity for the subjective, lyrical qualities of German literature equipped her to be one of the best nineteenth-century interpreters of Goethe. Her translation of the *Correspondence* is important because of the friendship between Bettina and Goethe, and Bettina's correspondence with the poet Karoline von Gunderode reflects Fuller's interest in the personal, spontaneous quality of the letters.¹²

Like Madame de Staël, Margaret Fuller promoted the internationalization of letters and saw literary exchanges as necessary to the growth of national literatures. She devoted her work as a journalist, critic and translator to establishing cultural links between America and Europe.

Unlike Margaret Fuller and Madame de Staël, Eleanor Marx is not considered primarily a literary figure. Known first of all as the daughter of Karl Marx and as a social activist, Eleanor Marx (1855–1898) was in fact heavily involved in the world of letters, and did a substantial amount of translation work, from French and from Norwegian—which she learned (as Joyce did) in order to read and translate Ibsen (Kapp 1972:99). Her first translation was for the Russian anarchist Stepniak; she translated into English a text he had turned from Russian into French (ibid.: 94).

Her most influential translation, however, was *Madame Bovary*, a work undertaken in 1865, during the time when the author, Flaubert, was on trial for immorality. Marx's somewhat literal translation was for a long time used as the standard version. She clearly undertook the work as a challenge to conventional standards of morality. In her preface she acknowledges her political motivation for translating the book, claiming that it is to the eternal honor of Flaubert that *Madame Bovary* had been prosecuted by the government of Napoleon III (Tsuzuki 1967:166). It was less the conception of adultery itself which had shocked bourgeois morality, she adds, than Flaubert's coolness (the "calm of a doctor describing a disease"). Eleanor Marx expresses particular sympathy for Emma's "misery of earthly affections and the eternal isolation in which the heart remains entombed" (ibid.: 167). Eleanor Marx's empathy for

Emma was indeed strong, because she eventually chose to die in the same manner as Flaubert's heroine—by taking poison (Kapp 1972:697).

In addition to her remarks about Flaubert, Marx's preface to *Madame Bovary* includes the traditional disclaimers of the humble translator, taking the trouble to make clear that she has neither suppressed nor added a line or a word, but apologizing for a work she knows is "faulty" and "pale and feeble by the side of the original" (quoted in Kapp 1972:97). Despite the admitted weakness of the translation, it was received as a serviceable rendition of Flaubert, an author considered practically untranslatable. George Steiner is somewhat conciliatory in his appreciation ("Read now, what is frequently an imperceptive version is steadied by its period flavour" Steiner 1975:377) but he offers no real textual evidence for his claim—which is based, of course, on biographical data—that "The translator has identified herself with Emma" (ibid.: 377). We know in any case that *Madame Bovary* is a notoriously difficult work and one of the French novels which has been most frequently translated into English; many different writers have tried their hand at its dense and self-conscious prose.

The other major author whom Eleanor Marx and her husband Edward Aveling introduced to the English public was the play-wright Ibsen. The naturalist esthetic and social themes of Ibsen's plays were extremely popular with socialists like Aveling, and had a tremendous impact on the English stage. Eleanor Marx translated two of Ibsen's plays, *A Doll's House* and *An Enemy of the People*, as well as other short stories from the Norwegian (Tsuzuki 1967:176, 169). Eleanor Marx also helped her husband turn *Das Kapital* into English (ibid.: 160–161).

There is a strong link to be made between the internationalist allegiances of socialism and the motives which would promote the translation of political and literary works. And so for women like Eleanor Marx, Constance Garnett, Jean Starr Untermeyer, Willa Muir and Helen Lowe-Porter, who recognized the political potential of literature, translation work was not only an alimentary activity, but a means of expressing and promoting international solidarity.

CONSTANCE GARNETT: THE POWER OF A NAME

As women increasingly swell the ranks of professional writers, they logically account for a larger proportion of translators. Yet few women (or men) have enjoyed a literary reputation on the basis of their exclusive commitment to translation. One of the most obvious reasons for this

neglect is that the designation of the translator has been considered totally irrelevant to the cataloguing, storing and transmission of printed matter.

The one name, however, that many readers during the first part of the century would have been likely to know is that of Constance Garnett (1862–1946), translator of some sixty volumes by Russia's most notable modern writers. It has become a cliché to observe that the English-speaking world has, in reading Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov, been listening principally to the voice of Constance Garnett. The breadth and impact of Constance Garnett's translation work makes her an exemplary—and atypical—figure in twentieth-century literature. Hers is one of the few translators' names which has penetrated the general literary consciousness—and this may be at least in part due to the notoriety of the family whose name she bore.

Fully integrated into British literary life, married to an important critic (Edward Garnett) whose father (Richard) was himself a major figure in British poetry (and longtime Keeper of Printed Works at the British Museum), Garnett was attuned to the writing canons of her time. She had studied at Cambridge, excelled in Latin and Greek, and become an active member of the Fabian Society during her early adult years. She was committed to progressive social causes, and worked as chief librarian at the People's Palace, the "annex" of the British Library in London's poor East End, until she was obliged to retire to have a baby. As an active participant in the political debates of her time, she came to know and sympathize with a group of revolutionary Russian exiles including Felix Volkhovsky. It was Volkhovsky who suggested that she learn Russian, and gave her a grammar and a dictionary (Garnett 1991: 75). Garnett was in her early thirties when she began this task. Later she met Stepniak, the famous Russian nihilist (and friend of Eleanor Marx), and they were close friends, he the reviser of many of her translations, until he died. Garnett's biographer, her grand-son Richard, intimates that her translating career was a direct result of her attraction to Stepniak and his ideas (*ibid.*: 86).

Part of Garnett's success lay in the extraordinary appeal of the newly discovered Russian writers for the English-speaking public. Turgenev was immensely popular, the esthetics of his self-conscious introspection particularly well adapted to the *fin-de-siècle* disenchantment (*ibid.*: 186). Dostoevsky made a strong impact on the English-speaking world as his work became available in translation during the years leading up to the First World War (*The Brothers Karamazov* was published in 1912, *The Idiot* in 1913, *Crime and Punishment* in 1914). Dostoevsky had been dead for more than thirty years when these translations appeared; earlier efforts to introduce his work had not been successful. Gogol and Chekhov

also had enormous appeal for a public increasingly interested in foreign literature.

A list of Constance Garnett's translations includes: seventeen volumes of *The Novels* by Turgenev (Heinemann), six volumes of *The Novels* by Tolstoy (Heinemann), twelve volumes by Dostoevsky (Heinemann), thirteen volumes of *The Tales* by Chekhov and two volumes of *The Plays* (Chatto and Windus), and six volumes of *The Works* by Nikolai Gogol (Chatto and Windus).

The rhythm of Constance Garnett's production was astounding. She would set herself daily objectives for translating and invariably stick to them. Very often she worked in collaboration with a native Russian speaker. In 1895–1896 she published six volumes in just over a year. Her work was on the whole extremely well received, and she received an Authors Award in 1899 for her translations of Turgenev (Garnett 1991: 182). Subsequent evaluations have been more mixed, although the criteria according to which translations are judged are rarely made explicit. Joseph Conrad praised her translations, as she had praised his writing. "She is in that work what a great musician is to a great composer—with something more, something greater. It is as if the Interpreter had looked into the very mind of the Master and had a share in his inspiration" (May 1994:25).

But Garnett has been faulted in particular for her difficulty with dialogue and "peasant speech." Richard Garnett agrees that "her background made her feel that coarse rustic speech was unfitting for a writer so poetical as Turgenev" (Garnett 1991:185). In addition, Garnett's work is criticized for smoothing over the stylistic differences of the authors she translated. In her extensive study of translations of modern Russian literature into English, Rachel May provides numerous examples of such insufficiencies. It is obvious that Garnett could not be equally successful with authors as different from one another as Turgenev, Tolstoy, Chekhov and Dostoevsky. She herself said that she would like to be judged by her translation of *War and Peace*, which she found particularly satisfying (Garnett 1991:205).

But May also underscores the extraordinary degree of affection and loyalty which Constance Garnett's work inspired. Even more than a half-century after their publication, elaborate explications are necessary to defend the need for new versions (May 1994: 37–42). Garnett clearly contributed to the stylistic transition from Victorian literary canons to the modernism of the twentieth century, a moment to which the social and psychological concerns of Russian literature were vital.

Why would anyone want to unseat her, if she is so beloved, so well established, so unquestioned? One answer is that she only went unquestioned because she suited the needs of her time so well that no one knew what questions to ask. Later critics, faced with different cultural conditions and presenting new demands—for psychological complexity, for example, for stylistic nuance—have been less ready to accept her at her word.

(*ibid.*: 38)

Garnett's commitment to Russian literature was hardly limited to its ideological content. But her sympathy for pre-revolutionary Russian anarchist exiles, her visits to Russia and her support for the Revolution provided the initial impulsion and the ongoing grounds on which her work was built.

TRANSLATING RELATIONSHIPS

Though it has long been recognized that translation can involve intensely conflictual emotions of transfer (in the Freudian sense), that is mixed feelings of admiration and rivalry toward the author of the text, these relations have not often been documented. By coincidence, the memoirs of three major women translators appeared in the mid-1960s: Jean Starr Untermeyer's *Private Collection* in 1965, John Thirlwall's record of the relationship between Helen Tracy Lowe-Porter and Thomas Mann, *In Another Language* in 1966, and Willa Muir's *Belonging* in 1968. All three women were translators of modern German literature. Though very different in temperament and artistic sensibility, the subjects of these memoirs are all remarkably articulate and strong-willed literary women whose translation work meshed with their political convictions.

What is particularly interesting about these documents is that they chronicle the relationships between (women) translators and their (male) authors. They illustrate the enactment of a writing relationship where the unequal positions of writer and translator are intensified by their gendered identities. Such chronicles are rare, and their value is enhanced by the fact that they provide an opportunity to witness the ongoing negotiations which nourish a creative relationship.

All three women choose to bring out in some way the relevance of their experience as women in these relationships. Jean Starr Untermeyer's narrative is the most explicit; it describes an extraordinarily intense relationship between herself and Hermann Broch, a relationship whose tensions were exacerbated by the historical context

(the Second World War), the immensity of the translation task (a huge modernist tome, constantly rewritten and revised), and the personalities of the protagonists. The moments of intimacy and frustration which developed between author and translator were not extraneous to the translation process but seemed rather to be a necessary component of it. The emotional dynamics which prevail between these writing partners tell us a great deal about the affects which play into the work of translation.

Such frictions underlie the transference tensions at play in many writing relationships, whatever the gender of the individuals involved. But the dialogues enacted between the partners in these exchanges show how potent the historically charged positions of male author and female translator continue to be.

Jean Starr Untermeyer and Hermann Broch

That Jean Starr Untermeyer's translation of Hermann Broch's *Death of Virgil* should win the highest praise from George Steiner is surely an indication of the extraordinary creative task she accomplished. George Steiner says of Untermeyer's translation that

it produced a text which is, in many respects, indispensable to the original...The Broch–Untermeyer version moves very far towards the German form with its endless spiralling sentences, mass of composite words and emphatic substantives through which Broch tries to express a simultaneity of physical and meta-physical meanings.

(Steiner 1975:320–321)

This translation is for Steiner the realization of a truly interlinear text, a translation which comes close to the “poets’ dream of an absolute idiolect...a *tertium datum* unique to its occasion” (ibid.:321).

Untermeyer (1886–1970) began working on the translation in 1940, before the German work was published. In fact, she was working on the translation as Broch was constantly reworking passages from 1942 to 1945. Untermeyer met the exiled Austrian writer Broch at Yaddo, an artists’ colony at Saratoga Springs, in 1939. He suggested she translate some of his poetry, and, with the success of these versions, persuaded her to translate *The Death of Virgil*. Untermeyer was the author of five volumes of poetry, and she was involved in preparing a volume of her collected poems, *Love and Need*, during the period in which she was working on the translation. She was clearly taken by the personality of

the author, by the pathos of his condition as an exile, and by the urgency of his creative task in difficult times.

Private Collection, the memoirs of Jean Starr Untermeyer, provides a remarkable glimpse into her translating relationship with Broch. One of the most substantial chapters of the collection, entitled “Midwife to a Masterpiece,” is devoted not only to a discussion of their personal relationship but to Untermeyer’s analysis of her practice of translation. She recounts how, in her first attempts to deal with Broch’s unwieldy prose, she was helped by a friend. Together, “we marked the main sentences in blue pencil, the unbelievably long subsidiary clauses in red, thus providing me with a kind of map, or Baedeker. Somehow or other, both Virgil and I would get through this melee” (Untermeyer 1965:235). Each part of the translation was subsequently revised, word for word, comma for comma, with Broch.

I had developed my own method of work, and it was a musical method. Looking back, it seems as if rhythm and meaning came to me simultaneously, but I worked slavishly at the language, making liberal use of both dictionary and thesaurus. My routine became a grueling one; my working schedule was from ten to fifteen hours a day. Breaks occurred, but these came in the form of illness. I was in the grip of a relentless possession.

(Untermeyer 1965:236)

The relationship with Broch was far from harmonious. Knowing not only from Broch’s other books, but also from his confidences, how ambivalent his attitude to women was, Untermeyer wrote to him, “How strange it must seem to you to have your great work translated by a woman.” Although her intention had been ironic, she found that her remarks had greatly “puffed his ego up” and muses on how “dull-witted” even the cleverest of men can be in respect to the muted irony of a woman (ibid.: 240). But Broch’s criticism could also be extremely cutting. His sudden antagonisms were often unleashed, Untermeyer suggests, by her unappreciated insights into his work: “Thus Broch, like other men of his stamp, gave me to understand that whatever abilities a woman might possess, the ability to think, by his standards, was not one of them” (ibid.: 241).

And yet it is clear that Untermeyer feels tremendous sympathy for him, and identifies intensely with the combined characters of Virgil and Broch himself.

My close association with this work, as well as with the author, was probably the most educative experience of my whole writing life. No, of my life—without any qualifying adjective. More than any book, more than any other person, Broch probed for the truth of existence. His was the most radical, most powerful, most far-ranging mind with which I had ever made contact. This contact, it is true, was not always comfortable, for Broch was thoroughgoing in his role of Socrates, and so divested one of every pleasing self-illusion that one felt stripped to the bone. But I had had since childhood a certain stoicism in bearing the penalties one pays for knowledge.

(Untermeyer 1965:244)

Some sense of the immensity of the task imposed on Untermeyer can be glimpsed through the fact that Broch insisted that the English manuscript be made in six copies, corresponding to the different versions of his work. When a change was made in one part of the work, it had to be followed through logically into every section in which the idea recurred. Tension mounted to breaking point in 1945, when Broch kept feeding Untermeyer with constant changes in the final manuscript. There were angry shouting matches toward the end (*ibid.*: 248). When the book was published in 1945, Broch's hostility disappeared and their relationship became warm and relaxed. Untermeyer comments ruefully, however, that it took her ten years to emerge artistically from this "difficult birth" which had stretched over five intense years, and to return to her own work (*ibid.*: 245). However, it is also suggested that the work of translation had something of a therapeutic effect for her. The "all-absorbing" task of translation calmed the spirit of a woman who had been grieving for losses recently suffered.

The story of Untermeyer's relationship with Broch and his book is extraordinarily rich and suggestive. We can only guess at the parts of the story which Untermeyer chose not to tell. From Broch's biography (Lützelner 1987), we know that he maintained an extra-ordinary level of intensity in his relationships with women. As well as these frequent and passionate relationships, he had long and loyal friendships with women. Untermeyer was to some extent subjugated by Broch's personality, and by the nature of his artistic commitment. We clearly appreciate her attraction toward a man who incarnated the poet's dream of an uncompromising and absolute artistic sensibility—as well as being a victim of Nazism. Broch, on the other hand, was very dependent on Untermeyer. Her work was to rescue him from anonymity in America.

We sense the desperation in Broch's dependence upon the American translator to make him understood and accepted in his country of exile, a desperation exacerbated by the pressures of wartime and by the tremendous concentration of creative energy in a single work. (Broch published only two major novels in his lifetime.) Each of the partners in the relationships fulfilled, then, an essential function for the other. Through this literary engagement, Untermeyer constructed for herself an ideal of translation, an ideal as exacting as Broch's conception of writing. So did a work generally considered "untranslatable" find itself admirably and uncompromisingly turned into English.

The critical esteem granted to Untermeyer's translation work is indicated by the invitation she received in 1946 to address the German Club of Yale University. She was the first woman, apparently, to receive such an invitation. Her talk, included as an appendix in her memoirs (Untermeyer 1965:250–277), was entitled "Is Translation an Art or a Science?". Untermeyer's general comments on the "art" of translation put the strongest weight on the emotional and esthetic commitment of the translator. Translation must be seen, she argues, as a work of art, "a thing whole in itself, the result of a process in which vision as well as technique, form as well as content, merge in a body—soul relationship that assures the vitality and spirit of a creative work" (*ibid.*). But essential to the creation of this work, Untermeyer insists, is the condition that

the translator has really to identify with the work he is translating in the same way that he identifies with his own creative work. He must become it. The first and final axiom for a translator might well be this: the translator should himself be translated.

(*ibid.*: 253)

Translation must be an "adventure in empathy."

Untermeyer puts a great deal of emphasis on the musical grounding of her work. She shared with Broch a passion for music, and both invoke musical principles of composition.

The Death of Virgil was musically conceived and executed, and it needed to be musically interpreted. But the task was not so much like transposing a composition from one key to another, as of re-orchestrating a composition for another set of instruments, taking utmost care to preserve the structure, the phrasing, and the musical line, and to substitute for the original sonorities others of equal depth.

(ibid.:261)

Providing numerous examples, Untermeyer concludes:

You will have perceived that I wrestled with Broch's ideas, as they mistily emerged, as I would have done with my own adumbrations in any creative process, and that the methods brought into play through translation were not essentially different from those demanded by a work just coming into being. With each revision, I, like the author, became more exacting. I wanted to achieve what perhaps no translation can hope to achieve. I hoped it would seem that these words and no other could express the message of *The Death of Virgil*.

(ibid.: 267)

What is most exceptional in these comments is the depth of Untermeyer's commitment to translation, the tremendous intellectual, esthetic and emotional investment she makes in the task. The standards she sets are unusually rigorous, her goal being to ensure that "these words and no others" will render Broch's message. Her engagement with author and text reaches a level of artistic intensity rarely attained through translation.¹³

The Muirs

While Willa Muir's and her husband Edwin's names are also associated with the highest standards of literary translation, Willa Muir's own estimation of this task is in stark contrast to Untermeyer's. In her memoirs, Muir (1890–1970) mentions her translation work only in passing, making few comments about its demands. Muir was certainly a talented writer, her memoirs a remarkable demonstration of the fluidity of her style and the acuity of her perceptions. She was an early feminist, first by temperament and then by political conviction. *Women: An Inquiry* was published by the Hogarth Press in 1925. Her marriage was a thoroughly modern one, based on principles of equality and collaboration. She was involved in radical innovations in education and fully implicated in establishing and maintaining literary relations between England and Europe. She and her husband, a literary critic and cultural ambassador, lived for extended periods in Italy, Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Translation was an activity which “came upon her” when she was offered the possibility of turning three of Gerhart Hauptmann’s plays into English blank verse.

I was pleased because this was something I felt I could do: I did not know why I had not thought of it before as a possible means of earning money. The many years I had spent translating Greek and Latin into English gave me a sense of competence; I was well trained in accuracy, at least, and that was all to the good, for Edwin’s interpretations tended to be wild and gay. We hammered out our blank verse and it was rhythmical enough, but I should not care today to be faced with these translations.

(Muir 1968:106)

Willa Muir published both novels and essays in between her other endeavors: “I was always translating something, and any other work I did was sandwiched between translations” (ibid.: 115). She translated over forty books, mostly during the period 1924–1940, some under her own name, some with her husband. It is unfortunate that Willa Muir chooses not to describe this collaborative work with her husband, with whom she had a rigorously egalitarian relationship. Both partners were very suspicious of gender stereotypes and combined their literary interests with a strong commitment to alternative education. Their translation work was clearly inspired in part by financial considerations, but was also closely tied to their commitment to “Europeanize” the British world of letters.

They are best known for their translation of six books by Kafka. Willa Muir notes that one of their most successful efforts was not a translation at all but rather “a polished rendering.” For the *Jew Süß*, she consciously tailored the style of the novel to one which she felt would better suit an English public, cutting out adjectives and shortening sentences. The novel was wildly successful in England, much more so than *The Ugly Duchess*, also by Leon Feuchtwanger, for which the Muirs provided a “faithful” translation rather than the “polishing up” technique which had proved so effective (Muir 1968:134). The Muirs translated *The Sleepwalkers*, and Willa herself another novel of Broch’s, *The Unknown Quantity* (ibid.: 197). But Willa refused to translate *The Death of Virgil*, partly because she “did not care for it” and partly because she was overcome by Broch’s pessimism (ibid.: 200). The Muirs had spent nearly a year translating *The Sleepwalkers*, which had as its theme “the inevitable break-up of civilization in contemporary Europe—towards

which, according to Broch, we were all sleep-walking” (ibid.: 152). Deep believers in the powers of the unconscious, the Muirs objected to “the supremacy of abstract philosophizing,” and did not agree that the “unconscious should be despised as Broch despised ‘the irrational,’ and the notion that it could and would overwhelm European civilization in a cataclysm like the break-up of an ice-floe gone was entirely repugnant to us, even unthinkable” (ibid.: 152). Nevertheless, Broch represented for the Muirs some kind of prescient political knowledge. Returning from a factious meeting of P.E.N. International in Hungary in the 1930s, where they had felt the ominous threat of war, the Muirs went to visit Broch in Vienna. “From his tall height Broch looked down on us compassionately as on a pair of children who had just been learning the facts of European Life” (ibid.: 157).

That Broch proved accurate in his pessimistic predictions is probably the main reason why Willa Muir ended her translating career. The triumph of Nazism in Germany changed her attitude toward the German language, as she notes in her brief contribution to the volume *On Translation* (Muir 1959). She cannot dissociate the Nazi imprint from the language as a whole, and feels excessive distaste for its rhetoric of power.

I find myself disliking the purposive control, the will power dominating the German sentence. I dislike its subordination of everything to those hammer-blow verbs; I dislike its weight and its clotted abstractions. I have the feeling that the shape of the German language affects the thought of those who use it and disposes them to overvalue authoritative statement, will power, and purposive drive.

(Muir 1959:95)

Muir then goes on to say that Germans roll compound words into “sausages of abstraction,” associating this sausage shape of the sentence with the Zeppelin (a German invention) and German “bowel-consciousness” in general. “So the right image for the German sentence, I suggest, is that of a great gut, a bowel, which deposits at the end of it a sediment of verbs. Is not this like the Reich desired by Hitler, who planned to make mincemeat of Europe?” (ibid.: 96). Austrian German, she concedes, is different and easier to translate. “But to turn classical German into sound democratic English—there is the difficulty” (ibid.).

If the politics of international communion were responsible for beginning Willa Muir's translating career, it was the violence of Nazism which put an end to it.

Helen Lowe-Porter and Thomas Mann

The Second World War also had the effect of establishing the literary reputation of the anti-Nazi Thomas Mann. Mann's literary reputation in America was established as he became the standard-bearer there for German anti-Nazi dissidence during the war, despite his many years as an apolitical writer. The long literary relationship between Mann and his translator Helen Lowe-Porter (1877–1963) intensified during this period, owing to the difficulties of his exile. For Mann, as for Hermann Broch, it was a period of intense creative activity. Cut off totally from his reading public, Mann was dependent upon his American readers not only for critical esteem but also for his revenue. The pressure he put on his translator was evident: she could make or break the reception of his writing. Despite this tension, relations between Mann and Lowe-Porter remained largely courteous and friendly, and took the form of a voluminous correspondence.

The gradual politicization of Mann, along with his physical presence in the United States, brought him closer to Lowe-Porter, who had previously considered him politically naive. She held very firm Marxist convictions, and felt more comfortable with him as he became increasingly outspoken in his political opposition to Nazism. She occasionally wrote him pointed letters on political issues, and it is possible that she had some influence in transforming Mann from the apolitical writer he had claimed to be into a politically committed writer. She had traveled to the Soviet Union in 1936 in order to explore for herself the world created by a revolution she had supported, and she backed the Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War. She felt great affinities with Einstein, with whom she had a close friendship. She translated his papers and public addresses (Thirlwall 1966:xvi).

Helen Lowe-Porter translated almost all of the voluminous and numerous works of Thomas Mann. Because she always signed by her initials, many readers did not know she was a woman. Did she choose to do so because of an early traumatic experience with Thomas Mann? Although Lowe-Porter had successfully translated *Buddenbrooks*, Mann hesitated about giving his *Magic Mountain* to a female translator, expressly, he claimed in a letter to Lowe-Porter because "the new book with its deeply intellectual and symbolic character makes quite other

demands on the translator [than *Buddenbrooks*—demands which I sometimes deem would be more readily met by a male rather than a female temperament” (cited in Thirlwall 1966:9). Mann’s letter goes on to suggest that Lowe-Porter should perhaps have thought of this herself:

I do not know whether such thoughts and doubts have occurred to you, though, in view of your intelligence, I would consider it possible...I would suggest that if any scruples or doubts concerning the task happen to have occurred to you, you do not hide them from the American publisher.

