

# Translating Women: From Recent Histories and Re-translations to «Queering» Translation, and Metramorphosis

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## Abstract

*Gender*, the term often used to discuss the effects of sexual differences in cultural, social and political configurations, has become increasingly conflicted. This article touches on this development, and then returns to *women* as the touchstone of sexual difference in translation studies, reviewing historic achievements of feminisms in translation and analyzing/proposing new scholarly directions.

**Keywords:** women and translation; feminisms; metramorphosis.

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## Resum

El terme *gènere*, sovint utilitzat per fer referència als efectes de les diferències sexuals en la configuració política, cultural i social, és cada cop més discutit. Aquest article tracta l'evolució dels estudis de *gènere* i proposa retornar al terme *dona* com a referent de la diferència sexual en els estudis sobre la traducció, alhora que revisa els assoliments històrics dels feminismes en traducció i analitza i proposa noves direccions en l'àmbit acadèmic.

**Paraules clau:** dona i traducció; feminismes; metramorfosi.

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## Summary

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The past forty years of the women's movement, feminist politics, and feminist scholarship have been strongly affected by *translation*: not only in English-speaking countries but all over the world. In what follows, I will briefly review the history of this development (in English), and elaborate on its effects in the re-translation of several so-called fundamental texts of these «feminist» times. Then I will engage with a development in Anglo-American gender studies that, for a time, has seriously hampered thinking about women as a group, especially in the humanities and the arts —so-called «gender trouble» that has caused me, for one, to abandon the term «gender» and re-value the term «women».<sup>1</sup> Finally, I will move to two examples of strong recent work that mark a resurgence of interest in *women* and translation, re-affirming the importance of women both as individuals and as a group, and demonstrating the need for and the possibility of ongoing solidarity, across all the intersections and differences.

### Reviewing Translation within the Women's Movement

Well before such ideas as «feminist translation» emerged in the 1990s, translation was an important motor for Anglo-American and various other feminisms:

- Translations of women authors allowed *massive cross-fertilization and exchange of ideas*: from the Anglo-American perspective, the work from France became very important (Cixous, Irigaray); in Canada, the French work by experimental feminist writers in Quebec became instrumental in theorizing feminist epistemologies and developing feminist approaches to translation.
- Re-readings, re-evaluations, and re-translations of existing «key» texts of Western, and feminist culture became important.
- The discovery of long lost, newly-unearthed women writers led to more translation: huge anthologies of women's writing were produced, publishing houses set up series of women's lists; women's work was *in* for a while.<sup>2</sup>
- Finally, all this activity led to an examination of translation itself —as the medium without which such exchanges and cross-fertilizations are impossible; a medium that has often been theorized as «feminine» and somehow decadent, untrustworthy, and hedged in by boundaries and limits. Much academic work ensued on the power of translation, on women translators and their influence on texts, and on theories of translation that develop a powerful view of the supposed feminine side of the phenomenon of translation.

1. *Translating Women*, ed. Luise von Flotow, University of Ottawa Press 2011.

2. Research done on the translation of Canadian writing into German has shown that in the 1980s publishers' and readers' interest in women writers brought on the success of writer Margaret Atwood and many other Canadian women, to the detriment of male authors: in that decade almost 80 books by women and fewer than 50 books by men were translated from Canada into German (*Translating Canada* 2007).

## Re-Translations (in Feminist Times)

Translation is deliberate. It is intentional, and usually done for a purpose. No translation is the production of only the translator. For one thing, the source text and author are involved: they become more or less meaningful or useful at different moments in a culture, more or less interesting for translation or re-translation; publishers and editors are involved; so are patrons willing