(ibid.:9)

Indeed, as Mann hesitated for months on his choice of translator, Lowe-Porter did come to have misgivings about her abilities to deal with the intellectual content of the novel, even though she also felt intensely stimulated by it. In her later “On Translating Thomas Mann,” she analyzes her own ambivalence:

That letter [from Mann] should have stimulated me, but it did not, although in theory I was a confirmed and express proponent of what in those long-ago days was called “women’s rights” and under my aunt’s tutelage had read assiduously the defense of women as human beings. No—partly my pride was touched at the idea of forcing myself into a commercial bargain with an unwilling author; but partly I was scared—though on grounds not that “Woman” but this particular poor specimen was unequal to the task,

(ibid.: 11)

The incident ended in a rather grotesque manner. The Mr Schef-fauer to whom the translation contract was finally granted “jumped or fell from a window” (ibid.: 10), and the contract was finally given to Lowe-Porter anyway. She did occasionally appeal to Mann for help on certain points, but her translation was immensely successful. Its enthusiastic reception was the beginning of what became a cult of Thomas Mann in the English-speaking world (ibid.: 16). Subsequently, she translated almost everything else Mann wrote, and was asked to re-translate already published works (ibid.: 18).

Lowe-Porter spent ten years alone—eight hours of work each day—on the *Joseph* books, choosing not even to add a translator’s note to this massive epic which reached 2100 pages in German (ibid.: 27). She was singularly self-effacing, to the point, comments Thirlwall, that “she was

considered by some to be a mere Mann appendage” (ibid.: 20). She did produce a substantial essay “On Translating Thomas Mann” (1954), mainly recounting the circumstances of the various translations (ibid.: 178–209). In a short conclusion to the rambling essay, she proposes a few comments on “technical problems”: these are generic problems “from the German” rather than the specific problems of Mann’s style. Mann was very enthusiastic about Lowe-Porter’s translations, occasionally criticizing specific points but generally complimenting her on her work. She received very positive reviews. The only very negative one, the British critic Harry Levin’s review of *Doctor Faustus*, had little impact on the reading public, especially in the United States where Mann was lionized (ibid.: 114–115).¹⁴

Lowe-Porter did have literary ambitions of her own, but her desire to see her own creative writing published proved fruitless. She attributed this failure to her having been pegged as a perpetual translator: “for to most of the reading public, once a translator always a translator” (ibid.: 209). On the other hand, her correspondence with Mann is itself a valuable document on the ongoing negotiations of translation and on the political events which were so decisive to Mann’s career.

Two witty translators

To the translating relations discussed so far—which chronicle the translation of German modernism into Anglo-American letters until the end of the Second World War—a more contemporary example should be added. This is Suzanne Jill Levine’s account of her work as a translator of Latin American literature, and her collaborative “closeslaborations” with Guillermo Cabrera Infante and his novel *Tres Tristes Tigres* (translated as *Three Trapped Tigers*).

In her remarkably precise and suggestive account of the cultural work of translation, Levine is attentive also to the dynamics between author and translator. She advances—with wit and retrospective wisdom—into the areas where Jean Starr Untermeyer and Helen Lowe-Porter obviously feared to tread. She looks into that space where the power of the author threatens and seduces the translator, relates some of the excitement which a young American in search of exotic adventure finds there, and finally confesses to her life as a betrayer “fallen under the spell of male discourse, translating books that speak of woman as the often treacherous or betrayed other” (Levine 1991:181).

Levine’s self-accusation, we understand, merely adds one more level of betrayal to a career of ironic self-reflection. The wealth of Levine’s

examples of her work of “transcreation,” the extent of the literary knowledge and imagination which inform her practice, the strong sense of the cultural inequalities which feed translation: these define a superbly self-conscious (and self-confident) practice of translation. It is not at all certain who is ultimately betrayed by the dizzying sequence of cultural transactions which defines the world of Infante’s novel, and by the pingpong of subjectivities which is collaborative translation.

Levine’s belated sensitivity to the betrayals of her translating relationship brings to mind similar perceptions expressed by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Carol Maier, and others we discussed in [Chapter One](#). We might wonder how Jean Starr Untermeyer and Helen Lowe-Porter would have experienced and described their translating relationships had these occurred some fifty years later. Would they have been somewhat more transparent in recognizing their personal needs for self-expression? Would they have given more importance to gender difference? These questions make evident the sea-change which has occurred over the last decades in our sensitivities to gender roles. We can choose to ignore the pertinence of gender in our literary relationships, but it would seem impossible today not to take into account the possible effects of such differences.

WOMEN AT THE BORDERS

It should be emphasized that the preceding overview by no means exhausts discussion of the points of intersection between social and literary roles as they play themselves out in translation. It indicates some of the moments when translation presents itself as a socially and culturally meaningful activity for women. On the one hand, translation has provided a point of entry for women into the literary world. And on the other, it has allowed them to promote social and esthetic causes through the literary commerce between nations.¹⁵ Networks of solidarity have created the need for translations and opened the conduits which made them possible. Margaret Tyler, Aphra Behn and Madame de Staël attain the stature of heroic precursors here, tracing out paths to be followed by numerous successors. Margaret Tyler and Aphra Behn gave the “translatress” a voice; they opened a position from which women could intervene forcefully in the intellectual and literary debates of their time. Madame de Staël showed that translation was not a mechanical act of exchange, a neutral transaction, but that translated works had the power to interact dynamically with works in their new environment, and act as a stimulant to literary creation.

Something of Madame de Staël's heritage can be seen, then, in the work of Lady Gregory (1852–1932), a central figure associated with the Gaelic Revival and Irish Literary Theatre (later The Abbey) at the beginning of the century. She was a poet and prolific playwright. Her translations from Irish into Kiltartan Anglo-Irish dialect were aimed at transferring into English the power and energy of Irish folklore. Her translations, in other words, were very much a part of her struggle for the Irish nationalist cause (Kohfeldt 1985).

The example of Lady Gregory, like the many others presented here, shows that the intentions of translation can never be understood in isolation, but always in relation to a social, political or intellectual framework. The very meaning of the activity, the values which it engages, the changes it invokes, must be understood in relation to “something else”—the ideas and projects with which it is allied. Like other acts of writing and communication, translation belongs to a world of roles, values and ideas. The aims and the impact of the work of translators take shape in interaction with this world. This is especially true because translation is in itself an intensely *relational* act, one which establishes connections between text and culture, between author and reader. More than any other writing activity, the discourse and practice of translation foreground the *positionality* of enunciation. As Lynn Penrod demonstrates, translators are required to:

take a position relative to other cultures and languages.... Is it one of domination or is the other culture, the other language seen as a model? Is there an attempt at enrichment of our own culture or is “naturalization” of the other considered the objective? We need also to consider questions relating to the distance in time, in space, which separates translations from their originals as well as those arising from the most fundamental decision of all: whether or not to translate a given text at a given time. Who the translators are and the nature of the literary institution they belong to will also necessarily affect the way translations are produced.

(Penrod 1993:39)

These positionings, in other words, are productive. They act upon the language of translation, converting judgments about social and literary values into the materiality of the translated word. But they are also productive of discourse itself. That is, they allow translator/ writers like Jean Starr Untermeyer and Suzanne Jill Levine to use their particular

angle of vision in order to enrich our understanding of literature and the relationships it builds.

As forceful articulations of the translator's role, these perspectives break entirely with the evasive techniques of "self-denial" which were still current among nineteenth-century women translators. While undertaking very significant scholarly work, translators like Sarah Austin persisted in defining translation as a "specifically female flight from public recognition" (Stark 1993:37). These discursive tactics aimed at comforting existing hierarchies, confirming that being "only a woman" was consistent with being "just a translator," and yet allowing women effectively to make major scholarly achievements.

It would be comforting to believe that contemporary feminism has finally put an end to the career of this trope. As an intellectual and literary movement, feminism has challenged the historical imbrication of gender and writing roles and, as has been shown in [Chapter One](#), renewed translation theory. Like its "first wave" of expression in the nineteenth century, contemporary feminism has also reordered lines of cultural transmission. Translators, often women, have been instrumental in creating new circuits of exchange, opening new translation markets, promoting the new international stars of women's writing, whose work is available in countless languages. That is, in addition to the conceptual challenging of translation tropes, feminism has worked to establish new intellectual *connections*. These are particularly apparent in the exchange which has come to be known as transatlantic feminism.

Academic feminism has nurtured new generations of theorists, whose books circulate world-wide in translation. Central to the dynamic of literary and academic feminism from the 1970s on was the (sometimes ambivalent) attraction of Anglo-American women to the work of the French feminists, principally Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. This translating relationship nourished the development of Anglo-American feminist theory. The saga of transatlantic feminism is a story of trans-lation, the bearing across of Continental thought to Anglo-America, and the confrontation of two "versions" of theory. Despite the network of solidarities underlying this exchange, however, the encounter was not entirely harmonious. What comes into focus through this "missed" meeting is the diversity of intellectual alliances through which feminism has taken shape. As will become evident in the unfolding of this tale of (un?)fair exchange, the impact of translation first revealed the surprising disparity of these alliances, and then opened a space for dialogue and realignment.

Chapter 3

Missed connections: transporting French feminism to Anglo-America

It seemed appropriate enough that the afterlife would exceed the origin, the translation outflank[ing] the original.

(Comay 1991:47)

It seems, in retrospect, as though literary criticism in the United States had long been on the lookout for someone to be unfaithful with.

(Johnson 1985:143)

How did French feminism take hold in America? During an approximately twenty-year period from the mid-1970s onward, an immense wave of intellectual enthusiasm arose in response to the thought of the women who became known as the French feminists, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva. Hundreds of essays and articles have analyzed and documented the “French connections” which opened Anglo-American feminism to Continental philosophy and psychoanalysis. This collective infatuation was not entirely without precedent. It was part of a more general fascination with French thought which dominated this period, embracing such thinkers as Barthes, Lacan, Foucault and Derrida, and recalling the prestige and influence of Sartre, de Beauvoir and Camus on the previous generation of artists and intellectuals.

What is different about the impact of French feminism is the clearly defined focus of the movement on three specific writers—their names often recited together in ritual homage—and the intensity and duration of passions generated. We can wonder why and how the threesome of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, coming from a country whose feminist politics were in some ways light years behind those of Anglo-Saxon countries, came to represent the vanguard of feminist thinking. How has

such a longlasting climate of excitement been maintained around these writers, whose names are well known even if their works are not always widely read?

From the start, the importing of French feminism was framed as a “we/they” encounter, the meeting of two traditions (Freiwald 1991:65–66). The pragmatic vitality of American feminism, with its rich past of political activism, came into contact with a new, more conceptual dimension of feminism. French feminism offered the promise of a deep and necessary investigation into the symbolic and historical roots of patriarchy. Translation served to provide the theoretical nourishment and analytical tools in which Anglo-American feminism felt itself to be lacking. Through the French feminists, English-language readers came into contact with Continental philosophy and critical thought, modes of thinking which allowed a challenge to the very representation of knowledge, and to the discursive construction of sexual identity.

What are to be considered here are the intellectual conditions and the interlinguistic machinery which allowed this transfer to take place. What was it, Rebecca Comay asks in her witty and learned investigation into the “re”-localization of Derridean deconstruction in America, that accounted for the inflationary reception of obscure currents of French thought, like deconstruction, in America? What dissatisfactions, asks Barbara Johnson, made American academics susceptible to the allures of new intellectual partners? The lightning speed of transmission in the academic culture industry has created new conditions for the transfer of knowledge: travel, publication and conference time have speeded up immeasurably. But the special conditions of intellectual debate in America, the academic seclusion and relative isolation of ideas, and perhaps also the liberal ethos of pluralism contributed to creating a special home for deconstruction. “No doubt the job crisis, triggering a real intellectual crisis, played a significant enough part” (Comay 1991:49).

The impact of the French feminists on American feminist thought is far too wide-ranging to analyze in the same terms as a current like deconstruction. And yet some of the same forces of curiosity, the need for renewal, and the seeking out of a certain philosophical depth were responsible for the popularity of Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray in Anglo-America. By virtue of their engagement in the vital matrix of French modernity, these writers shared the anti-metaphysical and anti-humanist project which defined the *Zeitgeist*. This project aimed above all at advancing feminist thought beyond the Marxist model of oppression. Nevertheless, this overall critique of metaphysics does not explain how Julia Kristeva, who espouses the most universalistic of intellectual

positions, and always treats “the feminine” as the marginal underside of the masculine, emerged as a major “feminist” heroine in America.¹ Nor does it explain why the burden of essentialism was so resolutely placed at the feet of Hélène Cixous, on the basis of very few translated works. An extraordinarily long-winded controversy has both inflated and tempered the influence of all three writers by nailing them with the dreaded epithet “essentialist.” Behind their sophisticated mental machinery, were they not, in the end, idealists? Was their glorification of the feminine an authentic subversion of the symbolic structures of patriarchy or a mirror-image mystification? These questions fueled feminist debate right through the 1980s, obliging critics to confront the entire complexity of what is after all the main issue: what is contestatory discourse?

We find, then, that the dynamics of exchange can activate illusions and misprisions, as well as new frameworks for intellectual debate. It would seem indeed, as Nicole Ward Jouve has concluded, that “the translation process implies untold selections, omissions, enlargements, that have as much to do with the translating culture, its needs and projections, as they have with the writing that is being translated” (Jouve 1991:91).

IS PHALLOGOCENTRIQUE THE TRANSLATION OF “MALE CHAUVINIST PIG”?

The years 1980 and 1981 are signal years for transatlantic feminism. In 1980 the influential anthology *New French Feminisms* (Marks and de Courtivron 1980) appeared, as well as the volume *The Future of Difference* and important issues of *Signs*, *Feminist Studies* and *Critical Inquiry*. The issue of *Yale French Studies* entitled “Feminist Readings: French Texts/American Contexts” appeared in 1981. Each of these publications indicates the growing awareness of a developing relationship between Anglo-American and French feminism, which defines itself around a simultaneous attraction toward, and distrust of, psychoanalysis and theory.

In *New French Feminisms: an Anthology*, the work of translation is clearly foregrounded in the introduction and in the dedication of the book, to, among others, the “writers and translators of these texts.” But this widely praised and influential anthology is very laconic, if not totally silent, in its actual exposition of translation difficulties. This silence is related to the very brief presentations of the “context” of the writings of

French feminism, and in the lack of attention to the conflictual dimensions of the French context (see Burke 1978). In putting complex theoretical pieces alongside more transparent political declarations, the anthology creates a reductive egalitarianism among the authors and a false impression of easy access to all the work. While the anthology had the merit of giving a name to a new area of interest and expertise, it was clearly deficient in providing background for the ideas and styles of the major theorists.²

While *New French Feminisms* creates the impression of relative ease of access to a “foreign” body of work (despite an isolated disclaimer that “for the uninitiated some of the texts will first appear impenetrable”), the discussion in the issue of *Yale French Studies* suggests a different reality.

The contributors to this issue recount the difficulty of transplanting a text like “The Laugh of the Medusa” (Cixous 1986) to an American classroom where Cixous’ complex dialogue with Derrida (not to mention Derrida’s with Lacan) left the students “very excited, very frustrated and very dislocated” (Introduction, *Yale French Studies*, 62). In her brief comments, Susan Gubar remarks on the importance of such cultural intermediaries as Gayatri Spivak and Jane Gallop, who can bridge the intellectual gap. Many of the others speak of their very ambivalent feelings toward the foreignness, cultural and conceptual, of French theory. Alice Jardine, in “Pre-Texts for the Transatlantic Feminist” (1981a), sees the American feminist, whose reading strategies have been radically changed by recent French theory, as caught between two contradictory imperatives. While American feminism enjoins the feminist to “know thyself!” (that is, to make contact with your *true* self, beneath the false images which patriarchy has created) French feminism claims that there is no self to know (Jardine 1981a: 224). For Jardine, the most important aspect of French feminism is its link to the epistemological crisis of modernity, a crisis which insists on the opacity and difficulty of language—in contrast to the American valorization of plain speaking. Can this distance be measured in Elaine Marks’ suggestion that the appropriate French equivalent for “male chauvinist pig” would be “phallogocentrique” (Marks 1978:842)?

The main issue of difference between American and French feminism was indeed perceived as one of language. But what did language mean here? Certainly not the importance of the specific linguistic code used by French writers. It meant rather the challenge which feminist theorists addressed to the conceptual structure of patriarchy, a masculine mode of perceiving and organizing the world, a male view encoded in centuries of learning so that it appears natural and inevitable. While Anglo-

American feminists had highlighted the linguistic consequences of oppression (in particular empirical investigation into the nefarious effects of naming what is inferior and other derogatory linguistic conventions) the focus of French feminism lay in deconstructing the symbolic structure of patriarchy. Language was not to be considered a mere system of names and labels, but the means through which meaning and value are expressed, a condition for the production of subjects within an anti-humanist framework of subjectivity.

These initial signs of the difficulty of communication between two recognizably different philosophical and cultural traditions might, logically, have extended into a heightened awareness of translation effects. Curiously, however, recognition of the effects of translation was rare relative to the sheer mass of commentary which accompanied this exchange. In almost every instance, translations of single texts by the French feminists are accompanied by explanatory articles, rather than buttressed by translator's notes. It is to be remembered that the feminist scholars dealing with this material in English would not have training in foreign languages, and would share the insensitivity to translation common to members of all imperialist cultures. As dominant English-speaking nations in an English-speaking world, both England and the United States have relatively limited practices (and consequently limited awareness) of translation, leaving the obligation of linguistic transfer to non-English-speaking countries.

Commentators might have been more vigilant had they been aware of the history of the translation of feminist writings, in particular the serious truncation of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (first published in English in 1952, three years after the initial publication in France). In arguing for the need for a new English version, Margaret A. Simons shows in detail how the translator, Howard Parshley, a professor of zoology at Smith College, and the author of a 1933 book on sex and reproduction, deleted fully one-half of one chapter on history, a fourth of another, and eliminated the names of seventy-eight women (Simons 1983:560). In Book II, he deleted approximately 12 percent, primarily quotations cited by de Beauvoir. Parshley distorts de Beauvoir's main arguments about socialist feminism by randomly deleting portions of her historical accounts, and mistranslates some key terms of existentialist philosophy like the Sartrean phrase, *la réalité humaine, pour-soi* and *en-soi* (Simons 1983:562, 563). In fact, Parshley's understanding of Marxist and other philosophical terms is also inadequate: "alienation" becomes "projection" or "identification"; "mystification" becomes "hoax" or "mockery." It is obvious, then, that just as the naked woman on the cover

of one of the paperback editions of *The Second Sex* misrepresents the tenor of the content, the translation of this feminist classic seriously distorts its scholarly underpinnings.

Contemporary publishers have been more sensitive to the content of feminist writings and given them to translators more in sync with the work. Who are the translators of the French feminists? One observation is striking: there have been few translations by the theorists who have acted as cultural intermediaries: Alice Jardine, Toril Moi, Jane Gallop, Elizabeth Grosz, etc. (Gayatri Spivak is an exception to whom we shall pay special attention in the Conclusion of this book.) The intellectual “returns” of translation are clearly not sufficient today to merit the investment of otherwise productive academics. Instead, translations have been meted out, usually on an individual basis, to translators who have been in some way associated with the intellectual projects of their authors. Kristeva’s writings have been translated by a group from Columbia University (where Kristeva was an invited lecturer), Cixous’ by the translator Betsy Wing, by Catherine MacGillivray and by a group of American women who attended her seminars in Paris, and Irigaray’s numerous publications meted out to a variety of women translators (Penrod 1993:43).

While contemporary feminist writings are not likely to suffer the negative effects of an inappropriate or gender-biased translator, they have suffered distortion effects of a different order. The case I will discuss at greatest length is that of H  l  ne Cixous. The effects here relate both to the time lag between the translation of two very popular essays in the mid-1970s and the rest of her work, and to the difficulty of determining the genre of her discourse and therefore of choosing an appropriate translation strategy.

Before going on to this analysis, however, it would be useful to situate the translation of Cixous in relation to the parallel career of Derrideanism in Anglo-America. Derrida was an early and major influence on Cixous’ writing, and her techniques of representation are to some extent similar to his.

IN PARALLEL: DERRIDEANISM IN AMERICA

Roughly contemporaneous to the period during which French feminism was traveling to Anglo-America, the movement of Derrideanism through translation tells a story somewhat similar to the one which unfolded on feminist terrain.³ This is in part because the anti-metaphysical dynamics

of Derrideanism are very much at work in the texts of the French feminists and provide the conceptual underpinnings of their critique of language.

Rebecca Comay points to Derrida's 1966 lecture on "Structure, Sign and Play" as the inaugural moment in a movement which was to "stick the 'post' in front of structuralism" before the original ideas themselves had penetrated American soil (Comay 1991:50), and propel Derrideanism far out of the control of its eponymic source. Despite constant appeals to history and context, Derrideanism was swept into the arena of literary criticism and "free play," submitted to an "uncontrolled fever" of appropriations, domestications and displacements.

In this context, the appearance of the term "free play" itself takes on some importance. In fact, the term was introduced as a rendering quite simply of "jeu" (play) in the initial English version of Derrida's article "Structure, Sign and Play." This term became the focus of attacks on the gratuitousness of the textual antics of Derrideans. The "mis-translation" came to crystallize issues around the stylistic and ethical liberties of the deconstructionists, for whom the conventional frames of interpretation were no longer operative. Did the questioning of the authorial intention indeed give the interpreter the right to interpret as he or she wished? Was the death of the author to become the source of unlimited freedom for the critic? Comay correctly stresses the error of introducing the idea of "free play" in the context of an anti-humanistic philosophy where "freedom" would be a strongly contested notion. In the re-translation of the article prepared by Allan Bass, "jeu" is rendered by the more precise "play" (Comay 1991:50-51).

The paradox of deconstruction's introduction into America is that, by virtue of its very philosophical basis, there could be no "controlling" of its movements. There could be no appeal to the conventional "strategies of purification by bifurcation" (Comay 1991:54), that is appeals to the authority of the original, the purity of sources, the autonomy of the signature. Questions of filiation and affiliation, translation effects, were indeed the very subject—and matter—of Derrida's work. While resisting translation (through its use of the signifier and associative wordplays), Derrida's work paradoxically lent itself to translation as a mode of transmission.

And "Derrida himself" before long was to be observed speaking in conference halls across the nation, delivering texts written in and for another's English translation, like a dubbed version of some lost original, like a player in his own comedy, like a ventriloquist to his own voice.

(Comay 1991:54)

One of the most salient offshoots of the adventure of Derrideanism in America has been the new attention paid to the active character of translation. Barbara Johnson observes that “Derrida’s theory and practice of *écriture*, indeed, occupy the very point at which philosophy and translation meet” (Johnson 1985:144). The fact that Derrida’s critique of representation and mimesis is performed through translation provided the basis for new inquiries into the ethics of language transfer. Philip Lewis, one of the first translators of Derrida, turns Derrida’s own “inchoate axiology” of translation into the justification for what he calls “abusive” translation, in which fidelity is attached to rhetorical strategies rather than to content (Lewis 1985).

What kind of translations issue from such a theoretical position? Lewis, whose translation of “La Mythologie blanche” is recognized as a decisive moment in the reception of Derrida’s work in the Anglo-American context (it appeared in 1974 in *New Literary History*), offers a surprisingly negative assessment of his own initial efforts of translation. He says of his English text: “The abuses in the French text are commonly lost; the translation rarely produces any telling effects of its own; the special texture and tenor of Derrida’s discourse gets flattened out in an English that shies away from abnormal, odd-sounding constructions” (Lewis 1985:56). It renders the message but not the performance which strengthens it. The translation is “in dissonance” with the program of the text. Lewis explains how this kind of weak, entropic translation becomes a problem for commentary, standing between “strong” readings of the Derridean text and weak adaptations of his message. Commentary must function “in the wake of translation” (*ibid.*: 62).

The elegiac tone of Lewis’ remarks is in stark contrast to the joyful manifesto-like tone of the first part of his article where he calls for “abusive” translation. This disparity in tone is in fact symptomatic of the chasm between writing on—and performing—translation. Such a hiatus is reflected in the comments of Joseph Graham, editor of the volume of Derridean conceptions of translation, who in his translator’s notes also sounds depressed rather than joyous.

Translation is an art of compromise, if only because the problems of translation have no one solution and none that is fully satisfactory.... There was consolation for so much effort to so little effect in that whatever we did, we were bound to exhibit the true principles of translation announced in our text.

(Graham 1985:205)

Can it be that Derrida's writing on translation uses a dynamic exactly contrary to that of the practice of translation, opening frontiers of meaning where translation is obliged to shut them off?

Not all assessments by translators of Derrida are as negative as these. Barbara Johnson's reference to her own translation of an "untranslatable" passage of Derrida shows little frustration. What she has done is to transpose a reference to the French language into English, "thus fictively usurping the status of original author" (Johnson 1985:146). Johnson is sanguine in pointing to the inevitable conflicts of translation. Transporting the scene of translation into the psychoanalytic arena, she suggests that there is no use blaming oneself for an exercise that will undoubtedly result in some kind of dissatisfaction. Translation plays out in the open the "everyday frustrations" of writing, projecting them into an external form. We transfer our frustrations to the mother tongue, reproducing the "scene of linguistic castration—which is nothing other than a scene of impossible but unavoidable translation and normally takes place out of sight, behind the conscious stage" (ibid.: 144).

Faced with the inevitability of "impotence," Johnson prefers to avoid the elegiac mode and to equate the limits of the translator's task with those of the writer. In adopting this more positive attitude toward translation, in unapologetically and even triumphantly "usurping" the position of the original author, Johnson serves as our point of juncture between Derridean and feminist translation as developed most notably by Barbara Godard. It is through Derrida that feminist translation finds its new definitions of textual authority and develops its politics of transmission. The unprecedented theoretical attention given by Derrida and Derrideans to translation itself will provide feminist translators with a vocabulary allowing them to redefine their task. These new conditions of authorization are to some extent put into practice in the translations of work by Hélène Cixous, and most notably by Cixous herself.

PRODUCTIVE BETRAYALS: HELENE CIXOUS

A static and very partial image of Hélène Cixous' work took root in America through a very small sampling of her writing. One article, "Le Rire de la Méduse," published in translation in *Signs* (1976) and then in Marks and de Courtivron's (1980) anthology, for almost a decade came to "represent" the writing of Cixous, and by extension, French feminism.

This essay was immensely influential in altering the course of language-centered theoretical debates in Anglo-American feminist circles, but it also made its author, Cixous, the recipient of a fair amount of adverse criticism having to do with the alleged essentialism of this text (Penrod 1993:40). While virtually all of Julia Kristeva's work had been available in English translation—more than half of it translated by the same group of academics from Columbia University where Kristeva spent several terms in the 1970s as Distinguished Professor—only three book-length titles of Cixous' more than thirty books were available in English until the early 1990s (Penrod 1993:44). The end result is that “those members of the Anglo-American feminist academy who could not read French happily continued writing as if Cixous were still laughing at the Medusa, being newly born day after day” (ibid.: 47). Four major translations have, however, appeared since 1990 from important university presses.⁴

Nicole Ward Jouve echoes Penrod's claims that Cixous is the most misrepresented of the three prominent French feminists. She underscores the fact that very few of Cixous' plays, for instance, have been translated. Thus an evolving practice is patchily represented, “the few available fictions (like *Angst*) solidified into a false representativeness” (Jouve 1991:49). It would seem that Anglo-Saxon criticism has found the theoretical Cixous most useful, if only to use her as a foil for the suspect essentialism of French feminism. This essentializing of Cixous was itself brought about at the expense of the wide range of her creative writing. Spivak acknowledges and contributes to this effect by noting, in a relatively recent essay analyzing “The Laugh of the Medusa,” that even if this piece is not representative of the current Cixous, “it is representative of that moment in ‘French’ feminism which has become a flashpoint for feminist intellectuals” (Spivak 1993:310).

The distortion effects which occur through time lags are but one example of the kinds of displacements which inevitably occur through cultural transfer. The fact that the writings of Cixous, Irigaray and to a lesser extent Kristeva are “language-centered,” that is consciously focused on the power of the signifier and on strategies of performative rhetoric, obviously make for increased complexity of transmission.

The work of H el ene Cixous is particularly complex in that it expresses concepts which are recognizably “theoretical” in poetic language. It is the indeterminacy of Cixous' style which has made for the most difficulty in translation, because of the initial identification of Cixous with philosophy and theory rather than with fiction. Logically enough, Cixous' work has elicited the most comments from translators of French feminist texts, and engaged a polyphony of voices.

In addition, faithful to her Derridean allegiances, and conscious of the political and emotional attachments which always make writing a process of dialogue, Cixous mingles voices and languages within her own work. In the title essay of *La Venue a l'écriture*, Cixous (1977) refers to the multiplicity of languages into which she was born—German, French, Arabic, English—to demonstrate that there is no definitive language, since the meaning of one language can never be fully translated into another. She urges men to relinquish the attempt to master language and to embrace, instead, the plurality of languages: “‘adoring’ language’s differences, respecting its gifts, its talents, its movements.” In *Angst*, Cixous suggests that this will be a language in which “she” will also have the status of subject: “a sentence with room for me in it” (ibid.: 27).

The text which best illustrates the complicity between writing and translation in the work of Cixous is *Vivre l’orange* (1979). Published by the feminist press, Éditions des femmes, *Vivre l’orange* is a bilingual text, both versions signed Cixous (an introductory note states that the English text is an edited version of a translation by Ann Liddle and Sarah Cornell). Such a bilingual text offers us a rare opportunity to assess the translation strategy of an author, herself abundantly translated, for whom translation is an explicit concern. How does Cixous reconcile the demands of translation with the semantic slippage she deliberately seeks to provoke in her own work?

Cixous’ translation strategy is consistent and coherent: she provides in English a very close echo of the French text, a persistent shadowing of the French, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase. This close reading inevitably creates estrangement effects in English. And these effects are amplified by the occasional use of arcane or unexpected vocabulary: “*la voix baisse comme une flamme*” “whose voice that like a flame lowers,” “*une écriture est venue*,” “a writing came” (Cixous 1979:8–9, 12–13), and occasionally the presence of a French word unitalicized or otherwise bracketed in the English text: “but where are the amies,” “by a fine vibration in the toile,” “Bonheur malheur,” “montgolfier,” “sortie,” “ensemble” (ibid.: 10, 18, 28, 22, 22, 70), or the attempt to create polysemic effects in English, where they did not necessarily exist in the French: “I had the peace in my hands,” “How to call oneself abroad?,” “I am foreinge,” “alightening on the table” (ibid.: 16, 36, 40, 80), or purposely using an English word which resembles the French but introduces a new semantic element: “*les defiles de l’angoisse*” becomes “the defiles of anguish,” “white leaf” for “*feuille blanche*,” “rebirth herself” for “*ren’être...renaissante*,” “peel myself down” for “*me dépouiller*” (ibid.: 32–33, 16–17, 38–39, 40–41).

Only one paragraph seems to depart radically from this system of strict equivalences and coincidences. This is a paragraph where the question of Cixous' Jewish identity is broached in a kind of paroxysm of anguished jubilation. What is the relation between women demonstrating in Iran against the veil and the "Jewish question"?

La question des juifs. La question des femmes. La question des juifemmes. *La questione della donnarance. A questão das laranjas.* The question: Juis-je juive ou fuis-je femme? Jouis-je judia ou suis-je mulher? Joy I donna? ou fruo filha? Fuis-je femme ou est-ce que je me ré-juive?

The question of the Jews. The question of women. The question of jewomen. *A questão dans laranjudias. Della arancebrea.* Am I enjewing myself? Or woe I woman? Win I woman, or wont I jew-ich? Joy I donna? Gioia jew? Or gioi am femme? Fruo.

(Cixous1979)

Here we see Cixous writing across languages, moving from jubilation to lament, moving through English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian, between Clarice Lispector and Joyce, in an outburst of ambivalent self-accusation. Here, the absence of any mechanical idea of equivalence between languages reinforces the dynamic of Cixous' writing which is to create meaning in the spaces between words, in the interplay between them.

The careful, restrained linguistic shadowing which prevails else-where in the text collapses entirely as the plurality of codes is equally produced in all languages. We are reminded here of Derrida's question: can the process of transfer between texts already written in a plurality of tongues still be called translation? How to translate a text which is already infected by the multiplicity of language (Graham 1985:215)? In this passage, Cixous brings to the surface the tensions among identities through which her text is constructed. The unity of the speaking subject's identity explodes, as does the unity of language.

There is a certain violence in this expression of non-identity, in the dispersion of familiar linguistic traits. The reader of the translation is faced with "stiff or limping English, full of gaps, blocked by untranslated matter" (Willis 1992:107). Exposed to the eye are two texts, one dependent on the other, each language showing itself to fill the gap of the other, supplementing and at the same time revealing the faults and gaps of the original, in a complementary and simultaneous act of completion and deformation. The poles of wholeness and loss are

indicated by the orange and the apple, the orange pointing to a mythic completeness, the apple drawing attention to the divisions at the heart of being: apple becomes *appel*, appeal: *how* to call, *what* to call? The speaker draws attention to the shift from orange to apple, claiming in the text: "I am guilty also of voluntary translation" (Cixous 1979:38). Clarice, however, is the instrument who will translate the apple into the orange. *Vivre l'orange*, in Sharon Willis' strong reading, is a text that "exposes its own fault, faultiness, an internal rift, across the figure of the orange, a beginning displaced, occupying the place of Iran, of I, of woman, of the body through which the voice passes" (Willis 1992:113). It performs the failure of the journey toward the proper name, toward the security of a linguistic home. The interdependence of the double text echoes the absent origin of the speaker, the displacements of her quest.

TRANSLATION BY ACCRETION

The wordplay in Cixous' writing has, understandably, been a source of considerable difficulty for her translators. They must try to follow, imitate or reproduce the wordplays and slippages of the original, without reducing the text to its communicative content. Largely, however, they have not followed the defamiliarizing strategy which Cixous herself illustrates. Prefaces, like that of Annette Kuhn (for the translation of "Castration or Decapitation"), draw attention to how difficult it is for translation to do full justice to Cixous' writing, "which is actually organized around a pervasive play with, and subversion of, linguistic signifiers" (Kuhn 1981:36), yet devote no further attention to drawing the specificity of this writing practice into the body of the translation. In the same way, Catherine MacGillivray, in her translation of Cixous' essay *Repentirs*, confines her comments to a preface, where she notes that the moments of tension in the text are lost in the translation. In particular she mentions the difficulty of rendering Cixous' word-play around different forms of "taking off" (MacGillivray 1993: 87–103).

Only Betsy Wing, translator of a number of texts by Hélène Cixous, in comments buried in the glossary which follows *The Newly Born Woman*, argues for a

process of accretion, not choosing a single meaning and indulging in wordplay where the disruption could bear the same relation to written English as the "original" did to written French.... There are difficult words in this book; words that are too-full of sense

(direction, meaning, feeling; common, uncommon) to be rendered by any one English word.

(Wing 1986:163)

Rather than breaking the rhythm of the text, Wing has chosen to include numerous meanings, for instance, in *coupable*, both “culpable” and “cuttable”; in *voler*, both “to fly” and “to steal”; in *dépenser*, both “to spend” and “to unthink”; in *encore*, both “in body” and “still more” (ibid.: 163–164).

Wing pursues this method of translation in Cixous’ *Book of Promethea*. Thus when Cixous writes “*Elle ne sait plus par quoi commencer: chanter, brûler, liquider, couler, jaillir*” (Cixous 1983:12), Wing translates: “She no longer knows where to begin: singing, burning, abolishing, liquidating, flowing, gushing” (Cixous 1991a: 19). The English “abolish” is an addition which creates a link between the alternative meanings of *liquider*: abolish and flow.

The “fly/steal” method has been criticized, notably by Nicole Ward Jouve, an admirer of the writing of Cixous. She admits, however, to having no alternatives to put in its place. Deborah Jenson is more categorical in her critique of Wing’s method. She argues that Wing’s decision to present explicitly a series of terms in answer to the poetic multiplicity of one term does not respect the nature of the text itself and the relationship it creates with the reader. According to Jenson, the reader is responsible for discerning the several meanings which are suggested, but can also let them “lie dormant” (Jenson 1991:195). It is because Cixous’ writing should be understood primarily as poetry that its “untranslatability” is to be respected. There can be no equivalence for words which gather connotative force as they advance through the text (ibid.: 195). Jenson herself uses endnotes rather extensively (though reluctantly, as they “interrupt the musical flow of the text”) to underline, in particular, the omnipresent Cixousian stylistic device of homophony. For instance, Jenson, in her translation “Coming to Writing,” leaves the word *languelait* in the English text, but in a footnote explains that “languelait” is a phonetic spelling of *anglais* (English) which produces a pun combining *langue* (language) and *lait* (milk) (foot-note 11). A play on *demain* (tomorrow) and *deux mains* (two hands) is rendered by “twomorrow.” A play on *grammaire* and *grand-mère* with reference to the big bad wolf is given as “gramma-r wolf”; the confusion of *mère* (mother) and *mer* (sea) are given as “sea-mother” (ibid.: 8, 22, 23). Rather than adding extra suggestive words as Wing occasionally does, Jenson tries to reproduce the pun, or to use footnotes.

It is not entirely evident that Betsy Wing's proposed technique of translation by accretion is less respectful of the polysemy of Cixous' text than the more conventional procedure favored by Jenson. Whether it be through cumulative semantic effects or through footnotes, however, it would seem absolutely essential that the English-speaking reader be given some idea of how Cixous mobilizes poetic resources in the service of a specific textuality. The semantic slippages and rhetorical hesitation which are generated through the insistence on the signifier is central to Cixous' writing strategy. It highlights the work of the unconscious of the text, and drains authority away from the speaking subject. Those who read Cixous with no indication of these recurring lapses, returns and echoes will indeed get from her work the illusion of a false certainty. Gayatri Spivak insists on the writerly nature of Cixous work: "We must attend more closely to the detail of her style as we attempt to explain her positions" (Spivak 1993:154).

The idea of writing as a process of discovery which escapes the control of the author recurs often in the essays of Cixous. "Writing advances in the dark," she says. "One cannot know." "*Ecrire chemine dans le noir vers ces vérités. On ne sait pas. On va*" (Cixous in Rossum-Guyon and Diaz-Docaretz 1990:34-35). This weakening of the authority of the author creates an uncomfortable situation for the translator, whose position is structurally tied to that of a strong author. Although her writing has been criticized as self-indulgent and formless, trapped in the symbolic plenitudes of the Imaginary (Moi 1985:125), this abdication of control remains central to Cixous' fiction.

In "A Translator's Imaginary Choices" (preface to her translation of *The Book of Promethea*), Betsy Wing notes the contradiction between the clashing impressions of free flow and conscious effort in Cixous' texts, and the particular importance of clichés of femininity within this particular text. She draws attention to the importance of the translating voice through closely literal translation, "one which flaunts the clearly poetic quality of her texts—and yet takes poetic license to reproduce Cixousian wordplay and repetitions where they can appear easily and letting them slip away where they would be obtrusive and forced in English" (Wing 1991:5). Voice must be attentive to the "clusters of textual energy which force new meaning into being." The translator must re-create the violence of these moments. And so the translator is faced with a tall order: "pay attention and let things slip through...it is in terms of the body and its rhythms that translation must work" (ibid.: 7, 9). Wing's translations are indeed writerly, sensitive and attentive to Cixous'

wordplay, to rhythm, to sound repetition and to the foregrounding of grammatical gender.

KRISTEVA AND IRIGARAY: TRIALS OF PASSAGE

In contrast, the writing of Julia Kristeva has elicited relatively little commentary from translators. In *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, the first collected volume of Kristeva's writings, Leon Roudiez suggests in his introduction that the translators might once have entertained hopes that their work would make Kristeva come out sounding like Edmund Wilson (Kristeva 1980:12). This surprising analogy is based on the recognition that Kristeva's work is not a "text" but simply expository prose. The translator's desire to transform Kristeva into a slightly antiquated version of the American critic seems to find expression in the very first essay ("The Ethics of Linguistics") where she is made to say: "Should a linguist, today, ever happen to pause and query the ethics of his own discourse, he might well respond by doing something else" (ibid.: 23). 23). In fact, the ever-present technical terms and Olympian theoretical perspective of Kristeva's essays prevent any real imposition of essay-like fluidity.

It is in this volume that the translation of the *term jouissance* is discussed at length. If the translators of all the French feminists agree on one point, it is on the problematic nature of the term *jouissance*. Roudiez opts for using the English word "jouissance," apparently a carryover from Renaissance English which maintains the meanings related to both law and sex.

In Kristeva's vocabulary, sensual, sexual pleasure is covered by *plaisir*; "jouissance" is total joy or ecstasy (without any mystical connotation); also, through the working of the signifier, this implies the presence of meaning (*jouissance=j'ouïs sens*=I heard meaning), requiring it by going beyond it.

(ibid.: 16)

The translators of the Marks and de Courtivron anthology had missed the full meaning of the French terms, proposing that *jouissance* be translated as "sexual pleasure," but taking the trouble all the same to justify this translation in a note:

Women's "jouissance" carries with it the notion of fluidity, diffusion, duration. It is a kind of potlatch in the world of orgasms, a giving, expending, dispensing of pleasure without concern about ends or closure. One can easily see how the same imagery could be used to describe women's writing.

(Marks and de Courtivron 1980:36)

And later another note explains the untranslated terms as "a word used by Hélène Cixous to refer to that intense, rapturous pleasure which women know and which men fear" (ibid.: 95).

Elizabeth Grosz explains that *jouissance* tends to remain untranslated in English texts because of its ambiguity in French. "The term refers undecidably to pleasure understood in orgasmic terms, and a more generally corporeal, non-genital pleasure. Sometimes translated by 'bliss' the term does not, however, carry the religious associations of the English term" (Grosz 1989: xix). She refers to an early text translated by Sheridan who provides the following description: " 'Enjoyment' conveys the sense, contained in *jouissance* of enjoyment of rights, of property, etc. Unfortunately, in modern English, the word has lost the sexual connotations it still retains in French. 'Pleasure', on the other hand, is pre-empted by *plaisir*" (ibid.: xix).

Betsy Wing, finally, in her glossary to *The Newly Born Woman* gives a lengthy commentary, explaining that

The reincarnation of this word in the English language has been accompanied by a certain amount of dictionary rattling. Apparently it did indeed exist in the eighteenth century with some of the fullness of current French usage. Total sexual ecstasy is its most common connotation, but in contemporary French philosophical, psychoanalytic, and political usage, it does not stop there, and to equate it with orgasm would be an oversimplification. It would also be inadequate to translate it as enjoyment. This word, however, does maintain some of the sense of access and participation in connection with rights and property. Consti-tutions guarantee the "enjoyment of rights"; courts rule on who is to enjoy which right and what property. It is therefore a word with *simultaneously* sexual, political, and economic overtones.

(Wing 1986:165)

Why the focus on one untranslatable term, *jouissance*? Does this word function as a kind of condensation of the untranslatable, thus to free up

the rest of the commentary to unmediated transfer? The only other term to have been granted comparable linguistic independence is *écriture féminine*, quickly relegated to the realm of Cixousian essentialism. One can understand the distance critics might have wanted to create in leaving *feminine* untranslated, lest it become infected by the more pejorative meaning of “feminine” in English.

Bina Freiwald notes favorably this preponderance of glosses on the word *jouissance*, and the essential explanatory role of “second-degree mediators” in the effective translation of culturally dense texts.

Had this fuller cultural translation *offjouissance* been better recognized, we might have been spared over a decade of dismissive American coy righteousness, annoyingly accompanied by repeated accusations of essentialist biologicistic determinism and inexplicable fainting spells at the mere mention of the word. The inclusion of glossaries in editions of theoretical texts in translation, it therefore can be argued, involves more than an attempt to account for untranslatable word play. In making the explanatory apparatus an integral part of the project of translation, translators and editors can more fully acknowledge the density of the source text, recognizing the impossibility of separating text from intertext, primary work from interpretation.

(Freiwald 1991:63)

Although her point is well taken, it remains that *jouissance* was from the start the one term which was foregrounded as a “problem” concept. Perhaps additional attention had to be channeled outwards into a wider network of terms, fully grounding its meaningful use. It remains that this term was unduly emphasized, to the detriment of a number of other potentially key polysemic words.

Why not have retained the French term *propre* (which Betsy Wing gives as “Selfsame” or “ownself”) because of the untranslatable overtones of property, selfhood and propriety? What about *féminin* which is either feminine or female—and which has distinctly less pejorative connotations in French than in English—or the difficult *sexe*? The unanimous decision to leave *jouissance* in French (or to consider it an English word) points to its pivotal role in indicating how theory itself can move from economic into sexual concerns, how issues of mastery and self-identity (or on the contrary lack of control) function in differing economies. Yet the focus on this single term also suggests that other

terms pose little or no problem, and that their meaning is transparent to the English-speaking reader.

The difficulties of translating Luce Irigaray are of a different order again from those of either Kristeva or Cixous. Because Luce Irigaray's work is "functionally interventionist," working on and through its own language through powerful textual strategies, her work is especially difficult for English-language readers (Foss and Morris 1978). In particular, Irigaray uses contestatory philosophical concepts to reverse conventional meanings, and introduces a wide variety of styles (enigmatic, parodic, visionary, prophetic, academic) to adapt to different projects. Some translators have felt obliged, as did Paul Foss for his partial translation "This Sex Which is Not One," to introduce extensive notes to account for this inter-ventionism in English (*ibid.*: 1978:168).

Another translator of Irigaray, Carolyn Burke finds herself wishing that

all English-language readers could diagram Irigaray's syntax, parse her riddles, and feel the provocative exasperation that accompanies this retuning of the ear in the process of translation. It is in such exercises that one experiences the extent to which, for Irigaray, grammar plays its part as an agent of change.

(Burke *et al.* 1994:251)

At the same time, Irigaray's constantly changing styles and performative tactics make it difficult for any reader to grasp the totality of her rhetoric, and pin it down once and for all.

Indeed, "language" takes on a strongly double sense in Irigaray's work, sometimes referring to conceptualization, and sometimes, especially in the later work, referring explicitly to the rules of natural languages. For instance, Irigaray repeats what feminist linguists have claimed from the 1960s on:

Language is one of the primary tools for producing meaning: it also serves to establish forms of social mediation, ranging from interpersonal relationships to the most elaborate political relations. If language does not give both sexes equivalent opportunities to speak and increase their self-esteem, it functions as a means of enabling one sex to subjugate the other.

(Irigaray 1994: xv)

Irigaray further insists on the gender biases of natural languages, particularly French and Italian, which have a system of grammatical gender (ibid.: 27).

Irigaray's extreme attention to the gender-related aspects of words, as well as their etymological and philosophical histories, demands an equally attentive response on the part of the translator, "however much it might tear at the syntactic joints of English" (Burke *et al.* 1994:251). Burke gives the example of Irigaray's critique of Levinas, in which she changes his term *l'aimée* to her *l'amante*, restoring the woman as desiring subject. Burke initially translated *amante* as "beloved," to echo the amorous tones of the Song of Songs. When this essay on Levinas was reprinted in a larger project, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Burke and Gillian Gill changed the translation to "female lover," and *amant* became "male lover" and *aimée* "beloved woman." Burke explains that this "sexuation" of grammar had to be rendered literally, even though the result was awkward, because it emphasized the ethical force of positing woman as an active subject (ibid.: 252).

Translation of Irigaray's neologisms is particularly problematic. *Sexué*, *sexuation*, *entre-hommes*, *entre-femmes* and *le peuple des hommes* are examples from the recent volume *Thinking the Difference (Le Temps de la différence)* translated by Karen Montin (Irigaray 1994). *Sexué* is alternately translated as "has a sex," "sexually differentiated" or "sex-specific," as in "*Le droit est sexué, la justice est sexuée, mais par défaut*" translated as "The law has a sex, and justice has a sex, but by default." *Sexuation* could be "sexual differentiation" or the English neologism "sexuation." *Entre-femmes* might be "women's space," "women-amongst-themselves," "women-to-women sociality"; *le peuple des hommes* translated as "mankind."

Elle devrait se tenir radicalement à l'écart du peuple des hommes, des contrats entre hommes, des relations entre hommes, jusqu'à ce que sa virginité ne soit plus un lieu de tractations entre eux.

She should keep well away from mankind, men's contracts, men's relationships, until her virginity is no longer a subject of negotiations between men.

(Montin 1994)

And yet if Irigaray's work has been treated with more linguistic respect than Cixous' or Kristeva's, in the sense that the alterity of her language is widely acknowledged through glossaries (Margaret Whitford's *The Irigaray Reader* (1991) provides a three-page glossary of Irigarayan

terms, which adds to the glossary already provided in *This Sex Which is Not One* (1985), as well as parenthetical explanations in the text), it remains that “an astonishing variety of critics, many with little or no knowledge of French and of French culture, almost immediately roundly condemned Irigaray...on the basis of a partial knowledge of her work, notably *Speculum* and *This Sex Which Is Not One*” (Schor in Burke *et al.* 1994:5).⁵ While translations of Irigaray’s work have attracted considerable attention from American feminists, they have often discussed the texts “as though written in English and not subjected to the transformative process of translation” (Godard 1991:114). Godard points specifically to Gillian Gill’s translation of *Speculum* (1985), in which polysemy is not translated. Godard points to *non-propre* which is rendered simply as “non-propriety,” neglecting the chain of meanings which have to do with contamination, dirt, illegality and its homophonic relation to the “proper name”; *même/autre* which moves between self/other and same/different; *enceinte* and *antre* in their relations to boundaries and passages such as enclosure, cave, womb, etc. (Godard 1991:114–115).

Here again, as in the case of Cixous, gaps and lags in translation had an important influence in the reception of Irigaray’s thought. The significance of such temporal and conceptual gaps are underlined by theorists like Gayatri Spivak who argue that the only way either Cixous or Irigaray can be read as essentialists is if too little attention is paid to the stylistic effects, the rhetoricity, of their texts (Spivak 1993:141–171).

ARRIVAL AT DESTINATION

Could the misapprehensions and tensions of the contact between Anglo-American and French feminism have been attenuated through greater attention to translation? through a more developed understanding of the linguistic and textual specificity of the French-language work?

It is perhaps only now with some hindsight that there can be some appreciation of the gap which separated the conditions of production of those texts from the conditions of their reception. The disjunctions between the political and theoretical pressures at work in France and those in Anglo-America some ten or twenty years later make for a series of time warps which reception studies will yet have occasion to measure.

The tendency for translations to neglect full textual explanations for concepts and rhetorical strategies indeed limited the reception of this work. That strategies of translation were not brought forward as a topic of debate is itself puzzling. As we saw, Derrida and the transfer of

Derrideanism brought translation into discursive currency during the 1970s and 1980s, and yet this discussion was not generalized.

To the extent that translators of the French feminists chose not to draw attention to their task, not to encumber their translations with notes or other visible signs of “interference” with the text, they reproduce conventional attitudes toward language transfer. They choose an ideal of fluency over disruption, of immediacy and trans-parency over density. But in so doing they create a clearly false assumption of easy access to the text. Numerous commentators remark on the frustration which students have felt in being made to read texts—in English—which they could not understand (for example, Grosz 1989).

What is principally neglected in such translations is the full import of *context*, both intellectual and rhetorical. There has been no lack of written commentary to fill this gap—thousands of pages of analysis of these texts have been written. Yet the very disparity between the abundance of commentary and the “self-evident” nature of the texts themselves as they appear in English is striking.

After two decades of impassioned reactions to the French feminists, enthusiastic excitement often competing with confused anguish, the 1990s have introduced some measure of serenity into this long dialogue. Volumes like *Coming to Writing* (Cixous 1991b) and *Engaging with Irigaray* (Burke *et al.* 1994) in their different ways point to the maturation of the reception process. Susan Rubin Suleiman’s lyric introduction to the translated collected essays by Cixous in *Coming to Writing* focuses on the author as an individual rather than as a spokesperson. Deborah Jenson insists that finally Cixous is being treated as a poet, and that it is the poetry of her texts (even though they are “essays”) which is now being attended to in the translation. Thus the specific contours of Cixous’ writing career can finally be traced out—not to limit and categorize her contribution once and for all, but to grant it the appropriate space for commentary.

Engaging with Irigaray (Burke *et al.* 1994) stands as a measure of the success of the translation of Irigaray’s work. A collection of remarkable essays attests to the fecundity of Irigaray’s work within contemporary Anglo-American feminist philosophy. The critical and theoretical engagement of prominent Anglo-American feminists with the work of Irigaray is in fact the final and most fruitful stage of the translation process. Irigaray’s writing is neither reported on nor defended, but meshed within ongoing issues of contemporary feminist thought. The many different practices of mediation—which include translation, commentary and critique—have prepared the way toward this

meaningful intellectual interaction with the work. Effective translation finds its place within ongoing processes of interpretation which take place both within and across languages.

These examples of successfully achieved intellectual exchange can be compared to other similarly felicitous encounters. The translation of feminist writing from Quebec, during the 1970s and 1980s for instance, had as its result the creation of new writerly sensibilities in English. English-Canadian writers like Daphne Marlatt translated and engaged with the writing of Nicole Brossard, introducing into English-Canadian literature a more language-focused and conceptually critical style of writing (see Brossard 1986, 1987). With time, the movement of translation was inverted, with the work of Marlatt being translated into English. Circuits of exchange were opened not only between individual writers but, in a more generalized sense, between literary traditions. These literary contacts were exceptional in the Canadian context, despite a long and distinguished history of literary translation, in that they broke with the long-hallowed tradition of the “parallel” courses of the two national literatures. For this brief but intense period, translation played a particularly important role as a ferment for literary creation. (See Godard 1994; Simon 1995.)

While translations are an essential part of all ongoing literary and intellectual production, there are clearly moments when a spark of collective enthusiasm sets off a particularly intense dynamic of interaction. These encounters are especially fruitful when they lead to long-standing, reciprocal relationships.

MISSED CONNECTIONS?

There can be no definitive balance sheet to record the gains and losses generated by the exchange with French feminism. Feminist thought, like any other intellectual project, advances as an evolving and always unstable network of affiliations. And there is always a plurality of perspectives at work in any intellectual milieu. In addition, the creative and philosophical work of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva has itself developed considerably over these twenty some years. At the same time, the encounter with the work of a group of writers, early collapsed under the label French feminism, sustained the fiction that there existed some sort of “native” form of thought, which then came to be “enriched” or “tainted” by a foreignizing influence. The very fact of the language difference allowed points of view to be crystallized according to their geographical origin. The confrontation of two apparently separate bodies

of feminist writing has invited intellectual cartographers to map out, with greater confidence, separate continents of thought.

With a purview of some twenty years of exchange, the knotted strands of French feminism have finally become disentangled, the durable projects of each thinker more clearly identifiable. The success of the interchange is to be judged by the quality of the *engagements* which they have solicited. The lesson of these transatlantic metamorphoses, those of the French feminists as well as those of Derrida, Foucault, Lacan and Barthes, is that translation involves a “generalized movement of transition” in which “neither destination nor source” remains untouched (Comay 1991:79).

This means that where “we” are has changed through the contact with “them”; but undoubtedly “they” have changed as well. In the context of an increasingly internationalized intellectual community, where traditions can no longer be identified with national boundaries (we know that Derrida’s thought “began” in Heidegger, Foucault’s in Nietzsche, and so on), the location of thought must be constantly redefined. It is indeed more and more difficult to define any intellectual tradition in purely national terms. The *philosophical* location of feminist thought can now be said to be somewhere in mid-Atlantic.

Chapter 4

Corrective measures: the Bible in feminist frame

Should contemporary feminism be interested in the Bible? Several early second-wave feminists, like Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett, said no. They reacted strongly against the overwhelmingly masculinist bias of the Bible, and the way it had for so long been used to constrain and oppress women. Yet it was inevitable that feminist scholarship—both religious and secular—would sooner or later have to engage with the Bible.¹ As one of the most important foundational texts of our Western culture, the Bible remains a major point of reference and for that reason is open to challenges of inter-pretation—and of translation.

Translating is an act of interpretation. Religious authorities have always recognized this fact and that is why each major religious denomination has its own approved translation of the Bible. Certain translations have been decisive in redirecting the meaning of the Bible at pivotal moments in history. We have only to think of those monuments of translation, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Authorized version and Luther's Bible, which acted as bridges in the passage of the Judaic heritage into a succession of new linguistic and cultural universes.

But the passage from one interpretative context to another is rarely a peaceful one. That translation can also be a challenge to authority and dogma is evident in the dangers which have been associated with the task. It is unlikely that Bible translators would today be put to death as William Tyndale was, but translators caught up in another religious controversy, the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, have been killed; and so we are not permitted to forget that violence remains associated with conflicting versions of religious truth. There is danger in daring to pit one's own words against the rule of tradition or the sovereignty of a Word considered to be of divine origin.

The intense passions linked to Bible translation, the glorification of its protagonists (the sanctification of the mythical Seventy, the beatification of Jerome, the adoring homage to the scholars assembled by King James)

and the vilification which greets each new, competing version, makes any foray into the well-known text a dangerous excursion. Despite the traditional image of the translator as a savant steeped in exegetical lore, there can be no disinterested specialist, no neutral or value-free translation of the text. However abjectly servile the translator claims to be, each new translation is necessarily a confirmation of, or a confrontation with, a pre-existing version. Each progressive re-vision of the text *necessarily* declares its ideological or esthetic affiliation, its translating *project*. Is the text to be rendered as artifact or message, as document or voice, as historically situated or as eternally meaningful? What position does the translator choose in relation to the history of successive translations, in relation to structures of authority? What is the aim of the version and to what body of dogma is it answerable?

The overtly political ends of many versions are often frankly enunciated. The aim of conversion which motivates evangelistic translations undertaken by missionaries around the globe is clearly stated; these translations are based on the idea that the Bible contains a timeless message, and that difficulties of Bible translation are largely technical rather than ideological. Strategies of translation are “target-centered,” that is focused on the parameters of understanding of the readership (Nida 1959; Nida and de Waard 1986). That these versions often coincide with and contribute to the dynamic of colonization (or neo-colonialism) is a clearly recognized reality. The contemporary spread of evangelical Protestantism in Latin America, for example, has grown out of the efforts of missionaries to translate the Bible into indigenous languages (Simon 1982). While the relation between translation and politics is not often as salient as it is in the projects of evangelical missionaries, there is very often a confrontational dimension to Bible translation.

There is neither contradiction nor novelty, therefore, in the elaboration of a feminist project of Bible translation. That revaluation of gender relations should seek expression in new kinds of language for the Bible is a logical outgrowth of a conflictual tradition. It must be emphasized that there is no one feminist approach to Bible translation. Feminist influences have penetrated every denomination, and even been at the source of innovative interdenominational groupings. But there are a number of significant fault-lines which have appeared in debates around the feminization of the Bible. These lines of tension define issues that have to do with the nature of the biblical text and of the task of the translator in putting this truth into contemporary language. In the following discussion, I will look first at the Creation story as a site of

contested meanings and then at the more general question of inclusive language versions of the Bible.

CONSTITUENCIES OF MEANING

In whose name is translation undertaken? The communities seeking recognition of their own particular biblical interpretations are most easily recognizable in the form of denominations. There are Jewish, Protestant and Catholic Bibles, and within these, innumerable sub-categories. One of the more noteworthy examples of the way the reader is inscribed in the translation is the case of the Spanish Ferrara Bible of 1553 which existed in two versions, one for Jews and one for Christians. In the Christian version, the term “virgin” was introduced in Isaiah 7:14, while it remained “young woman” in the Jewish version. By using the term “virgin,” the translators were enacting a Christological reading of the Old Testament (Orlinsky 1974:351), proving the Christian precept that the New Testament is prefigured by the Old. Versions of the Bible come to “belong” to different groups through interpretative tradition as well. Though prepared for the diasporic Jewish community in Alexandria, the Septuagint was increasingly adopted by the Christians and correspondingly rejected by the Jews. The Hebrew word for “wind” (*ruach*) came to mean “spirit,” the Holy Spirit of the Trinity. Accordingly, another Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible was required (Orlinsky 1974:350, 407).

But the interpretive communities of the Bible have shattered into many more than the groups identifiable as institutional religions. The “hermeneutics of suspicion” now characterizes the approach of a large number of groups, including feminist scholars, who seek to read the Bible against its patriarchal frame and, through critical engagement with the text, challenge sociocultural stereotypes.² As the recent volume *Searching the Scriptures*, edited by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1993), so exhaustively demonstrates, “feminist” critique covers a wide array of culturally situated approaches, including “womanist,” “mujerista,” Asian, African, Latin-American, Native American, lesbian and differently abled, perspectives. This insistence on the wide variety of hermeneutical positions within feminism (what is more, Fiorenza’s volume reflects only the Christian tradition) points to the signal importance of integrating race and class issues within gendered critique. Feminist scholarship is no longer to be the exclusive precinct of white, middle-class women; it must reflect the diversity of pressures at work within feminist scholarship (Fiorenza 1993).

Contemporary evaluations of the founding document of feminist biblical scholarship reflect the tensions of this precarious unity. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's (1815–1902) project, *The Woman's Bible* (Stanton 1972), though celebrated as an epoch-marking initiative, is also criticized for being an unabashed expression of white European-American women. Although admired as a vigorous response to the sexism of institutional religion, it is also read as a somewhat sectarian piece of work which is oblivious of its own cultural biases.

FIRST-WAVE FEMINISM AND THE BIBLE

The question of the sexist nature of the biblical text and its possible rehabilitation through translation was of tremendous concern to women reformers in the nineteenth century when organized religion played a greater role than it does today in controlling social norms. This is particularly evident in the context of the American women's rights movement. A resolution unanimously passed at the famous convention at Seneca Falls in 1848 had referred to the "perverted application of the Scriptures" and the need for woman to "move in the enlarged sphere which her Great Creator has assigned her" (Gifford 1985:17). The Seneca Falls convention put great emphasis on the role that the Bible and religious institutions played in the oppression of women. The resolution mirrored the hope inspired by the development of "high criticism," which sought to discover the historical background of the biblical texts, their authors, sources and literary characteristics (as opposed to lower criticism which was textual criticism that aimed at establishing the original text of scripture free from mistranslations).

The most outspoken feminist critic of the Bible was Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton's forthright and, for her time, scandalous critique of the Bible was one of the strongest expressions of biblical criticism by first-wave feminists.

The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection she was to play the role of a dependent on man's bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to

ask her husband at home. Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up.

(Stanton 1972:7)

She lashed out at the “false translations, interpretations and symbolic meanings” which have been imposed on the Bible. “Whatever the Bible may be made to do in Hebrew or Greek, in plain English it does not exalt and dignify woman” (Stanton 1972:12). Those who have the power to “translate, transpose and transfigure this mournful object of pity into an exalted, dignified personage” are to be congratulated, she adds sardonically, for their mystic powers. The texts of the Scriptures are not to be varnished or prettified: they speak for themselves. Try as they might, she claims, those trained in research and higher criticism “cannot twist out of the Old Testament or the New Testament a message of justice, liberty, or equality from God to the women of the nineteenth century.” She was convinced that it was the institutional Church which had plunged women into “absolute slavery” (Fiorenza 1993:53).

Why is it more ridiculous for woman to protest against her present status in the Old and New Testament, in the ordinances and discipline of the church, than in the statutes and constitution of the state? Why is it more ridiculous to arraign ecclesiastics for their false teaching and acts of injustice to women, than members of Congress and the House of Commons?

(Stanton 1972:10)

The Women's Bible, the work of twenty women under the responsibility of Stanton, was an attempt to draw attention to the sexist bent of current translations in the hope of stimulating critical response. Stanton had great difficulty recruiting a committee, and tried several times in vain to get the project going (Gifford 1985:58).

Feminist leaders felt that the project would alienate women from the suffrage movement (ibid.). Stanton remained convinced that the critique of sacred scripture was a necessary element in the process of social change for women. *The Women's Bible* was not a new translation, but a compilation of all the sections of the Bible which referred to women, accompanied by commentaries principally written by Stanton. *The Women's Bible* when finally published in 1895 and 1898 created an uproar. It was condemned both by clergymen and the national American Woman Suffrage Association, which did not wish to offend its membership.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton had a few notable predecessors. Frances Willard (1839–1898), longtime president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, struggled for the rights of women in the Church and argued that “until women share equally in translating the sacred text” the evidence of women’s participation in the early Church would not receive correct emphasis (Gifford 1985:26). Stanton differed from Willard and from many of the women’s rights leaders in the nineteenth century, like Sarah Grimké in the 1830s and Antoinette Brown (Zikmund 1985:23–25), in believing that the Bible was fundamentally anti-woman. Stanton wanted the Bible to be examined, as any other book would be, against the standards of Enlightenment liberalism. She was quite willing to jettison the traditional theology which had dominated American religion, and to seek a rational religion which would promote the equality of women (Gifford 1985:29). Willard, Grimké and the others believed, rather, that if the Bible was interpreted correctly, it would demonstrate a more egalitarian attitude to women. Grimké blamed incorrect translations and false interpretations for blocking access to the truth of the Bible, calling upon women to do the work which she felt men were too biased to accomplish (*ibid.*: 20). Yet few women were able to undertake the studies required. Lucy Stone, a leading women’s rights reformer, did teach herself Hebrew in order to find out for herself if the Bible was as sexist as it seemed to be in English. On the basis of these studies and her subsequent reformist work, she remained convinced that there was absolutely no biblical basis for women’s subordination (*ibid.*: 13–33).

As might be expected from the preceding remarks, there have been very few women Bible translators. Few eighteenth-or nineteenth-century women were able to obtain a classical education, let alone a proficiency in Hebrew. Yet there were a number of exceptional cases of women who received their education from their fathers, or who succeeded in attending university. Elizabeth Smith (1776–1806) translated the book of Job, published in 1810; and in 1814 *A Vocabulary Hebrew, Arabic and Persian by the late Miss E. Smith* appeared (Todd 1985:290). Her friend Elizabeth Bowdler (1717?-1797) was also known as a commentator on the Scriptures, and published a new translation and commentary of the Song of Songs (*ibid.*: 54). Anne Francis (1738–1800) also published *A Poetical Translation of the Song of Solomon, From the Original Hebrew* (1781) in which she transforms the poem into a triangular drama between Solomon and two women, the Spouse and the Jewish Queen (Todd 1985: 132).

Julia Evelina Smith (1793–1886) was apparently the first American woman—perhaps the first woman anywhere—to translate the whole Bible on her own. Julia and her four sisters were learned in Oriental languages and actively involved in the Woman’s Suffrage Party (Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991). Helen Barrett Montgomery (1861–1934) was the translator of *The Centenary Translation of the New Testament*, “Published to Signalize the Completion of the First Hundred Years of Work of the American Baptist Publication Society” (1924). Active in Church and biblical studies, a licensed Baptist minister, she was “the first woman to independently produce a translation of the New Testament in modern speech” (Bullard 1987).

BEGINNING WITH GENESIS

How will feminist interpretation leave its mark on Bible translation? One of the most powerful examples of the potential of feminist critique is found in the Creation story, certainly one of the most influential stories of the origins of feminine inferiority. The example concerns the meaning of the Hebrew word *adam*, as the first human being created by God. The common understanding of this being is that he was first created male, and that the female was derived from the male. Recent re-readings of Genesis contest the exclusively masculine identity which has traditionally (but not always) been given to that word. In fact, as Phyllis Trible showed in a now widely accepted understanding of the Creation story, the narrative can be interpreted to show that the creature God made out of clay was at first neither masculine nor feminine, but a creature not yet sexed. The sexual identity of humankind would have been a later attribution, following its division into two sexes (Trible 1978: Chapters 2–3).

This reading is grounded in the knowledge that the texts of Genesis 1–3 are not a unified whole: they are the product of different authors and different periods, Genesis 2 and 3 being older than Genesis 1.³ In the story told in Genesis 1:27, Creation entails the equal birth of men and women:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

(Revised Standard Version)

Referring to this passage, Elizabeth Cady Stanton correctly declares that “No lesson of woman’s subjection can be fairly drawn from the first chapter of the Old Testament” (Stanton 1972:16).

Genesis 2:21–22, however, insists on the inferiority of Eve, and it has become the much more popular version of the Creation story.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

(Revised Standard Version)

For Stanton, “The first account dignifies woman as an important factor in the creation, equal in power and glory with man. The second makes her a mere afterthought” (Stanton 1972:20). How is one to account for this discrepancy? Stanton and another commentator, a certain Ellen Battelle Dietrick, agree that some wily “writer” could not handle the declaration of equality and introduced the second account to “effect woman’s subordination in some way” (ibid.: 21). In fact, the second account is older than the first.

The word/name *adam* has been widely recognized by exegetes as having different meanings within these texts, sometimes referring to “humanity” as a whole, sometimes to “man,” sometimes to a proper name. In the first text it refers to “humanity” as a whole, only in the second text designating an individual. This is not an isolated phenomenon in Genesis. Israel, for instance, is the name given to Jacob; it is also the name of a people. The whole of Genesis 49 illustrates similar shifts of meaning from man to clan (Schungel-Straumann 1993:53–76). Still, early Jewish interpretation read *adam* in Genesis 1 as a proper name, due to a misinterpretation of the texts in Genesis 2 and the following chapter. Because Adam and Eve are seen there as individuals, *adam* in Genesis 1 is consequently a man. The Greek translation renders *adam* as *anthropos*, wherever it is not used as a proper name. Although this means human being and includes woman, in popular Hellenistic philosophy only the male is regarded as an *anthropos* in the full sense of the word. So quite frequently the statement on the creation of man and women in Genesis 1 is perceived as referring to the man only, however subtle the exegesis may be (ibid.: 61).

Relying on the fact that *ha’adam* is a generic Hebrew term meaning “humankind,” Phyllis Trible initially turned to an early Jewish

interpretation that defined the first human beings as androgynous creatures. But she subsequently corrected this interpretation, arguing that androgyny assumes sexuality, whereas the earth creature is sexually neutral—either humanity or proto-humanity (Trible 1978:141, n.17). She argues that it is not man who is created in Genesis 1:27 but an “earth creature” (*ha’adam*—humankind, *’adama*—earth). Human sexuality is created only in Genesis 2:22–23. Sexual differentiation takes place only when the concepts *ish* and *isha* are created.

This interpretation is echoed by André Chouraqui in his French translation of Genesis which he calls *Entête*. “*Elohims crée le glébeux a sa réplique/à la réplique d’Elohims, il le crée, mâle et femelle, il les crée*” (Chouraqui 1992:49). Chouraqui explains in his commentary that the original “Adam” created by God is both male and female. But he refers to the earlier Jewish interpretation of androgyny which, he explains, is linked to the vision which the Hebrews had of man and woman. It is only after the creation of woman, Genesis 2: 23, that man appears (Chouraqui 1992:49).

Such a reinterpretation has tremendous repercussions for our understanding of the biblical Creation story. If it is “humankind” and not “man” which is created in God’s own image, if “man” and “woman” were given sexualized identities *at the same time*—and not one as a consequence of the other’s prior existence—then the conventional understanding of the place of woman “at the beginning” must be radically revised.

This revised understanding is reflected in a new translation of Genesis by Mary Phil Korsak, *At the Start...Genesis Made New: A Translation of the Hebrew Text* (1992). Taking her cue from Trible’s powerful and influential argument, she chooses to translate *adam* by “groundling.” When in the initial stages *adam* represents the potential human couple, Korsak uses the pronoun “it” (Korsak 1993:46). Thus, “It is not good for the groundling to be alone; I will make for it a help as its counterpart” (Genesis 2:18). (As opposed to the Revised Standard Version which has “I will make him a helper fit for him” (*ibid.*)). The masculine form of the possessive appears only with the first presence of woman in Genesis 2: 23: “The two of them were naked/the groundling and his woman/ they were not ashamed” (Brenner 1993a: 46). Korsak maintains the masculine form of the pronoun until the couple is expelled from the garden, and at that point reverts to “it,” which now refers to the couple, now differentiated. While the Revised Standard Version has “The Lord God sent him forth to till the ground from which he was taken” (Genesis 3:

23), Korsak proposes “Elohim sent it away from the garden of Eden to serve the ground from which it was taken.”

The return to etymology in translating *adam* enjoys a certain vogue. André Chouraqui used the French term “*glèbe*” ou “*glébeux*,” meaning “mud” or “clay,” since *adam* is related to the noun *adama* meaning “earth.” And David Rosenberg’s *Book of J*, in a similar defamiliarizing move, suggests: “Yahweh shaped an earthling from clay of this earth, blew into its nostrils the wind of life. Now look: man becomes a creature of flesh.” Yet in this version the earthling is clearly masculine: “It is no good the man be alone,” said Yahweh. “I will make a partner to stand beside him” (Bloom 1990).

Another very eloquent example provided by Korsak (*ibid.*: 48–51) concerns the cursing of Eve, and the punishment which she and her kind are visited with in Genesis 3:16–17. The Septuagint has: “I will greatly multiply thy pains and thy moanings.” The New English Bible:

To the woman he said, I will increase your labour and your groaning and in labour you shall bear children; And to the man he said, With labour you shall win your food from it.... You shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow.

But the Hebrew simply has: “you shall eat.” The Hebrew text draws a parallel between the pains/or labor of woman and the pains/or labor of man. But the emphasis is put on the productive nature of the man’s labor. Korsak proposes: “Increase! I will increase/your pains and your conceivings/With pains you shall breed sons” (Genesis 3: 16); “Cursed is the ground for you/With pains you shall eat of it/all the days of your life” (*ibid.*: 17).

One notes in translations like that of Mary Phil Korsak an attenuation of the anti-woman sentiment expressed in the Bible, and a generally favorable prejudice toward the “original” or authentic intentions of the biblical text. Does that mean that the aim of feminist translation is necessarily to exonerate the Bible, to wrest it off the patriarchal hook? One of the strongest objections to Phyllis Trible’s readings of the Bible has been that she tends to turn the Bible into a feminist text, “where every detail suspiciously ends up supporting women’s liberation” (Pardes 1992: 24).

Should translation become a means through which the Bible is “de-patriarchalized”? This question has been the focus of a great deal of controversy within feminist scholarship and shows to what extent feminist biblical scholars are divided. They differ not only in their

religious and intellectual affiliations (consider the abyss separating the resolutely secular narratological enterprise of Mieke Bal from the Christian liberationist work of Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, or the distance of both these approaches from the research under-taken from within the Jewish tradition which tends to show more concern for textual and philological issues, since these scholars work from the original Hebrew rather than from translations) but also in their fundamental attitudes toward the text. Can the authentically sexist character of biblical culture be separated from the overlay of assumptions that have been imposed upon it? For some, the Bible must be rescued from centuries of masculine interpretation and a more innocent text revealed beneath the familiar meanings.

Two comments are in order here. First, feminist scholars have in fact been wary of embarking upon official translation projects. They are less concerned with the establishment of a “correct” or “revised” modern text than with a more global confrontation with the biblical text. Biblical translation is traditionally a weighty enterprise, most often handled by committees who are mandated by specific institutions. To produce a new version of the Bible is to affirm a new state of biblical truth—something which many feminist biblical scholars would rather avoid in the present state of intense questioning. The contestatory readings of feminist scholars offer themselves as transitional responses, rather than new doctrines.

Second, recent approaches to the debate on the irredeemably patriarchal nature of the Bible opt for a more complex understanding of the gendered nature of the biblical text. The narratological work of Mieke Bal has been central to this new focus of investigation. However, Bal’s work itself has relatively little impact on potential re-translations in the sense that she is generally more concerned with underlying structures of meaning than with philological issues or the surface manifestations of the text.⁴

More systematically pertinent to translation is the innovative work exploring the historical traces of female discourse forms within the male writing tradition (Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes 1993; Pardes 1992). The emphasis of inquiry shifts from notions of textual authorship toward the recognition of submerged strains of cultural forms which have persisted in the text. Some examples are the “rebuke-song” or admonishment in Proverbs, victory songs and mockery songs; wisdom and warning discourse; prophecy and sooth-saying; love songs and songs of harlots; laments and rituals of lament; prayers; birth songs and naming speeches (Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes 1993). These specific objects of analysis

allow for exploration of a women's culture which speaks within a yet over-whelmingly patriarchal text.

Ilana Pardes' focus on names and naming in Genesis, for example, allows her to re-evaluate the meaning of a problematic phrase. In Genesis 4:1, Eve speaks in her own voice, saying on the birth of Cain, "*qaniti 'et YHWH.*" Here traditional biblical wordplay links the name Cain (*Qayin*) and the verb (*qana*), which can mean "to create" or "to acquire" (Pardes 1992:44). The King James version follows this tradition with "I have gotten a man from the Lord"; the old Jewish Publication Society has "I have acquired a man with the help of God," and the new Jewish Publication Society Bible: "I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord." Basing her interpretation on the work of Cassuto, who shows that the verb *qnh* is used in the sense of "create" elsewhere in Genesis, as well as in Babylonian creation myths, Pardes claims that Eve's naming speech can be seen as a trace of belief in the creative powers of mother goddesses and of the hubris of Eve. Pardes suspects that Eve's naming speech is also a response to Adam's naming of woman, the word *ish* echoing in both (and in Eve's speech designating both Cain and Adam) signaling "a compelling exchange (almost a match) of naming-speeches" (ibid.: 48). She speculates that Eve's speech could be a condensation of two verses, following the parallelism of Adam's speech, which contain the following two thoughts: "I shaped a child equally with Yahweh/I created a man together with God" (ibid.: 48). Does Eve's authority rival that of God—or at least the naming power of Adam?

In suggesting that the meaning of the Bible be tied to a revised understanding of the discursive dynamics of women's speech, contemporary scholars like Pardes are opening the words of the Bible to new interpretations and therefore to new translations.

THE SONG OF SONGS

An approach similar to Pardes' focus on naming rituals has been applied to the Song of Songs. Because of its absolutely atypical status in the biblical canon, the presence of astonishing female imagery and of the female voice, various scholars have sought to find proof of female authorship (Brenner 1989). The Song of Songs is the only book of love poetry in the Bible and as such it has been the subject of much speculation and controversy. For centuries, both Jewish and Christian traditions viewed the book as spiritual allegory, thus justifying its place in the biblical canon. There are apparently no historical grounds for viewing Solomon as the central character. His name was bestowed not by the

Song's original author(s) but by later compilers, who were probably also responsible for giving the text its semblance of structural unity (Falk 1982:108).

Marcia Falk's 1982 poetic translation (labeled a "feminist" version by the publishers to emphasize the erotic nature of the text) divides the text into thirty-one discrete poems and uses three different typefaces to reflect the different voices which speak in the Song: singular male, singular female and a group of speakers. In the original, these three voices are usually distinguishable because in Hebrew various parts of speech, including the pronoun "you," have gender and number. Falk's scholarly and poetic engagement with the text makes for a powerful and lyrical rendering. Her attention in particular to the dialogue of voices within the poem brings out the utter singularity of the woman's voice as a biblical poet.

The Song of Songs is very unusual in that it foregrounds a woman's voice. How can the presence of this female voice in the Bible be explained? Recent speculation links the Song of Songs with evidence in the prophetic tradition that there was an annual women's festival honoring God. The parts of the Song of Songs in which a woman is the speaker may have been linked to these festivals (Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes 1993). This association would link women in ancient Israel to those in Sumer and Egypt who were creators of love poetry.

The possibility that women (or rather, a woman) may have had a far greater role in the creation of the Bible has recently been suggested—somewhat provocatively—by Harold Bloom in the *Book of J* (1990). Bloom suggests that the Yahwist author (the author of the parts of the Bible identified with the J and not the P speaker) (see note 3) might have been a woman. Bloom's authority as a conservative textual critic gives substantial weight to a hypothesis which, according to Ilana Pardes, is pure speculation (Pardes 1992:33). Bloom attributes the J text to a woman whose powers of sophistication and especially of irony were unrivalled. This author would have lived, according to Bloom, during the reign of King Rehoboam of Judah, Solomon's son. Bloom's hypothesis is attractive: a witty and sublimely gifted woman as the origin of a text associated for centuries with the authority of patriarchy?

Contemporary feminists would have trouble adhering to Bloom's hypothesis, even if they were to cherish the very possibility. How to infer from the text the gender of its author? Pardes indeed has little sympathy for Bloom's speculations. She compares his romantic admiration of female power to the nineteenth-century scholar Bachofen's discovery of a matriarchal era at the base of Western culture, concluding that both in

fact end up “endorsing and venerating male rule” (Pardes 1992:34). She notes that Bloom seems to turn J into a “typical Jewish mother,” whose main purpose in life is to “raise her ‘genius’ son” (ibid.). Although the *Book of J* is a fascinating document, the translation a monument of grace and harmony, the introduction of gender into Bloom’s critical discussion has little pertinence.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

The deep suspicion with which many feminist scholars continue to view the Bible is reflected in the ongoing debate over inclusive language. Inclusive or non-sexist language aims at replacing non-motivated uses of masculine vocabulary by neutral terms: “father” by “parent” when the sex is not specified, “brother” by “brother or sister,” and so on. Such a principle may appear to be totally irreproachable—a sensible and an unavoidable approach to translation. And yet, some feminist scholars oppose inclusive language.

They feel that this adjustment to contemporary norms in fact softens the harsh and intransigent message of a truly patriarchal document.

The principle of inclusive language has been widely accepted by the translating institutions of many Jewish and Christian denominations.⁵ A good example of the general receptiveness to the idea is recounted by well-known translators Orlinsky and Bratcher in their *History of Bible Translation and the North American Contribution* (1991). They include a special chapter to discuss “Male Oriented Language Originated by Bible Translators.” In it we learn that work on the New Jewish Version (1955-) was already well advanced when Betty Friedan and the National Organization of Women made contact with the translators to sensitize them to the question of gender bias in language. Friedan and her group encouraged the translators to eliminate unjustified masculinization of the text. Apparently the translators acceded willingly to these requests (also inviting women to participate on the translation committee). In fact they argue that such an approach to translation was totally consistent with their philosophy of avoiding slavish respect for the letter of the text at the expense of the deeper meaning (Orlinsky and Bratcher 1991:268).

The following example is used to illustrate their argument. In the Babel story, *bene-ha-adam* is commonly translated as “sons of men.” This, they argue, is quite simply an incorrect, literal translation; the real meaning, that is the meaning which results from a freer, more sense-oriented translation of the phrase, is “mankind” or “the human race.” Orlinsky’s point is to demonstrate that the translators did not distort meaning in order

to recognize a consciously ideological perspective, but that the “correct” translation must reject “men” and “sons of men” in favor of, for instance, “Everyone on earth.”

Other examples are *ashre ha'is* (“blessed”), a singular collective, which should be translated not as “Blessed is the man” but “Blessed are those.” The correct meaning of Deuteronomy: 24:16 is not: “The fathers shall not be put to death, etc.” but, as in the New Jewish Version, “Parents shall not be put to death for children....”

But the willingness with which traditional Bible-translating enterprises like those of Orlinsky and Bratcher have accepted inclusive language has much to do with their conceptions of the place of the Bible in the modern world. Though they belong to separate traditions (Orlinsky the chief translator of the Jewish Publication Society, Bratcher attached to the American Bible Society), they view the Bible as a document of contemporary relevance, a message which speaks today with the same force and pertinence as it did in biblical times. The idea of actualizing the biblical text, within this very narrow framework of gender-based language, is totally consonant with their view of their task as Bible translators.

Paul Ellingworth, editor of *The Bible Translator*, is somewhat more reticent in his approach to inclusive translation. He admits that as a translation consultant, he approaches “with some suspicion” a movement which seems occasionally in danger of “distorting the content of the Bible” (Ellingworth 1987:46). He compares the feminist movement with Jewish efforts to eliminate “authentically anti-Jewish features” from the Old Testament and fundamentalist pressures to harmonize real differences between parallel biblical narratives (ibid.: 46). Nevertheless, he sympathizes with Joann Haugerud, who in the introduction to her inclusive translation of parts of the New Testament, asks: “When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John to become ‘Fishers of men,’ did Jesus mean that they would set out to catch male humans only?” (quoted in ibid.: 46).

The work which has been most explicit in promoting the “inclusionist” cause is *An Inclusive Language Lectionary: Years A, B, and C* (1983, 1984, 1985), a publication prepared by a committee of reputed Christian Bible scholars of both sexes (Division of Education and Ministry 1986).⁶ The committee was mandated by the National Council of Churches in the United States to recast the Revised Standard Version in order that it fully respect the person-hood of women; it also took on the tasks of tempering traditional color symbolism (equating darkness with evil) and encouraging more positive Jewish-Christian relationships (Bennett 1987:

546). This revision was specifically geared toward the use of the *Lectionary* within the context of worship (a lectionary contains the selections of scripture to be read within religious services)—therefore out of the usual context of the full Bible. As Robert A. Bennett explains, the legitimacy of the task is based on its “practical, pragmatic, and functional role” in assisting the hearer of the biblical word during worship (*ibid.*: 550). But the subtitle of the *Lectionary* clearly states that its use is “voluntary.” For Patrick D. Miller, Jr, another member of the *Lectionary* committee, the aim of this particular version was not to provide a definitive translation of the Bible, but one which moves against usual translation trends by anticipating language trends (Miller 1987: 545). As a member of the committees of both the Revised Standard Version and of the *Lectionary*, Miller sees the goals of these two endeavors as quite different, the RSV being rather conservative in its acknowledgment of inclusive language, the *Lectionary* affecting and even “shaping the language of the future”(*ibid.*:545).

The preface and appendix to the *Lectionary* refer to three main areas of concern: the language of human beings, language about Jesus Christ and language about God. In all three cases, terms have been sought which do not necessarily over-masculinize the realities referred to by these names. The following are the major revisions of the *Lectionary* as described in the appendix (Division of Education and Ministry 1986:269–277): “God the Father,” considered to be a metaphor expressing the intimacy of Jesus with God (and “misused to support the excessive authority of earthly fathers in a patriarchal social structure”) (*ibid.*: 270), is translated as “God the Father and Mother.” The Greek “Kyrios” is translated not as “Lord” (as it is in the Revised Standard Version) but as “Sovereign,” “Christ” or “God” (*ibid.*: 272). “Son” or “Son of God” is rendered as “Child” or “Child of God.” And the “Son of Man” becomes “The Human One” (*ibid.*: 272–273). “King” and “Kingdom” are avoided in favor of “Ruler, Monarch” and “Realm of God”; “Brother,” “Brethren” are rendered as “Sisters and Brothers,” “Friends,” “Neighbors.” When “the Jews” in the Gospel of John refers to religious leaders who do not recognize Jesus as the Christ, the word used is “religious authorities.” This is to minimize what could be perceived as a warrant for anti-Semitism in the Gospel of John (*ibid.*: 276). The association of evil with darkness is avoided when possible.

One particularly controversial choice by the committee was to replace “Father” by “(God) the Father (and Mother).” This choice is explained by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite in terms of the historical meaning of Father as a “corporate personality” (as the entity responsible for the

family, as the representative of the house-hold or kin group) rather than in the modern sense of the individual. "How much more sense does the addition of Mother make to the translation of Father given both the presence of female images for God within the biblical text and the attenuated individualism of Father language in contemporary English usage!" (Thistlethwaite 1987:538).

Considering the degree to which the choices of the editors of the *Lectionary* disturb conventional assumptions about biblical language, the justificatory material they provide seems both scanty and cautious. The appendix explains that the choices of the *Lectionary* are grounded in the editors' understanding of biblical language as metaphorical. "God the Father" does not mean that God is a father, but that he is like a father. Therefore, according to modern sensibilities, God could just as well be like a mother as like a father. However, such a position makes both historical and linguistic assumptions which can be contested. Opponents argue that biblical language is much more than metaphorical, that it is rooted in the material realities of the Revelation (Achte-meier 1991:5). Some commentators would respond that the masculinity of religious language in the Bible is incidental to the Bible's main message; others that the patriarchal nature of biblical culture is a significant element of early Judaism and Christianity. In particular Frye recalls that the ancient Jewish and Christian authors were only too familiar with cults worshipping the Great Mother, and constructed the terms of their faith out of this awareness (Frye 1991:27). He supports authors who argue that the active suppression of female symbols was at the heart of early Bible culture.

Both Achtemeier and Frye suggest that some feminist thought definitely goes beyond the limit of acceptability in religious terms, and that it disregards fundamental issues of dogma. These dogmatic issues involve complex theological arguments around the degree of resemblance and the relations of authority obtaining between the Creator and the created world (Achte-meier 1991).

The publication of the *Inclusive Language Lectionary* gave rise to extensive and heated debate about the role of gender within the Bible—and about the parameters within which translation must operate. Some of the virulent opposition to the *Lectionary* shows how basic issues of naming are to the very doctrinal foundations of the Church. At issue particularly in the translation of the *Lectionary* is the question of the nature of the biblical text: is its goal to represent a historical reality or to explicate its current meaning? For Sharon H. Ringe, vice-chairperson of the project, the work of translation proceeded on the assumption that the

authority of scripture is intrinsic to the Bible, that is, “that Scripture *becomes* authoritative in the dialogical process in which a succession of ‘worlds’ ...intersect” (Ringe 1987:553). Faithfulness to the biblical text means attention to the highly specific vocabulary, syntax and metaphors of the Scriptures, as well as the concrete cultural matrix in which they are embedded. It also involves a complex sense of the historical evolution of words (words such as Holocaust) and the injurious effect of images. Sharon Ringe insists that the translator ask: “In its performance, does that language hurt or destroy? If so, it is inadequate” (ibid.: 557).

While opposition to initiatives like *An Inclusive Language Lectionary* on the basis of traditionalist theological grounds were to be expected (see Frye (1991), for example), opposition came also from feminist scholars and theologians. Some prominent feminist Bible scholars see inclusive-language translations as an unsatisfactory interpretative compromise. This opposition is based both on their understanding of the radical challenge of the feminist project and on their theological appreciations of the biblical text. Inclusive-language translations do not go far enough in either of the (contradictory) directions favored by feminist translators. They do not reveal the potentially woman-friendly aspects of the Bible, nor do they expose its unflinching patriarchy. They stand in ideologically ambiguous territory, seemingly provoking more confusion than they resolve.

Joanna Dewey (1991) uses the New Testament book of Mark to argue in favor of translation which will “restore” a hidden women’s reality. Though the presence of women accompanying Jesus is mentioned only in 15:40–41, they were apparently there all along. Dewey claims that translation needs to restore the presence of these women to our imagination of Mark’s narrative world. And so she suggests that “men and women” be given in English where Mark has only men. Dewey calls this an affirmative-action translation, which could be compared to the feminist glosses in some Jewish Bibles (Dewey 1991:65). Her call to action is militant. She urges women to “be authors,” to attempt feminist translations which range from the minimal inclusive translations already attempted, through more explicit affirmative-action translations, “feminist and womanist retellings, re-versions, re-visions, through attached commentaries and through ways yet unthought of” (ibid.: 67).

Strong voices, however, have more persistently called for an opposite tack. To the degree that inclusive-language translation encourages women to settle for “premature reconciliation” with text and institution, it “runs counter to feminism’s deeper goals and values.” These adjustments are viewed as cosmetic touches which do not touch the

“really tough stuff—the biblical constructs that support patriarchal Christianity” and that support quietism and acquiescence (Hutaff, in Castelli 1990:72). Consider the much-debated Greek word *anthropos*. When it is used in the New Testament, does it mean “human person, people, or humanity” or does it refer to the male of the species? See, for example, Titus 2:11: “the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men”; 1 Timothy 2:4 “God desires all men to be saved”; 1 Timothy 4:10 “we have our hope set on the living God who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.” The Oxford annotated Revised Standard Version uses the term “men” in each of these cases. Would “humanity” do just as well?

For Hutaff, Schaberg, Phyllis Bird and others, the answer would be a most definitive no. They suggest that the best “feminist” New Testament translation is the one which paradoxically most highlights the patriarchal and androcentric nature of the text, in an effort to “mimic and mock the loud male voice and tone, turn up the volume on its evasions and lies and guilt, put dots and slashes to mark the gaps and omissions” (Schaberg, in Castelli 1990:77). This aggressive framing of the patriarchal nature of the biblical text would encourage other kinds of action to correct past ills. Is there any point in making women feel “more at home” in a world which is fundamentally alien and discriminatory (Hutaff 1990:73)?

A similar concern is expressed by Clarice J. Martin who, from a “womanist” point of view, challenges the racial overtones of biblical language (Martin, in Castelli 1990). She examines the issue of the Greek word *doulos* meaning “slave” or “servant”; the term came to stand as a paradigm of discipleship and therefore was valorized in the Bible (Romans 6:6–18). Yet the “*doulos* tradition” was used by authors of pro-slavery tracts, who appealed to the authority of New Testament texts. An example of this is given by a freed slave who claimed that during slavery, when the “master’s minister” occasionally held services for the slaves, he would always use as his text something from Paul: “Slaves be obedient to them that are your masters...as unto Christ” (quoted by Fiorenza 1993: 7). Should *doulos* then be translated as “slave” or as “servant”? Slavery was an integral part of the social fabric of Paul’s day, and was often attended by physical brutality, sexual exploitation and emotional dehumanization. Should the translation reconfirm the “virtues” of slavery or downplay the degree of bondage which accompanies servitude?

Such questions cannot be resolved through philological investigation alone, but through attention to the historical resonance and political usage of words. These questions occupied Renaissance translators when they chose “elder” over “priest,” “washing” over “baptism,” “love” over

“charity,” purposely disrupting the link with the Vulgate and with the Catholic tradition. They were aware that the idea of direct access to true and original meaning was in fact an illusion, realizing, as Bakhtin later explained, that the meaning of a word is contained precisely in the conflictual dialogue it engages with other words. That is why the words of translation are always in some sense provisional, infused with the meanings and authorities of their time.

PHILOSOPHY OF TRANSLATION

Some of the opposition to inclusive-language translation stems from the fact that these corrective measures are taken to cover the whole range of feminist interpretation and translation. Consequently they undermine the larger feminist revisionary project, at the same time as they risk masking the historical reality of the biblical text (Fiorenza 1992:26). In fact, the problem of the sexist language of the Bible cannot be undertaken through translation alone, argues Phyllis Bird (1988:89). Inclusive-language translations can potentially do more harm than good, covering over some of the problematic areas and preventing critical engagement with the underlying issues. The sexism of the Bible must be recognized, she argues; it is a sign of its historically and culturally “limited” nature. The androcentric nature of the ancient biblical world must be laid bare (ibid.: 90).

Bird argues for a philosophy of translation which is diametrically opposed to the “functional equivalence” school of Eugene Nida. While Nida argues for an actualization of the ancient text, making it come to speak to the reader as if it were written for a contemporary audience (Nida and de Waard 1986), Bird claims that the aim of the Bible translator is to enable a modern audience “to *overhear* an ancient conversation, rather than to hear itself addressed directly” (1988:91) The translator’s obligation is not to make her audience accept the author’s message, or even identify themselves with the ancient audience. “I am not certain that the translator is even obliged to make the modern reader *understand* what is overheard” (ibid.: 91). The obligation of the translator is therefore to the source text. Only in the case where the intention of the text is clearly inclusionary (as in the example of the Psalms, already used by Orlinsky: “Happy is the man,” *asre ha’is*: see p. 125) should a non-marked term be used. Otherwise, it is best to expose the “androcentric and patriarchal nature” of the biblical text. “Only then can we begin to deal at all adequately with the problem of how revelation can be conveyed through

such flawed vehicles of grace as our Hebrew ancestors and our own prophets and teachers” (Bird 1988:93).

It is clear from what precedes that there can be no single, scientific solution to biblical translation. Each new contribution to the debate is supported by an elaborate scaffolding of theological and textual presuppositions relating to the status of the divine within language, the historical nature of Revelation, the universality of the Christian message, etc. It is important to recall here that these are essentially Christian debates, as the Jewish tradition always refers primarily to the Hebrew text, all translations having only the status of commentary. It is only in the Christian tradition that the translation can rival the original to the extent of itself achieving canonical status. This was the case for the Vulgate, declared the official version of the Roman Catholic Church, and for the King James version of the Bible in English, unofficially canonized by literary and liturgical tradition. Nevertheless, translation has always played an important role in reactualizing the Bible in Judaism, the most prominent example being the German translation of Buber and Rosenzweig (see Delisle and Woodsworth). Buber warns against the illusion of direct access to the Hebrew Bible “in the original,” because the Hebrew Bible can itself take on the patina of a translation, “a bad translation, a translation into a smoothed-over conceptual language, into what is apparently well known but in reality only familiar” (Buber and Rosenzweig 1994:73).

Buber and Rosenzweig’s German version of the Bible is just one of a number of significant Bible translations of this century. These range from André Chouraqui’s etymological and primitivist text, David Rosenberg’s stunning *Book of J* (Bloom 1990) and Henri Meschonnic’s powerful poetic versions, to the institutionally sanctioned efforts of Harry Orlinsky and the Revised Jewish Version, T.S. Eliot’s collaboration with the New English Bible, or Eugene Nida’s neo-colonialist evangelical versions done in conjunction with the American Bible Society and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. A number of these initiatives have been grounded in extensive theorizing on the nature of translation. Henri Meschonnic’s significant critical work has made Bible translation a relevant and vital facet of contemporary literary esthetic; the combination of ethical and poetic issues he raises nourishes a wide-ranging exploration of the interface between creation and transmission. In particular, Meschonnic’s writings have been essential to creating an informed readership for Bible translations. His attentive readings of other translators, like Chouraqui (whom he criticizes for a needless exoticizing of the biblical text) and especially Eugene Nida (whose work he excoriates as a deformation of

the translator's task), have sensitized a new generation of translators to the moral and esthetic dimensions of the task (Meschonnic 1972). Like Eugene Nida, but on entirely different grounds, Meschonnic has worked at the interface between Bible translation and other kinds of writing practices, showing the reciprocal influence of these diverse activities. Long considered a domain of interest only to specialized scholars and theologians, Bible translation turns out to share a surprisingly large area of common concern with other kinds of texts.

The continuing theoretical engagement between feminist scholars and the Bible prompts the question: will there one day be a feminist Bible, a new translation which will replace both existing versions and its predecessor, *The Woman's Bible*? It is unlikely, perhaps logically impossible, that the diversity within feminist biblical criticism (even within one religious denomination) would permit such an event. For the moment, feminist Bible translation plays an essential role of critique, preventing new dogmas from taking shape, promoting sharpened attention to the overlays of meaning which have been transmitted by tradition. The goal of the variety of feminist critiques is not so much to rectify the biblical text as to underscore the profoundly ideological nature of interpretation and translation.

There is no single feminist approach to Bible translation which could result in a definitive new text. Nevertheless, it is clear that no area of biblical scholarship can today ignore the feminist challenge to meaning. Paradoxically, though relatively newly emerged, this challenge takes on many of the same dynamics which have fueled other ideological pressures on the biblical text. Feminist translation joins a long history, becoming the latest and certainly one of the strongest contenders in the longstanding struggle over the meaning of the Bible.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: revising the boundaries of culture and translation

We can begin to see that the project of translating culture within the politics of identity is not a quick fix.

(Gayatri Spivak 1992:794)

It was only a question of time until cultural studies “discovered” translation. After all, the globalization of culture means that we all live in “translated” worlds, that the spaces of knowledge we inhabit assemble ideas and styles of multiple origins, that transnational communications and frequent migrations make every cultural site a crossroads and a meeting place. These ideas have become the accepted truths of our contemporaneity. The hybridization of diasporic culture and the mobility of all identities—including gender—are central to the concerns of cultural studies. These contestatory sites of identity have sharpened awareness of the cultural authority of language, and of the position of the speakers within dominant codes. Languages are understood to participate in the processes by which individual and collective selves are fashioned; the “weight of linguistic and cultural histories,” “old tales and new tongues” are brought to bear on the relations between self and other (Arteaga 1994: 2).

At present, however, translation is most often used by cultural studies theorists as a metaphor, a rhetorical figure describing on the one hand the increasing internationalization of cultural production and on the other the fate of those who struggle between two worlds and two languages. Women “translate themselves” into the language of patriarchy, migrants strive to “translate” their past into the present. Translation, as a tangible representation of a secondary or mediated relationship to reality, has come to stand for the difficulty of access to language, of a sense of exclusion from the codes of the powerful. For those who feel they are marginal to the authoritative codes of Western culture, translation stands

as “a metaphor for their ambiguous experience in the dominant culture” (Castelli 1990:25). It is this ambiguity, the sense of not being at home within the idioms of power, that has led many women, as well as migrants like Salman Rushdie, to call themselves “translated beings” (Rushdie 1991:13).

Homi Bhabha takes this metaphorization one step further, proposing “translational culture” as a new site of cultural production and as a new speaking position—as part of the processes by which “newness enters the world” (Bhabha 1994:212). “There is over-whelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities” (*ibid.*: 5). This in-between space of negotiation no longer belongs only to exceptional beings (the great modernist writers, translators, privileged migrants) but more and more comes to represent the tensions of hybridity related to the postcolonial subject and even to the national citizen. This altered understanding of translation as an activity which destabilizes cultural identities, and becomes the basis for new modes of cultural creation, is crucial to contemporary thinking. It is the very finality of translation which is put into question, the security of its promised closure.

But what of the material realities of translation? The highly metaphorical language used to describe translation hides an insensitivity to the realities of languages in today’s world. Anglo-American gender and cultural studies have been abundantly nourished through translations, and yet they rarely look critically at the translation practices through which they have come into being. Confidently conducted mainly in English, these studies give little attention to the specific languages of intellectual and cultural commerce in the world today. It is time, then, that attention turn to translation as a pivotal mechanism in creating and transmitting cultural values.

I wish to suggest, in this concluding chapter, some of the ways that the moving boundaries of culture and cultural identity affect the way translation is practiced and conceptualized. These reframings of the work of translation are enacted in theoretical writings (most notably by Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, as we will see) but also in literature and performance. Some of the most interesting challenges to the boundaries between literary genres and among national/cultural identities have been provided by women writers like Eva Hoffman, Christine Brooke-Rose, Nicole Brossard, Noëlle Janaczewska and performance artist and theoretician Coco Fusco. But in addition to showing how a renewed understanding of translation nourished contemporary intellectual practices, my invocation of these moving borders also includes a

pedagogical agenda: I wish to propose ways in which translation and cultural studies can be more closely integrated, so that each area can palliate the weaknesses and blind spots of the other.

Cultural studies brings to translation an understanding of the complexities of gender and culture. It allows us to situate linguistic transfer within the multiple “post” realities of today: poststructuralism, postcolonialism and postmodernism. To present these influences very schematically, it could be said that the first emphasizes the power of language to construct rather than simply reflect reality; the second highlights the power relations which inform contemporary cultural exchanges; and the third emphasizes that, in a universe where total novelty is a rare phenomenon, a great deal of cultural activity involves the recycling of already existing material. All three of these perspectives give heightened prominence to translation as an activity of cultural creation and exchange. All three “post” terms have shifted and refocused the boundaries of difference in language. They emphasize the multiplicity of languages circulating in the world today, the competition between local and global forms of expression, the reactualizations of cultural forms. Most crucially, they have irrevocably put to rest the myth of pure difference, showing that the passage from one location to another always involves displacements and changes in the relationship between both terms.

Translation studies, on the other hand, investigate the linguistic and textual realizations through which cultural exchange takes place. The potential of translation studies lies in its project to expose the pathways that create the movement of ideas and esthetic forms. These lines of transmission, opened up by the violence of colonialism, now crisscross the globe as a permanent feature of internationalized culture. Translation research maps out the intellectual and linguistic points of contact between cultures, and makes visible the political pressures that activate them. It shows that, because there is no total equivalence between cultural systems, the alignment between source and target text is necessarily skewed. And it draws attention to language as a force through which experience is shaped.

In sketching out the relations between gender and translation, this study necessarily opens out into the more general problematic of cultural identity in translation. Following the path of much of contemporary feminist theory (for instance, Poovey 1988; Spivak 1993), I in turn place gender concerns within the problematics of cultural representation.

THE “CULTURE” IN THE CULTURAL TURN

The “cultural turn” in translation studies has begun the process of examining the ways in which translation is nourished by—and contributes to—the dynamics of cultural representation. The descriptive methods favored by the polysystem theory have encouraged the study of large corpuses of specific translation genres: theatre (Brisset 1990), science fiction (Gouanvic 1994) or novels (Toury 1995). Examination of translation trends that prevail during specific periods brings an understanding of the larger cultural forces at work in translation. In addition, emphasis is placed on the material reality of translated texts, as separate from the originals. Numerous case studies show how translators actualize prevailing attitudes toward Otherness (Lefevere 1992a). The centrality of translation to the imposition and maintenance of colonialism, for instance, is a powerful case in point (Niranjana 1992; Rafael 1988). There is a recognition of the translator as fully engaged in the literary, social and ideological realities of his or her time.

But what is often missing from translation studies accounts is a clear definition of what “culture” means. While “culture” is recognized as one of the most difficult and overdetermined concepts in the contemporary human and social sciences, it often appears in translation studies as if it had an obvious and unproblematic meaning. Translators are told that in order to do their work correctly they must understand the culture of the original text, because texts are “embedded” in a culture. The more extensive is this “embedding,” the more difficult it will be to find equivalents for terms and ideas (for instance, Snell-Hornby 1988:41). The difficulty with such statements is that they seem to presume a unified cultural field which the term inhabits; the translator must simply track down the precise location of the term within it and then investigate the corresponding cultural field for corresponding realities. What this image does not convey is the very difficulty of determining “cultural meaning.” This meaning is not located within the culture itself but in the process of negotiation which is part of its continual reactivation. The solutions to many of the translator’s dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but rather in an understanding of the way language is tied to local realities, to literary forms and to changing identities. Translators must constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries, and evaluate the degree to which the two different worlds they inhabit are “the same.” These are not technical difficulties; they are not the domain of specialists in obscure or quaint vocabularies. They demand the exercise of a wide range of intelligences. In fact the process of meaning

transfer often has less to do *with finding* the cultural inscription of a term than in *reconstructing* its value.

Consider the following example from British cultural anthropology concerning the discussion by Rodney Needham of the possibility of translating the Nuer concept of “belief.” The Nuer are the African group to which the British social anthropologist Evans-Pritchard devoted a major study (Needham 1972). Needham begins his discussion by underlining the very obvious difficulty of translating religious concepts. In his study, Evans-Pritchard had concluded that the Nuer have no verbal concept that can convey exactly what is understood by the English word “believe.” Needham observed that this conclusion contrasts strongly with other ethnographical accounts according to which certain peoples “believe” this or that. It also contrasts with the findings of missionaries who do, by contrast, find equivalence between Nuer terms and the notion of belief. The missionary translators, although careful and conscientious in their linguistic research, seem to rely on their own “dogmatic conceptions of their faith” and on “personal conviction” to determine translatability. While the anthropologist hesitates to ascribe total transferability between the Nuer and the English languages, the missionaries take a confidently optimistic view of equivalence (Needham 1972:37–38).

Is the category of “belief” and especially religious belief transferable from the Nuer language to European languages? Needham’s subtle and exhaustive investigation into the question, heavily influenced by Wittgenstein, leads to an ambiguous answer. The question of equivalence cannot be decided once and for all. The adequacy of the translation can only be measured against the objectives of the translator (*ibid.*: 205). It is not entirely surprising that the Protestant missionaries concluded definitively that the Nuer did possess a category of religious belief, analogous to the Christian conception. A contrary conclusion would have made their task of Bible translation into Nuer extremely difficult. The anthropologist Evans-Pritchard believed, rather, that the interior categories of the Nuer religion remain inaccessible to the outside observer and therefore recalcitrant to translation. The apparently conflicting reports of the missionary and the ethnographer make clear that the meaning of “belief” says more about the ideological project of the translator than about the reality of the Nuer.

From this example, it is clear that “cultural meaning” is not to be discovered simply by tacking the linguistic statement against its ecological and conceptual backdrop. The question is not simply “what does the concept mean within a culture alien to us?” but “to what extent

can we consider this concept equivalent or analogous to one which we can frame in our own terms?" The answer is to be found only in a *value judgment* decreeing the degree of possible equivalence between cosmogonies.

The history of religion is rife with such examples. We know that the Catholic Church was forced to issue a decree against religious syncretism in the New World (at the Council of Trent, 1545–1563), specifically forbidding certain kinds of “native” pictorial representations of the deity as well as native terms for naming divine realities. Not all conceptions of divinity were considered equally appropriate, not all cultural expressions acceptable. While some early missionaries both in Mexico and Peru had thought that conversion could take place peacefully within the framework of indigenous languages and symbols, they were quickly prevented from pursuing this path. The ecclesiastical authorities considered that conversion could not be achieved without force. This violence included an attack on language and symbolism. Quechua terminology describing Christian concepts was carefully eliminated from dictionaries, catechisms and manuals used to preach to Indians, and the same purist attitude defined all other aspects of Christian life in the Andes (MacCormack 1985:456).

In other words, missionaries, who were widely regarded as experts on matters Indian, were never able to translate Christianity into Andean terms, “that is, to separate Christianity from its European cultural, sociological, and even political framework” (ibid.: 458). In imposing a translation strategy based on the non-equivalence between native and European concepts of the divinity, the Catholic Church made language an instrument in a practice of conversion based on coercion and violence.

Again, “cultural meaning” is hardly a given here. The names and meaning of Andean deities are relegated to the parochialism of the local and the limited; the name of the European god is given the epistemological privilege of universality.

Entering another area of cultural contention, consider the “meaning” of the ecclesiastical swear-words common in Quebec French. What do words like *câlîce*, *baptême* and *tabernacle* mean? On one level they refer to the vessels and the sacraments of the Church: the chalice, baptism, the tabernacle. Used commonly as swear-words (often “softened” into a deformed version of the word, like *tabernouche*, in order to limit offense), they have obviously lost their referential meaning to become pure expletives. All the same, a translator may indeed wish to insist on the particular cultural history which has given rise to the prevalence of this ecclesiastical language, whose perversion yet attests to the imprint left

by the Church. Do these words convey some essential information about living in Quebec? Would “damn” or “gosh” carry the same cultural weight?

In fact translators of Quebec literature into English have quite often left the expletives untranslated. They convey through this gesture an ethical posture: their conviction that an essential part of the meaning of this literature is its anchoring in a specific socio-historical context (Simon 1992, 1995). This does not mean, however, that the relationship between language and cultural identity remains static. At the beginning of the twentieth century certain literary uses of vernacular French in Quebec literature pointed to a conservative and even archaic vision of that culture (in the novel *Maria Chapdelaine* and in its translation by W.H. Blake); the later integration of an anglicized urban slang (*joual*) into literature pointed to the aggressive, self-conscious creation of an emergent culture. When seeking out or refusing English equivalents for this language, translators activate their readings of the way cultural meaning changes.

In order to determine meaning, therefore, and ensure its transfer adequately, the translator must *engage* with the values of the text. The translating *project* is essential to this transaction; it activates the implicit cultural meanings which are brought to bear.

GENDER TO CULTURE: GAYATRI SPIVAK

Feminist translation, as we have seen, is a similar kind of testing ground for cultural meaning. What does the word “man” mean? Who is to determine what that meaning is and whether the gendered dimensions of language are to be considered significant or trivial? In emphasizing the crucial historical and ideological role of gender in language, by underscoring the role of subjectivity in framing and reclaiming meaning, feminist translators foreground the cultural identity of women.

But this cultural identity has itself gone through a number of avatars over the last decades. And it is important to emphasize this evolutionary process. Within Anglo-American feminist thought, the concept of difference has experienced several theoretical moments. By now, most analysts agree on a three-stage evolution: (1) an essentialist phase which claimed the existence of an intrinsically valid “women’s reality,” to be opposed to the abuses of patriarchy; (2) a constructionist model which posited that difference is created through historical positioning within language and culture: women’s reality is understood as socially produced; and (3) a third position, growing out of the second, which understands difference to be produced dialogically in relation to what it

excludes. Based on a Derridean understanding of “*différance*” as a continual process of differentiation, and on the Foucauldian understanding of knowledge as a performative category, this perspective looks at women’s difference as one among a wide range of other cultural pressures, like race, class or the nation.

This understanding of the plurality of differences has led to the prioritization of the concept of “location.” Identity is understood as a positioning in discourse and in history. Sexual difference—gender—becomes one lens through which differences of all orders (national, ethnic, class, race), therefore, are scrutinized. Emphasis is placed on the active nature of representational practices, which are seen to construct positions for subjects and to produce identities, binding people across diversities and providing new places from which they can speak. Cultural practices are central to the production of subjects, rather than simply reflecting them.

The one theorist who has paid attention to translation in this double context of gender and cultural identity is Gayatri Spivak. With experience in the translation of Derrida, as well as texts by Mahasweta Devi and other Bengali writers, Spivak is one of the few cultural studies theorists to speak of translation from a practical as well as a theoretical point of view. She presents these ideas principally in “The Politics of Translation” (1993), an article whose articulation of gender, culture and translation merits examination in some detail. As is always the case with Spivak’s texts, no adequate summary can account for arguments which swirl and spiral, rather than unfolding according to conventional rules of composition.

Spivak begins by emphasizing that the “task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency” (Spivak 1993:179). This agency is only partial, however, since the writer is always “written by her language,” because even in acting intention “is not fully present to itself.” But the writer also “writes agency” in accordance with her ideological position. Spivak provides a number of images of the translator’s work which account for the complexity of agency. On the one hand she emphasizes the need for the translator to “surrender” to the text; on the other she speaks of the “staging” of language through translation. These illustrations of the subjective posture of the translator point to the first imperative of translation: the need to attend to the “rhetorical nature” of every language over its logical systematicity.

This required attention to the rhetoricity of language, within a poststructuralist understanding of the text, is Spivak’s main message to

the translator. While this idea might not seem particularly new to literary translators of Western works (familiar with such theoreticians as Henri Meschonnic, Antoine Berman, Walter Benjamin or Paul de Man), Spivak insists on its dramatic pertinence as far as non-European works are concerned. The works of non-Western women are too often reduced to their social message, according to Spivak, or rendered in a flat international translatese which could have come from any far-away country. How can such texts compete for students' attention, when placed beside an Alice Walker or a Monique Wittig?

Spivak goes on to transform this message, this declaration of principle, into a method of translation. First, she explains how she had to undo previously taught habits of translation in order to learn how to engage fully with the text. Her school training had taught her only to produce an "accurate collection of synonyms." In her preface to a recently published translation of eighteenth-century Bengali poetry, she explains that she also had to resist chaste Victorian prose just as she wished to avoid the new norm of plain English. What the translator must do is "surrender" to the text, earning the right to "transgress from the trace of the other" (Spivak 1993:178).

It is in describing this notion of "surrender" that Spivak opens her discussion onto the widest issues of subjective investment and loss in language. Translation has to do with loss of boundaries, loss of control, dissemination, the "spacy emptiness between two named historical languages" into which "meaning hops" (ibid.: 180). The translator "juggles" the disruptive rhetoricity of the text, sensing "the selvages of the language-textile give way, fray *into frayages* or facilitations" (ibid.: 180). Real translation can only come about if the "jagged relationship between rhetoric and logic, condition and effect of knowing" are reconstructed in the other language. This is the condition for an ethics of translation, "so that the agent can act in an ethical way...so that the agent can be alive, in a human way, in the world" (ibid.: 181). There must, in other words, be an engagement between the translator and the textuality of the work, with the conditions of meaning, not just the ideas of the work. The translator, the agent of language, faces the text as a director directs a play, as an actor interprets a script. This cannot be the case when translation is taken to be a simple matter of synonymy, a reproduction of syntax and local colour (ibid.: 179).

A translation might be produced if such a relationship is established, but it does not correspond to what Spivak sets out as an ethic of translation, which is to facilitate the love between the original and its shadow, "a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator

and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay" (ibid.: 181). Spivak here echoes Walter Benjamin's idea that translation is not a communicative act (Benjamin 1969:69). Like the "risky fraying" which accompanies "communication and reading of and in love," the act of translation brings with it the risk of a loss of agency.

This comparison with the experience of love allows Spivak to explore the relationship between self and other which is enacted through translation. Spivak posits two fundamental forms of alterity: the erotic and the ethical. In order to be ethical, she explains, we have to turn the other into something like the self. This is humanistic universalism: our moral obligations are built on the fundamental likeness between all human beings. But in the translating relationship there has to be more respect for the irreducibility of otherness; this respect is more erotic than ethical in nature. The liberal, humanist, "she is just like me" position is not very helpful when translating: it is maximum distance which the translator must seek. This brings the translating relationship ideally closer to the mode of the erotic rather than to the ethical form of alterity.¹

This description of the erotic in translation could perhaps be read as a parodic inversion of George Steiner's description of the hermeneutic motion. Using aggressively male imagery, Steiner describes the act of penetration of the text through which "the translator invades, extracts, and brings home" (Steiner 1975:298). Steiner's four stages of entry into the text might begin in a passive moment of trust, but they end with a gesture of control. Spivak's movement of surrender is in stark contrast to Steiner's description, not only because it avoids masculinist images, but also because she insists on the ambivalent and uncertain "agency" of the translator. For Spivak, to engage with the text means a certain loss of rhetorical control, a subjugation to the imperatives of the rhetoricity of the original. Hers is less a hermeneutical voyage into the intentionality of the text than an engagement with the sensual texture of expression.

Spivak describes her translating method as follows. First, the translator must surrender to the text. She must "solicit the text to show the limits of its language, because that rhetorical aspect will point at the silence of the absolute fraying of language that the text wards off, in its special manner" (Spivak 1992:181). The translator must earn the right to intimacy with the text, through the act of reading. Only then can she surrender to the text.

Spivak herself practices total surrender by providing a first translation at top speed. Surrender at that point mainly means being literal. The revision is not in terms of a possible audience but is "in a sort of English," working against the text as "just a purveyor of social realism" (ibid.: 188).

Spivak sees no reason why translation has to be a slow and time-consuming affair. If the translator is prepared and possesses the necessary reading skills, the sheer material production could be very quick.

Translation in postcolonial frame

The most original aspect of Spivak's discussion of translation is its combined postcolonial and feminist frame. On the one hand, Spivak is sensitive to the political weight of language and, in particular, the hegemonic position of English; on the other, she recognizes the need for translation that is grounded in feminist solidarity. These tensions are not always recognized as conflictual, and Spivak is scathing in her critique of the insouciance with which cultural inequalities can be treated by First World feminists.

Translation is a practical necessity, she grants. It is important that the texts of women who write in Arabic or Vietnamese "be made to speak English" (ibid.: 182). But is translation a form of hospitality or rather an expression of the law of the strongest? Spivak's discussion here recalls a long tradition of debate whose beginning can be found in Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, a world literature which would contain within its borders the many diversities of national literary expression. Goethe's idea of *Weltliteratur* was shared by Madame de Staël, as we saw in [Chapter Two](#). Both believe that the generalized interaction of literatures permitted by translation must be a permanent feature of cultural production; both believe that this interaction will provide for stronger national literatures. The paradox of this position is picked up by Antoine Berman in his seminal work of translation theory in the Romantic period. He wonders whether there lies behind the idea of *Welt-literatur* the threat of cultural hegemony. For Berman, Goethe's idea of world literature seems to oscillate between two poles: on the one hand "world literature" would be a generalized movement of inter-translation, in which all cultures would translate one another; on the other, it would be a specifically German-language literary market place, defining German literature as the privileged access to literary universality (Berman 1984: 92). Does translation not mean the expression of a strongly assimilationalist literary universe, carried by a single language? As Homi Bhabha asks, is Goethe's ideal of a world literature to be understood as the prefiguration of a harmonious universe of exchange, or rather as a "form of cultural dissensus and alterity, where non-consensual terms of affiliation may be established on the grounds of historical trauma" (Bhabha 1994:12)?

These questions very much echo Spivak's concern with the consequences of a generalized movement of translation of Third World literature into English. What are the practical and ideological effects of the large-scale transfer of these works toward English? Spivak's response to this question is contained in her exposition of translation method. Translation can attain the democratic ideal only if the rhetoricity, the textuality, of the work of Third World women is adequately rendered. A disrespectful rendering betrays the democratic ideal of translation.

Spivak very correctly indicates here that it is not the fact of translation itself which dictates its cultural meaning, but the manner of translation. It is not sufficient to count the number of translations in order to assess the dynamics of cultural exchange. What matters is the attention given to the textual specificity of the works.

This is where Spivak provides her most cutting critique of Western feminist ideas about Third World solidarity. Access to other cultures, contrary to what many might think or hope, is not easy. It is not a question of devoting oneself to local or global social work. If you really want to establish solidarity, she asks, why not learn the mother tongue of the women you are interested in? "In other words, if you are interested in talking about the other, and/or in making a claim to be the other, it is crucial to learn other languages" (Spivak 1992:190). By "other" languages she is referring to those tongues generally learned only by anthropologists. This suggestion reaches to the heart of postcolonial inequities and to the ways they are reproduced in academic feminism and in cultural studies.

This critique is extended to Spivak's insistence on high standards of translation from Third World languages. Such standards, she understands, imply the risk of marginalizing the translator and the language of the original. Rigorous attention to the forms of expression of the foreign text run the risk of producing texts too opaque for immediate consumption, or too distant from prevailing esthetic norms. Yet these high standards must remain the translator's goal, and can be reached only if translators are well prepared to take on their task. It is not sufficient to have depth of commitment to correct cultural politics. The translator must be familiar with the "history of the language, the history of the author's moment, the history of the language-in-translation" (ibid.: 186). To decide whether you are well enough prepared to start translating, it might help if you have "graduated into speaking, by choice or preference, of intimate matters in the language of the original" (ibid.: 185).

The translator must know the difference between resistant and conformist writing by women, must know the literary scene, must be able to recognize that what seems resistant in the space of English may be reactionary in the space of the original. It may seem surprising that Spivak feels obliged to labor the point that the translator must be able to “discriminate on the terrain of the original” (ibid.: 189). One wonders what ignorance she is addressing when she insists that writers of a single “origin” should not be considered a homogeneous mass. She warns against the old colonial attitude of lumping together as one all work of exotic origin. The persistent heritage of this colonialism means that the accountability of translation is different when you are dealing with a language most reviewers do not know. This is part of the political import of translating from a Third World to a First World language.

The examples Spivak discusses are from her own and others’ renderings of Bengali texts. She critiques a previous translation of the songs of Ram Proshad Sen “marred by the pervasive orientalism ready at hand as a discursive system” (ibid.: 185). Similarly, a first translation of a story by Mahasweta Devi neglects the Bengali proverbs cited in it (though they are startling, even in Bengali), and provides a naturalizing title: “The Wet-Nurse”; Spivak would choose “The Breast-Giver,” for its Marxian and Freudian associations.

Spivak’s most fully developed display of translation is to be seen, of course, in the volume *Imaginary Maps*, which inserts three translated stories by Mahasweta Devi within the “embrace” of a multitiered commentary (Devi 1995). The book begins with a discussion between Spivak and the author, followed by the translator’s preface, the texts themselves and then the translator’s afterword. Spivak’s careful enfolding of the text reflects her concern for the contextualization of all the voices which find expression in the book: the voice of the tribals of India, of Devi, of Spivak herself.

Spivak wishes so to counter the tendency toward the “uninstructed cultural relativism” of Third World literature courses and take seriously the role jokingly attributed to her of “dwarpalika” (female doorkeeper) of Mahasweta in the West (ibid.: xxvi). Specificity and singularity are all-important, especially as Spivak addresses her double audience of US and Indian readers.

What kind of idiom does Spivak use in her translation? The English of Spivak’s translations belongs, as she acknowledges, more to the “rootless American-based academic prose” than to the sub-continental idiom (ibid.: xxviii). When familiar terms of the vernacular are suggested, she gives “chick,” “bad news,” “what a dish,” “blow him away.” But the

particularities of the translating idiom are more than those of (sexist) slang. The language of the translation is stark, angular; there is no softening of the harsh sequencing of phrases, no addition of mollifying connectives or literary-like phrases. Like Spivak's own prose, the stories are disconcerting in their erratic rhythms. Also like Spivak's own writing, they make swift leaps between disparate vocabulary registers. The English terms which appear in the original Bengali are italicized in the English version, to draw attention to the legacy of colonial English in the Bengali vernacular.

Spivak's translations enact a complex articulation of distance. This in turn reflects Spivak's readings of Devi's stories within the double context of postcolonialism and gender, of nationalism and sexuality, of the global and the local. In "Woman in Difference," her extended commentary on Devi's story "Douloti," Spivak refuses the "evolutionary lament stating that *their* problems are not yet accessible to *our* solutions and that they must simply come through into nationalism in order then to debate sexual preference" (Spivak 1993:90). Her triple reading of Devi (using the triad of Marxism, deconstruction and feminism) militates at every point against an exoticizing of the social reality of the tribals, at the same time as it makes careful note of concrete specifics.

In her essay on "Douloti," Spivak explains Devi's rhetoric and the brutally dramatic effect of her prose. She explains in particular the concluding lines of the story which describe the decision of the dying Douloti to lie down in the clay courtyard of a school upon which a map of India has been traced. Here,

Mahasweta's prose, in a signature gesture, rises to the sweeping elegance of high Sanskrit Bengali. This is in the sharpest possible contrast to the dynamic hybrid medium of the rest of the narrative, country Hindi mixed in with paratactic reportorial prose. Echoes of the Indian national anthem can also be heard in this high prose.

(ibid.:94)

Spivak translates:

Filling the entire Indian peninsula from the oceans to the Himalayas, here lies bonded labor spreadeagled, kamiya whore Douloti Nagesia's tormented corpse, putrified with venereal disease, having vomited up all the blood in her desiccated lungs. Today, on the fifteenth of August [Indian independence day] Douloti has left no room at all in the India of people like Mohan

[the schoolmaster] for planting the standard of the Independence Flag. What will Mohan do now? Douloti is all over India.

(*ibid.*:94)

Spivak's stark and defamiliarizing translations of Devi's stories carry an extraordinarily powerful charge, bringing the work of the Bengali writer, Mahasweta Devi, through the authority of Spivak's name and her erotics of translation, into the ongoing conversations of and on transnational culture. Here, contrary to usual practice, the name of the translator carries significant weight; this creates a privileged channel through which this foreign work makes its way toward ready readers. Is there a paradox to be discovered in the contrast between Spivak's posture of "surrender" to the foreign text and her extensive critical interventions which mediate between the text and the English-language reader? For Spivak, both these postures belong to the esthetic and intellectual responsibilities of translation.

Postcolonial pedagogy

Spivak's politics of translation must be seen as part of her larger project of postcolonial pedagogy. This involves, among others, the following principles: a continual insistence on the internal differences of the postcolonial nation ("India" explained as unending diversity), and an appreciation of the singular nature of the cultural forms produced by the Third World. This sensitivity to the historical and ongoing effects of imperial power is essential to the training needed for transnational cultural studies, argues Spivak, but it cannot come from English departments only. Anti-imperialist critique, she argues, cannot be fully contained by English—either the discipline or the language. University curricula which train students for transnational cultural studies must recognize these limitations and should institute "a rigorous language requirement in at least one colonial vernacular" (*ibid.*: 277).

Such a proposal would seem banal were it not such a rare occurrence within cultural studies. Indeed, Spivak seems to be one of very few theorists who draw attention to language as a necessary condition for understanding singular cultural forms. She warns that, if such sensitivity is not encouraged, new forms of Orientalism could emerge, which would include a canon of Third World literature in translation, in which, in the words of Perry Anderson, "all alien shapes take on the same hue" (quoted by Spivak 1993:278). We understand, then, how translation itself comes

to nourish a program of anti-imperialist critique, by promoting the specificity of cultural forms. Spivak's own translations of a writer like Mahasweta Devi are clearly part of that project.

Although Spivak makes no reference to the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, her discussion of the writing of Mahasweta Devi begs to be read in the context of this massive historical precedent. Tagore wrote in Bengali, as does Mahasweta Devi. And like Tagore's, her international readership will be acquired through translation. However, while Tagore had a powerful intermediary to British culture in the person of Edward Thompson, as Devi does in Spivak, he took full responsibility himself for the English versions of his work.

The paradox of this choice, however, as has been astutely demonstrated by Sujit Mukherjee, is that "his own efforts [to translate himself] continue to be the greatest impediment to enjoyment and appreciation of modern India's greatest poet for those who have no choice but to read him in English" (Mukherjee 1994:113). Tagore was not at all unaware of the transforming processes he imposed on his own poetry as he brought it into English. On the contrary, he seemed to have a very conscious and explicit idea of what the English public expected of him, and he intended to satisfy that expectation (*ibid.*: 106). He subsequently simplified and edulcorated his poetry, earning a reputation for mysticism which he did not care to erase. Indeed he confessed to Edward Thompson that he had engaged in a career of "falsifying my own coins" (*ibid.*: 122).

The goals and rules of cultural exchange for Tagore were dominated by the demands of colonialism. Tagore assumed that the cultural differences of his Bengali poetry would be tolerated only to the degree that it was assimilable to the British literary canon. Indeed, although specialists like Edward Thompson objected to the simplification of Tagore's poetry, his work was otherwise received most positively. After all, Tagore surely won the 1913 Nobel prize on the basis of work which was available in English. As Mahasweta Sengupta makes clear, Tagore's reputation and immense popularity in the West were due primarily not to an intellectual appreciation of his work but to an emotional association between the East and mysticism. Tagore actualized Western fantasies of the East as a place where "saints and prophets brought deliverance to ordinary people" (Sengupta 1990:62). By his translations, Tagore was adding another piece to the existing edifice of Orientalism, making himself a representative of that otherness so alluring to the Western tradition.

The example of Tagore's self-translations are particularly revealing in that they are the product of a poet who was able to mold his work

according to two contradictory sets of norms. As a poet and translator, Tagore lived in two separate and seemingly irreconcilable worlds. Each of these worlds defines itself in opposition to the other; and yet each claims roots in the authenticity of cultural purity. Spivak speaks of the pervasive Orientalism which is “on hand” as a mode of relating to the Third World; Tagore’s translations contributed to building and maintaining this discursive system.

The postcolonial frame of Spivak’s “politics of translation” aims at revising the terms of cultural exchange as Tagore knew them. It is no longer a question of reshaping Indian literature into an Anglo-American frame, but of distorting the frame of reception itself. The translator Spivak also lives in two worlds, but she wishes to change the terms obtaining between them. Her goal is not to valorize one in favor of the other, or to separate out the strands which belong properly to one side or another of the cultural equation. Rather, it is to situate the critical project of translation within the parameters of an always evolving relationship between cultural poles.

The definition of this relationship is further complicated by the increasingly mobile boundaries of culture itself. Where once cultures were principally defined in reference to clearly circumscribed “national” or “ethnic” realities, it is the very boundedness of culture which has now become problematic. There is an emphasis now on the performative aspects of culture, on the ways in which cultural identity is constantly enacted through practices of representation. “American” culture, that is to say, now competes with a variety of other kinds of more specific forms of cultural identity (“feminist,” “Chicano,” “Black”), each employing vocabularies and images to affirm itself.

It is in their critique of the framing of culture that Spivak’s politics of translation should be read; also in relation to the notion of “cultural translation” as developed by Homi Bhabha. Bhabha’s theories emerge from concerns very similar to Spivak’s: both are engaged in reconfiguring the boundaries of culture from the point of view of the postcolonial and the migrant. Both are concerned by the practice of translation. In rethinking culture as a category of *enunciation*, rather than as a category of representation and knowledge, Bhabha elaborates a powerful conceptual frame for translation. Instead of serving as a bridge between already given cultural entities, translation becomes an activity of cultural creation. The bridge, in other words, brings into being the realities which it links. (“The boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing*” (Bhabha 1994:5).²)

By translation I first of all mean a process by which, in order to objectify cultural meaning, there always has to be a process of alienation and of secondariness *in relation to itself*. In that sense there is no “in itself” and “for itself” within cultures because they are always subject to intrinsic forms of translation.

(Bhabha 1990:210)

In the hybrid culture, in the third space defined by Bhabha, which takes into account the unstable identities of the migrant, translation is a foundational activity. It is not confined to its traditional ancillary role as a medium of communication between nations, but elevated to a primary creative activity.

Translation is also a way of imitating, but in a mischievous, displacing sense—imitating an original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact that it *can* be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on: the “original” is never finished or complete in itself. The “originary” is always open to translation so that it can never be said to have a totalised prior moment of being or meaning—an essence.

(Bhabha 1990:210)

This reconfiguration of translation and displacement is possible because Bhabha operates in a conceptual world from which the conventional stabilities of nation/culture/language/subject have disappeared. These terms are no longer to be considered in a logic of “diversity” or “plurality” (culture as the object of empirical knowledge, as a closed totality, an envelope which englobes and explains behavior and ideas) but in a logic of “difference,” as a process of negotiation.

Bhabha challenges the idea of culture as an envelope which securely binds all the members of a national community within the same coherence of meaning. The great migrations of post-colonialism have produced a new sociodemographic situation: all Western nations now have increasingly mixed populations. The ease and rapidity of global communication have created an international mass culture, which competes and interacts with local forms. Even those exotic cultures, which we once counted on to furnish simple counter-models to our own confusion, are as endangered as the fragile environment which once supported them. And so the idea of culture as a set of unchanging and coherent values, behaviors or attitudes has given way to the idea of

culture as negotiation, symbolic competition or “performance” (Clifford 1988). Every culture speaks a language traversed by two kinds of codes, the complicit idioms of the vernacular and the vehicular codes of international communication.

It is surprising, nevertheless, that Bhabha seems to be much less attentive than Spivak to the authority of the language of translation, the language which comes to enact and embody transnational culture. Using the theories of Walter Benjamin and de Man to highlight the irreducible specificity of the foreign signifier, Bhabha nonetheless draws little attention to the linguistic embeddedness of distant cultural material.

This is because the space which Bhabha works in is the liminary terrain of the transnational, that hybrid space which stands between the certainties of national cultures but does not participate in them. Unlike Spivak who engages in the practice of translation between cultures, insisting on the difference between the postcolonial and the migrant, Bhabha chooses to elaborate his own language of translation within the interstitial spaces of hybridity. This space is bracketed off from the traffic in ideas and texts which goes on in the more polarized spaces around it. Translation is not a mechanism of transfer or a naturalization of meaning, because the extremes of Otherness have collapsed into the ever-growing center between them.

We can wonder, though, if this liminal, hybrid space of Bhabha does not too quickly occlude the signs of the linguistic differences which inhabit it. While Bhabha’s own writing style promotes acute consciousness of the hybridity of its intellectual components, it is less sensitive to the linguistic expression of these differences. His writing is emblematic of the new internationalization of Anglo-American cultural studies, in that it seems to convey implicit assent to the dominance of the English language, and the implicit recognition of a single language of cultural expression. Here is enacted a curious law of the circulation of cultural goods. While the bulk of translation traffic today goes from English into other languages, the borders of cultural productions in English expand, becoming increasingly diasporic, occupying larger and larger chunks of territory.

The increasing voracity of English to assimilate all cultures, to become the single vehicle of cosmopolitanism, is recognized by some American academics as a threat to cultural difference. Elaine Marks feels that the American university is at risk of being “devoured by the disease of monolingualism,” facing the potential disappearance of languages and literatures other than English (Marks 1994:368). And it could be shown that the English-dominated hybridity of cultural studies feeds the

“devotedly monoglottal” tradition of American language-engineering policies (Shell 1993).

This is why Spivak’s foregrounding of translation within her post-colonialist pedagogy is especially significant. She draws attention to the power of the implicit language of translation—its power of linguistic and esthetic assimilation. But Spivak’s critique can be made to apply not only to postcolonial cultural studies but to the field of Anglo-American translation as a whole. Her appeal to what Lawrence Venuti would call more “resistant” and less “fluent” translation practices feeds into a nascent critique of existing practices of translation within Anglo-American culture in general. This is a critique which Venuti has launched from within translation studies itself, arguing that a recognition of the “excluded theories and practices” of translation can serve a more democratic agenda (Venuti 1995:40). In exposing the ethnocentric violence of much contemporary literary translation, in denouncing the “shadowy existence” of the translator within Anglo-American culture (*ibid.*: 8), Venuti shows how esthetic and cultural Otherness has been controlled by translation. Venuti calls for alternative translating practices which will break this hold, which will offer “modes of cultural resistance” (*ibid.*: 309).

Like Berman and Venuti, Spivak proposes an ethics of translation based on the responsibility of the translator to be self-conscious and self-critical. Whether this ethic includes practices of “foreignizing” (Venuti) or attention to the “letter” (Berman), it is argued that the political agenda of translation is best pursued by foregrounding the act of mediation, by giving voice and body to the figure of the translator. What Spivak adds to this injunction is the reminder that this body is gendered, and that it operates from within a specific set of cultural relationships—whose vectors of power can be influenced but not magically reversed by the act of translation.

PRODUCING DIFFERENCE

Gayatri Spivak’s “Politics of Translation” (1993) indeed gives voice and body to the figure of the postcolonial feminist translator. We become familiar with her critical idiom, with her methods of translation, with her understanding of her role as mediator. She defines her role with authority, aggressively asserting her own presence in the space of translation. As such, Spivak joins the company of a number of contemporary women writers who have come to redraw the portrait of the contemporary translatrix.

Consider the heroine of Christine Brooke-Rose's novel *Between* (1968), condemned to the perpetual in-between of the life of a conference interpreter, divided between the German of a renegade father, the French of her childhood, the English of a divorced husband, the Italian of a potential lover, and the cacophony of internationalized platitudes that pervades her business life. Brooke-Rose's dazzling novel, which uses the idiom of modernist collage to exploit every facet of in-betweenness, is itself written in a multiplicity of languages, exhibiting the tensions of its subject.

The world of *Between* is not yet that of the savvy postcolonial; it is that of a culture of modernity constructing itself upon the ruins of the Second World War. The dialogue between France and Germany still remains important, although it takes place against a backdrop of the anglicization of international culture. English is the main language of the text, but French, German, Latin, Italian, Romanian and various other languages make frequent appearances as the unnamed heroine-interpreter travels from an international congress of demographers in Copenhagen, to a meeting of archeologists in Istanbul, semiologists in Dubrovnik, acupuncturists in Italy, etc. The movement between languages is the underlying structural dynamic of the text, a text which is written without the verb "to be."³

The fractured German of her colleague and intimate friend Siegfried is a reflection of both the tragic and the ludic qualities of living "between." On the one hand, there is the spectacle of a mixed and broken language, which breaks with the logic of "natural" speech. In this world between, there is a suspension of the normal dynamics of communication: action is suspended, meaning is awaited. But this in-between space also permits irresponsibility, a free-flowing eroticism above the spectacle of disaster.

Und since man spricht sehr little Deutsch unlike un clever sweet half born and bred on Pumpernickel, man denkt in eine kind of erronish Deutsch das springt zu life feel besser than echt Deutsch. Und even wenn man thinks AUF Deutsch wann man in Deutschland lives, then acquires it a broken up quality, die hat der charm of my clever sweet, meine deutsche madchen-goddess, the gesture and the actions all postponed while first die Dinge and die Personen kommen. As if languages loved each other behind their own facades, despite alles was man denkt daruber davon dazu. As if words fraternised silently beneath the syntax, finding each other funny and delicious in a Misch-Masch of tender fornication, inside

the bombed out hollowed structures and the rigid steel glass modern edifices of the brain.

(Brooke-Rose 1968:53–54)

Brooke-Rose's novel is written in just such a mixed idiom, her sentences beginning in one language, only to flow unexpectedly into another. The text moves from one idiom to another, from one "state" to another—from the heights of air travel to the material realities of nations, from irony to nostalgia, from memory to anticipation, from uncertainty to conviction.

This exploration of in-betweenness carries moral dimensions as well. *Between* offers a critique of the new forms of internationalism born in the wake of the Second World War: the platitudes of international diplomacy, the infinite repetition (in numerous languages) of the inanities of advertising, the superficialities of a certain kind of cultural cosmopolitanism. In particular, we see the potentially unpleasant underside of the new career of the conference interpreter, which has long been associated with the glamor of international jet-setting. It is the pathos of the heroine's position, the tawdry underside of the glamor of international diplomacy, and the loneliness of the "Alleinstehende Frau" which are uppermost here: too much linguistic traffic, too much verbal noise, too many intercultural scars.

Eva Hoffman is also a translator, though she has never made a profession out of it. In her wonderfully titled memoir *Lost in Translation* (1989), she analyzes with exquisite precision the shape and feel of the intercultural scars she shares with Brooke-Rose's heroine. Hers is a narrative of passage, charting the move from the paradise of youth in communist Poland to the cultural desert of western Canada during the late 1950s, from the total mastery of Polish cultural codes to the ignorance and insecurities of English. With humor, with pathos too, Hoffman recalls her growing investment in English, its payoffs and its penalties.

What makes Hoffman's narrative different from other stories of immigration is her attentiveness to the linguistic dimensions of cultural passage. When she arrives in Vancouver in the early 1950s, she must assimilate a whole new set of codes. This period of utter linguistic poverty, though recounted with sensitivity, is not the most moving part of the narrative. Rather, it is the gradual refinement of her skills as she comes closer and closer to native competence and her growing ability to identify and correct her own cultural deficiencies. She must learn to make jokes, and to respond correctly to others' jokes. She must attain the correct measure of vapidity expected of a female, the expected degree of self-assurance required of a successful student.

It's as important for me to speak well as to play a piece of music without mistakes. Hearing English distorted grates on me like chalk screeching on a blackboard, like all things botched and badly done, like all forms of gracelessness. The odd thing is that I know what is correct, fluent, good, long before I can execute it...

I've become obsessed with words. I gather them, put them away like a squirrel saving nuts for winter, swallow them and hunger for more. If I take in enough, then maybe I can incorporate the language, make it a part of my psyche and my body... I search for the right shade of a pearly pinkish shell I found on the beach as if my life depended on it, and to some extent it does. I can't live forever in a windy, unfurnished imagination; I have to make a comfortable habitation there.

(Hoffman 1989:22, 216–217)

Hoffman's autobiography is exceptional, though, for another reason. And that is because her narrative does not lead to the triumphant success of an immigrant's assimilation into American life. Though Hoffman proves that she can "make it" in the cultural life of the United States, in fact becoming an important literary critic, she cannot overcome the distance that separates her always from the truth of experience. Rather, Hoffman the autobiographer insists on what is "lost" in translation, the neuroses of nostalgia, the impossibility of recovering from the fall from the cultural paradise of childhood in Poland. Translation, then, becomes her lot. She can never relax in the natural comfort of a linguistic home, but remains self-consciously aware of her surroundings. She inhabits the in-between space of the translator with absolute competence and yet with a nagging sense of discomfort. Like Christine Brooke-Rose's heroine, Eva Hoffman moves through the ruins of the postwar dis-order, finding that the professional privileges of cosmopolitanism rapidly turn into an emotional handicap.

For these writers, dislocation creates distance between languages and mind-sets, and enacts an economy of loss—the loss of spontaneous contact with one's inner self, of emotional immediacy and wholeness. This fractured state of existence, though experienced by all individuals, is particularly acute in the case of uprooted cosmopolitans, migrants and writers who challenge the bounds of national identities. In this sense, the distance of translation comes to represent the esthetics of modernity as a whole, as it is enacted by the major modern writers like Joyce and Beckett (see, for instance, Scarpetta 1981). The modernist text uses plurilingualism to destabilize national borders, to challenge ideologies

of purity and rootedness, to contest the security of common identities. The juxtaposition of languages and discourses suggests the incomplete nature of cultural interchange, the lack of total reciprocity between signifying systems.

Can this modernist understanding of translation as jubilation-and as loss—be set beside a postmodern formulation? This would be an understanding closer to Homi Bhabha's interstitial space of "cultural translation," which challenges the very terms defining the poles of the translating relationship. While modernism sets up an unresolvable tension between conflicting identities, postmodernism would challenge the very grounds upon which these identities are themselves constructed.

Perhaps one of the strongest attempts to do this is achieved in *Le Desert mauve*, a novel by Quebec feminist writer Nicole Brossard (Brossard 1987), translated from the French as *Mauve Desert* by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (Brossard 1990). This novel is indeed one of the most self-aware and fully achieved reflections on translation in contemporary fiction, a work that both describes and enacts the work of translation. What is most unusual about the novel is its shape. The text is divided into three parts, which are physically separated in the volume. The first is a dramatic story of murder and betrayal against the luminous backdrop of the Arizona desert; the second is a section called "A Book to Translate" in which the fictional translator discusses and fleshes out aspects of the initial story; and a third section entitled "Mauve, the Horizon" (given its own book cover, complete with title, name of author, translator and publishing house) is a rewriting of the first chapter, in "translation." The same story, then, is repeated in these first and third sections, both times in the same language, but the third section—a figurative translation—contains changes in rhythm, intensity and phrasing.

The triple structure of the book is striking, materializing the contrast between the author's text and the "work" of translation which is given its separate section. In this middle section of the book, the longest of the three parts, the translator fleshes out the skeleton of the narrative, imagining details which were barely suggested in the original, exploring hypotheses for unexplained enigmas, constructing an imaginary dialogue with the author. We see the translator here as an independent agent, adding new life to the narrative.

This does not mean that the fictional translator takes liberties with the text. On the contrary, when the time comes for her to set about the meticulous task of "reading backwards in her language" (Brossard 1990: 83), she proceeds with painstaking care. The result, as we see, is *practically* identical with the original. Despite—or perhaps because of—the

long reveries which have allowed the translator to enter the imaginative world of the text, the translation looks surprisingly similar to the original.

It is particularly appropriate that this foregrounding of the translation process should be at the heart of a work by the best known of Quebec's feminist writers. Translation has been recognized as particularly important to feminist interchange in Canada and Quebec, and an important motor of creative innovation (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991). Brossard's novel calls attention to the productive displacements which occur through cultural mediation and transmission.

Brossard's fictional translator, Maude Laures, is to be seen in contrast to another translator in contemporary fiction, Hermes Marana, one of the main characters in Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*. Calvino's translator is a surly, untrustworthy cosmopolitan polyglot, a character straight out of a Nabokov novel. He takes pleasure in sabotaging the work of the author, finding ever new ways of creating hitches in the chain of transmission of the literary work. Calvino uses the most stereotyped scenario of sexual relations to portray his vision of literary relationships: Author, Translator and (female) Reader are caught up in a triangle of seduction and jealousy. Suffering from the impotence of his status-in comparison to that of the Author—the Translator must resort to the most unworthy tactics in order to attract the Reader's attention.

Brossard, by contrast, reaffirms the lines of literary desire. Her translator, Maude Laures, is seduced by a book discovered, inspired by the image she constructs of the author. No international intrigues here, no high commercial stakes and no motives of vengeance: rather, the passionate life of the word and sister voices.

One of these voices is that of the "real-life" translator of the novel, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood. In a commentary inspired by the experience of this double translation, she describes her almost physical engagement with the text:

As Melanie drives through the mauve desert in her mother's white Meteor, translator Maude Laures works her way through Angstelle's road novel. This double movement is impressed upon the real translating body, already engaged in dialogic movement with the other by the fiction's structure. Travelling through this complex source text, the translator's whole body is necessary and necessarily in constant e-motion between novels and languages, hoisting dictionaries, scanning the intertext, turning the pages of her memory, questioning the author, thinking of her readers. Her

signature on the translated book will attest to her performance in constructing target-language meaning.

(de Lotbinière-Harwood 1995:60)

Brossard's optimistic view of translation as re-creation brings novelty to a field dominated by tired clichés of betrayal and failure. We see how the fictional translator's patient, careful work with words is driven by her engagement with the writer's project.

Challenging the traditional master-slave view of translation vis-à-vis writing, Brossard's *Mauve Desert* posits translation as creative, not derivative, work. As production, not re-production. In a dialogue with novelist Laure Angstelle, translator Maude Laures, playing the role of Angela Parkins, even goes so far as to question the author's intention, asking: "Why did you kill me?" (Brossard 1990:132). While fictional author Angstelle is annoyed with the liberties taken by her translator, who boldly steps over the line of professional ethics by declaring "Reading you gives me every right" (Brossard 1990:133), real-life author Brossard grants her real-life translator great freedom through her own adventurousness in language and in the symbolic.

(de Lotbinière-Harwood 1995:61)

INCOMPLETE TRANSLATION

Because contemporary national cultures are increasingly plural, and inhabited by diverse languages, it is not surprising that mixed codes—and other forms of incomplete translation—have come to figure prominently in contemporary literature. Translation and writing meet as practices of creation in texts which define themselves as forms of "border writing," in those areas Mary Louise Pratt has so aptly called the "contact zone" (Pratt 1992:6). This is the place where cultures, previously separated, come together and establish ongoing relations. Historically, these zones have grown out of colonial domination and been characterized by "conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict" (ibid.: 6). Increasingly, however, we find that Western society as a whole has turned into an immense contact zone, where intercultural relations contribute to the internal life of all national cultures.

The work of the critic and performance artist Coco Fusco and her partner Guillermo Gomez-Pena illustrates the conjunction of hybrid artistic practices and language cross-overs. *English is Broken Here* is a

collection of essays on “cultural fusion in the Americas” (Fusco 1995). In an interview with Fusco, Guillermo Gomez-Pena explains that the art work he has done around the U.S.-Mexico border involves working in a variety of disciplines and languages.

Working in different languages creates different levels of complicity. When we speak in English, we are the Other. Spanish is for us the language of translation and interpretation. When we use it, we explain the condition of the Mexican-American to the monolingual Mexican. Using bilingualism implies a complicity and speaks to the experience of the Chicano as one who understands biculturalism. Those three registers operate simultaneously in the performance. They create three levels of communication with three distinct sectors of the public....

I am very interested in subverting English structures, infecting English with Spanish and in finding new possibilities of expression within the English language that English-speaking people don't have. I find myself in kinship with nonwhite English-speaking writers from India and the West Indies, Native Americans, and Chicanos.

(Fusco 1995:151, 157)

The kind of border-writing described by Fusco and Gomez-Pena points to “incomplete” translation as an ongoing element of cultural creation. The many fictions of border-writing, increasingly numerous as our cultures become conscious of their linguistic diversity, take place at the point where translation and writing meet as processes of creation. They embody the complementary and over-lapping energies of translation as writing, of writing as translation. This interstitial space brings out to the full the tensions which inform cultural identities.

Fictions, like those of Nicole Brossard, Eva Hoffman and Christine Brooke-Rose, explore the suggestive point of intersection between writing and translation, navigating at the blurred edge where original and copy, first and second languages, come to meet. The space “between” becomes a powerful and difficult place for the writer to occupy.

These cross-cultural practices use language in innovative ways, mobilizing its symbolic power as well as its communitarian connotations. They define the space of translation as conflictual, and in this way activate many of the principles that are enunciated in feminist translation theory. It is undoubtedly the idea of translation as a creative project which has been most advanced through the positioning of gender in theory. To see

a translation as a project is to understand the emotional and intellectual commitment which translators make, and the esthetic they imprint upon the work. It is to be able to trace out the networks of solidarity which bring translations into existence. And to delineate the textures of the erotic and the ethical, the differential and the universal, that animate the work of linguistic transfer.

These tensions are forcefully brought to bear in *The History of Water/Huyen Thoai Mot Giong Nuoc* by the Australian playwright Noëlle Janaczewska. The play explores the experience of learning and living a new language, the “difference between floating on the surface of a culture and being able to chart its depths” (Janaczewska 1994:14). It tells the double story of Kate, an Australian photographer of British origin, who travels to Vietnam in order to “widen the frame” through which she captures reality, and of Ha, an Australian translator of Vietnamese origin, who struggles to bring together her different selves as she negotiates linguistic passage for others. Through the confrontation of their different experiences comes also the realization that reality can no more be penetrated by the lens of the camera than by the words of one language. The translator Ha says: “To move past speaking foreign words to taking them into your body—absorbing their meanings into who you are—feeling the grain of the language rough against your skin—that is the most difficult translation of all” (ibid.: 24). Like the photographer, the translator must come to terms with the impossibility of fixing reality—once and for all—through image or word. Both run the risk of disappearing in “the deep blue shadows that fall like water between languages. Dangerous places where it’s easy to disappear” (ibid.: 28). But the translator also “improvises a bridge over unknowns, over ambiguities and equivalences. Touching Vietnamese words with her Australian life” (ibid.: 29).

When are languages pure constructions of sound, skipping over the surface of reality like “a stone across a lake” (ibid.: 18)? And when do they cut through the surface and speak for the certainties of anchored, stable lives? Janaczewska’s play shows how the tensions of translation are tied into all constructions of cultural identity, these tensions being fully informed by the previous inscriptions of history. Kate’s experience of translation is quite different from that of Ha; nevertheless, both struggle to make words “stick,” to stop the endless movement of meaning, knowing that this task is impossible.

The inscription of translation within contemporary artistic practices is one indication that translation has moved ever closer, over the last twenty years, to the center of Western intellectual and cultural preoccupations. Accelerated communications, for one thing, have increased the sheer

volume of interlinguistic activity. But more important surely is the fact that we now understand the commerce between languages to be central to the process of communication. Roman Jakobson's articulation of the central role of translation in all linguistic activity remains crucial (Jakobson 1959). Processes of meaning creation are grounded in our ability to move from one discourse, from one language, from one cultural context, to another. The universes of all individuals are peopled by a multiplicity of discourses, and increasingly, in our postnational world, by a plurality of languages.

This proliferation of languages does carry the risk of unintelligibility. Can the entire universe of references contained, for example, in a novel by Salman Rushdie, be readily understood by all its readers? These references, in the case of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, range from *Don Quixote* and Dante to Bollywood and Bombay cultural lore. The presence of these very varied references, as well as the vocabularies of many different communities, point to the increasing importance of "translation-effects" as a component of contemporary fiction. These effects are the result of the incompleteness of translation. In this encounter of disparate idioms, meaning cannot be immediate. Language becomes partially opaque, only suggesting potential meaning. Whether a source of jubilation or of concern, these translation-effects (with their risk of unintelligibility) are a feature of contemporary transnational cultural productions.

What feminist theory has added to this understanding is the sense that translation engages many of the same kinds of active identity-forming processes as other language activities. This vision takes us far from the humanist ideal of translation serving in the creation of a "common Western culture," sustained by a universal human subject. The essential role played by translation in the creation of the great intellectual movements of Western civilization has always been recognized. Translation was central to the emergence of Christianity, to the renewal of learning during the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to the Europeanization of Romanticism: these examples are familiar. They are part of a discourse which defines translation as the principal instrument in the creation of our "common Western culture." George Steiner says of translation during the time of the Renaissance that:

at a time of explosive innovation, and amid a real threat of surfeit and disorder, translation absorbed, shaped, oriented the necessary raw material...it established a logic of relation between past and present, and between different tongues and traditions which were splitting apart under stress of nationalism and religious conflict.

(Steiner 1975:247)

We might wonder if the formative powers of translation today are working in the direction of the coherence imagined by Steiner, or rather toward increasing diffraction. Is it not perhaps that the solidity of these links is irrevocably lost, that the very “commonality” of culture is at risk? Cultural theorist Iain Chambers suggests that there is an incompleteness and a fragmentation inscribed into the logic of cultural communication:

There is a growing hesitancy in pretending to offer a rationalist synthesis of the voices and forces released in the post-colonial world, as if these can simply be plotted on to the existing map of knowledge. Sometimes the voices met with may converge, but they may also separate out to the point of incomprehension and dissonance.... This suggests the need to connect—without reducing to the same—those currents that seep through the contemporary critical world in the Occident, which, in condensed, displaced and partial fashion, seek to speak of an elsewhere, of other worlds, and whose co-presence and mixing disturb and decentre our previous sense of knowledge and being. It involves embracing a mode of thought that is destined to be incomplete. Western thought, with its promise of a mastery of the complete picture is confronted by the incompleteness of “the spilled, the broken world” to use Thomas Pynchon’s memorable phrase: world broken down into complexities, diverse bodies, memories, languages, histories, differences.

(Chambers 1994:70)

Translation might once have been considered the instrument through which a “complete picture,” an unbroken chain of tradition and a common contemporary culture, might have been achieved; today it inevitably partakes of the incompleteness of cultural belonging. The way we imagine translation is changed by the fact that the worlds which it seeks to bridge are already to some extent informed by plurality, are *already* saturated with a logic of translation.

The “incompleteness” of translation has been pointed to by the writers and theoreticians we have discussed. Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak define translation as a difficult and never-ending transaction between the uncertain poles of cultural difference. It is not surprising that these concerns, currently applied to the context of culture and nation, find their origin in a common Derridean suspicion of foundational concepts. This

awareness also infuses the work of feminist theorists like Barbara Godard, who map out similar resistances to the certainties of identity, finding strong formulations of these in the anti-metaphysical strategies of H  l  ne Cixous or Luce Irigaray. Rather than reconfirming the borders which separate nations, cultures, languages or subjectivities, translation shows them to be blurred. It is the very economy of translation as a system regulating differences which has become problematic.

How can translation act as an arbiter of culture, confidently recomposing the boundaries of the text, when the text itself challenges these limits? By placing translation *within* the borders of their books, writers like Nicole Brossard and Christine Brooke-Rose smudge the distinction between original and secondary forms of writing, troubling (but not yet toppling) the entire edifice of conceptual complicities which maintain the power of author over translator, creation over reproduction, male over female.

The shape of these fictions reproduces the dividedness of identity, the ongoing–and never complete–negotiations between the mother tongue and the other tongue. The space of translation widens, becoming a territory in which the imagination settles down, takes up its ordinary existence.

NEW LOGICS OF EXCHANGE

Translation as the source of a unified tradition, a coherent linear framework for the transmission of meaning, is today no longer really available as an ideal. In a world of increasing diversity and competing interests, common norms are conjunctural and fluctuating. Models of universality are more often the reflection of figures of domination. We can wonder, however, if the idea of a unified common culture ever in fact became historical reality. Those spaces which were identified as universal (the great humanist tradition, the canon of great books, the public space associated with democratic communication, the model of culture which sustained the ideal of citizenship) have been exposed as being essentially expressive of the values of the white, European and middle-class male. The universality attributed to these vectors of culture turns out to be supported by longstanding processes of exclusion, and by the silencing of differences.

Divorcing itself from the unrealizable ideals of universal humanism, translation must work today through new logics of communication, through new configurations of commonality. Feminist interventions into translation have served to highlight the fact that cultural transmission is

undertaken from *partial* (and not universal) perspectives, from constantly evolving cultural *positions*.

The movement of ideas and texts is influenced by the subject positions of those who undertake the work of translation. Gender is central to the creation and the definition of these positions. But as we have seen, the way that gender shapes the action of translation can be very variable. Historically, gender may have been a factor which confined women to restricted writing roles, but it also provided the social networks which make translation necessary, as in women's anti-slavery work in the nineteenth century or the discipline of women's studies in the twentieth. Contemporary feminist translation has made gender the site of a consciously transformative project, one which reframes conditions of textual authority. This authority can be exercised in a "corrective" mode, as when it attempts to bring the message of the Bible into line with current forms of belief, when it participates in a movement toward ever more completely achieved versions of the truth; it is more fruitfully used to trouble sedimented accretions of dogma, to loosen the bonds of accepted verities, to challenge social and conceptual hierarchies.

Foregrounding the role of gender in translation points to the ways in which channels of communication are opened and maintained by the interests of evolving communities; and how the work of translation at once elicits and confuses the link between self and community, recognition and estrangement.

Notes

1

TAKING GENDERED POSITIONS IN TRANSLATION THEORY

- 1 This solution is not a new idea. What did Thomas Mann and André Gide have in mind when they insisted on securing male translators for certain of their books? Even though almost all of their other works were translated by a single woman translator, Helen Lowe-Porter for Mann, and Dorothy Bussy for Gide (see Thirlwall 1966; Tedeschi 1983), these authors believed that a special match between translator and text was required, at least in some cases, a match that could not be achieved by imaginative projection. Ironically, the male translator whom Mann had chosen for his book died, and Helen Lowe-Porter translated it anyway to general satisfaction. Might we imagine such a category as “cross-writing” or “cross-translating,” where a writer of the “wrong sex” would “pass”? Surely, it has been shown often enough that writing permits the imaginative projection of self into other identities, that membership by birth into a cultural identity is no guarantee of affiliation.
- 2 It is also an indication of the relative abundance of bibliographical materials in English, compared to French or German. Information on translators is available in such works as Todd (1985) and Blain *et al.* (1990).
- 3 I do not wish to labor this point, but would like to be sure that my position is clear. Gender issues in translation are relevant to men as well as to women. Men can adopt the precepts of feminist translation theory; women can successfully translate texts by men. In this book I have covered only some of the issues which could be discussed under the rubric of gender in translation. I have chosen to focus on gender issues which have been activated by feminism, and which concern for the most part women translators. As cultural historian Bruce Russell has pointed out to me, another interesting area of investigation would be the way gender identities have been disguised through translation. He points to the masking of gender identities in the translation of homo-sexual Arabic poetry into English in the nineteenth century.

- 4 For numerous examples, see “The Metaphors of Translation” by Lori Chamberlain (1992).

2

CREATING NEW LINES OF TRANSMISSION

- 1 In *Les Traducteurs dans l'histoire*, the chapter on interpreters mentions an Indian woman called Lacohe who interpreted for the conquistador Tristan de Luna in 1559 and Sacajawea (c. 1790–c. 1812) who was interpreter to the Lewis and Clark expedition (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995: 257, 259, 272).
- 2 The Chicana writer Sandra Cisneros obviously has the story of la Malinche very much in mind in her story “Never Marry a Mexican” in *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991). The heroine, who “some-times works as a translator,” takes revenge against her betrayal by “Cortes” by betraying him in turn.
- 3 For instance, the *Feminist Companion to Literature in English* declares with extraordinary precision, in its entry for “Translation,” that “Ninetythree per cent of eighteenth-century female translators wrote in other genres as well” (Blain *et al.* 1990:1090). These women would presumably not have identified themselves as translators. Or, to take another example, Bible translators would identify themselves as theologians, rather than as translators.
- 4 Despite the enormous differences in the situation of women some five centuries later, this same question resurfaces with respect to the work of women translators in the nineteenth century (Stark 1993).
- 5 It is important to note that women on the Continent enjoyed more freedom than English women, and by 1500 European women had established a tradition of secular writing (Hannay 1985:5). Learned women like Clémence de Barking, a Benedictine nun of the twelfth century, Héloïse de Crenne who translated Virgil in 1541, and Madeleine des Roches who translated Pythagoras in 1584 contributed to the intellectual life of their times.
- 6 For instance Frances Brooke (1724–1789), popular author of the first Canadian novel, *The History of Emily Montague*, translated *Letters from Juliet, Lady Catesby, to her friend, Lady Henrietta Compley*, a popular novel of sensibility by Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni. Her own work shows the influence of Madame Riccoboni. She also translated Nicolas Framéry’s sentimental and melodramatic novel, *Mémoires de M. le Marquis de S. Forlaix* (1770) and Abbé Millot’s *Elemens de l’histoire de l’Angleterre* (1771). Brooke’s own books were quickly translated into French and widely praised in French periodicals. Elizabeth Griffin (1727–1793),

- prolific playwright and author, published several translations from the French, including *The Princess of Cleves* and *Zayde, a Spanish History* and some additional volumes by Voltaire.
- 7 Edmond Cary devotes a chapter to Madame Dacier in his *Les Grands Traducteurs français* (1963). Cary tells the story of the polemic between Madame Dacier and the poet Houdar de la Motte. Both had produced translations of Homer, Madame Dacier's prose version appearing in 1699, la Motte's verse rendition, fifteen years later. In his *Discours sur Homère*, la Motte criticizes Madame Dacier's scholarly work for its bloodlessness and its "superstitious adoration" of the old Greek poet. La Motte wants to offer a living work of art, a poem vital to its time. The point of Cary's narrative, however, is that the two translations are far more similar than their two authors had suspected. He shows that, despite opposing professions of faith, both works doctor the text, particularly in regard to unseemly language. They share the sensibility of their age.
 - 8 Behn's translations have recently been made available as volumes of *The Works of Aphra Behn*. They are accompanied by a precise and useful commentary by Janet Todd. It is clear that Behn takes her task as a translator very seriously, in many cases staying very close to the original, and yet producing remarkable fluent English prose.
 - 9 Hansen explains, however, that it was precisely the tension between the more outspoken proponents of women's rights and the relatively conservative wing of the women's abolitionist movement which led to the break-up of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society at the end of the decade.
 - 10 But Doris Kadish underlines the numerous contradictions that inform the anti-slavery writing of both Olympe de Gouges and de Staël. De Staël was actually given a slave, and she defended her lover Narbonne who lived off his wife's sugar interests in the West Indies, etc. Neither woman was a radical abolitionist but they argued rather for the improvement of the lot of slaves (for Gouges, within the monarchist system). See Kadish and Massardier-Kenney (1994).

11

Je dirais plus: lors même qu'on entendrait bien les langues étrangères, on pourrait goûter encore, par une traduction bien faite dans sa propre langue, un plaisir plus familier et plus intime. Ces beautés naturalisées donnent au style national des tournures nouvelles et des expressions plus originales. Les traductions des poètes étrangers peuvent, plus efficacement que tout autre moyen, préserver la littérature d'un pays de ces tournures banales qui sont les signes les plus certains de sa décadence.

(Oeuvres complètes de Madame la Baronne de Staël-Holstein, Paris, 1861: II, 294)

- 12 A relationship to German culture was also essential to the intellectual and imaginative universe of George Eliot (1819–1880). The extent of Eliot’s immersion in German philosophical culture is not always fully appreciated. Her translations of D.F. Strauss (*Das Leben Jesu, The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*) and of Feuerbach (*Das Wesen des Christentums, The Essence of Christianity* in 1854) were part of her immense investment in the German religious and philosophical tradition. She used the familiarity with Judaism, acquired in translating Strauss, in particular her knowledge of Hebraic words and concepts, in writing *Daniel Deronda* (Baker 1975:21). Her translation of Strauss was tremendously influential at the time for its introduction of “High Criticism” to the study of the Bible. It placed the life of Jesus within its historical context (*ibid.*: 57). Her translation of Feuerbach is the only book to which Eliot signed her real name, Marian Evans. This work was extremely important to Eliot, and her translation is still considered definitive.

Among Eliot’s essays is one entitled “Translations and Translators,” first published in 1855. As well as demonstrating her critical appreciation of successful translation (in this case her admiration for a new translation of Kant), she insists that “The power required in the translation varies with the power exhibited in the original work” (*ibid.*: 339), and also “Though a good translator is infinitely below the man who produces *good* original works, he is infinitely above the man who produces *feeble* original works” (*ibid.*: 342). As Margaret Homans (1986) has shown, Eliot was a writer who understood the responsibilities of “bearing the word.” Her women characters are often charged with the task of transmission, as amanuensis or messenger. Homans argues that Eliot, among other nineteenth-and twentieth-century writers, establishes a special connection between woman and the word, a connection which valorizes literalism, the body of language.

- 13 A similarly remarkable relationship can be found, perhaps, in John Felstiner’s translations of Paul Celan. See Felstiner (1995).
- 14 There is far more criticism of Lowe-Porter’s work today.
- 15 This work of cultural mediation includes the translation of scholarly books. The remarkable work of George Eliot is a case in point. The social thinker Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) translated Auguste Comte so successfully into English that this work was “translated back into French” so that it could be more readily accessible (Stark 1993: 39). The translating career of Sarah Austin (1793–1867) was note-worthy. Austin translated major works of German culture and history, and wrote prefaces to these works which engage with the theories of Dryden and Goethe. She favored an estranging manner of translation, even going so far as to state “that she would like to reform the English language by introducing Germanisms into it” (quoted in Stark 1993:42).

3

MISSED CONNECTIONS

- 1 See Elizabeth Grosz (1989) for a strong argument defining Julia Kristeva as a non-feminist.
- 2 It is nonetheless surprising to see just how little of French feminism had appeared in translation before the publication of this anthology. The paucity in 1980 of existing translations is noted: Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 875–893; Hélène Cixous interviewed by Christiane Makward, *Sub-Stance*, no. 13 (1976): 19–37; Hélène Cixous, "La Jeune Née: An Excerpt," trans. Meg Bortin, *Diacritics*, (Summer 1977), 64–69; Marguerite Duras, "An Interview with Marguerite Duras," by Susan Husserl-Kapit, *Signs*, 1 no. 2 (Winter 1975): 423–434; Julia Kristeva, "On the Women of China," trans. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, *Signs*, 1, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 57–81; Julia Kristeva interviewed by Josette Féral, trans. Jane Kritzman, *Sub-Stance*, no. 13 (1976): 9–18. Only two translated books are noted in the list: Monique Wittig, *Les Guerillères*, trans. David LeVay, London: Owen, 1973; Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows, London: Marion Boyars, 1977.
- 3 I rely extensively in what follows on Rebecca Comay's remarkable survey of Derrideanism in translation, "Geopolitics of Translation: Deconstruction in America" (Comay 1991).
- 4 Translations into German, Spanish and Italian have often followed somewhat different calendars. Translations of Cixous' work are numerous in German; Irigaray's work is massively translated into Italian.
- 5 See Burke *et al.* (1994) for a complete bibliography of the works of Irigaray in English translation.

4

CORRECTIVE MEASURES

- 1 A recent indication of renewed feminist interest in the Bible is the volume, Christina Buchmann and Celina Spiegel (eds) *Out of the Garden: Women Writers on the Bible*, New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994. Women writers from Louise Erdrich, Marina Warner and Ursula Le Guin to Cynthia Ozick and Faye Weldon use memory and fantasy to engage with biblical figures. Although for some, the Bible remains irrevocably wrapped in the mists of childhood, others use the Bible to engage with pressing ethical issues.
- 2 See in particular the series entitled "The Feminist Companion to the Bible" edited by Athalya Brenner, and published by the Sheffield Academic Press. Volumes devoted to Genesis, The Song of Songs, and

- Ruth have so far been published, each volume assembling the substantial results of scholarly feminist re-readings of these texts.
- 3 Nineteenth-century German biblical scholars identified four principal strata in the Pentateuch: the Yahwistic Document (J), presumably the earliest source, dating back to the tenth century BCE; the Elohist Document (E), from approximately the ninth century BCE; the Deuteronomistic Document (D), which might date back to the seventh century BCE; and the Priestly Document (P), the latest source, considered to be representative of priestly traditions from the sixth and fifth centuries BCE (Pardes 1992:3). Ilana Pardes uses the two voices in the Creation story against one another, considering the priestly story as a reinterpretation of the Yahwistic one (*ibid.*: 4).
 - 4 There are exceptions to this, however, as in her exploration of the meaning of *betulah*, generally translated “virgin,” or *pilegesh* as “concubine.” Bal introduces the idea that words in the Bible can be like “wandering rocks,” “fragments of discourse that...resemble those glacial tilts that travelled with the ice and landed in an alien place where they were put to a use foreign to their origin.” In this way “words circulated within the [biblical] culture,” carrying their ancient and alien meaning with them. This would be the case for *betulah* which here, in the Book of Judges, comes to express a “life-phase of ripeness” (Bal 1990:22–27).
 - 5 Paul Ellingworth gives statistics showing that there has been a gradual diminution of masculinist phrasings in the Bible. Where the Authorized Version of 1611 translated 63 percent of occurrences of *anthropos* as “man” (rather than human, people, etc.), the Good News Bible of 1984 used this formulation only in 24 percent of occurrences (Ellingworth 1987:50). Ellingworth points therefore to a gradual sensitization to unnecessary references to the masculine (*ibid.*: 52).
 - 6 Oxford University Press has recently published *The New Testament and Psalms: A New Inclusive Translation* (1995). According to newspaper accounts of this translation (the book was not available in Canada at time of writing), “God the Father-Mother” replaces “God the Father.” “The Son of Man” has become “The Human One.” While wives are traditionally enjoined to “be subject to your husbands” in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, they are now asked to be “committed to their husbands” (Abley 1995).

5

CONCLUSION

- 1 In her essay on Irigary, Spivak investigates the meaning of the contrast between the ethical and the erotic: “An ethical position must entail universalization of the singular. One can wish not to be excluded from the universal. But if there is one universal, it cannot be inclusive of

difference....For Irigaray, sexual *difference* is the limit to ethics” (Spivak 1993:165).

- 2 Barbara Johnson also uses Heidegger’s image of the bridge to describe translation. Like Bhabha, she quotes Heidegger: “It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream.” Just as it is for Bhabha, this bridge is not a passive link coming “after” the banks of the river, but bringing them into existence. Johnson explains that

translation is a bridge that creates out of itself the two fields of battle it separates....The bridge of translation, which paradoxically releases within each text the subversive forces of its own foreignness, thus reinscribes those forces in the tensile strength of a new neighbourhood of otherness.

(Johnson 1985:148)

- 3 Christine Brooke-Rose was much influenced by the New Novel in France and by Robbe-Grillet in particular. She translated Robbe-Grillet’s *Le Labyrinthe* (1957) as *In the Labyrinth* (1968). It is interesting to note that her decision not to use the verb “to be”—the kind of constraint favored by the experimental Oulippo writers in France—*pre-dates* the famous novel by Georges Perec, *La Disparition* (in English *A Void*), which is written without the most frequently used letter in the French alphabet, “e.” Another novel which should be considered here is Brigid Brophy’s *In Transit* (London, 1969) which similarly invokes the in-between world of air travel, and a state of linguistic and sexual confusion.

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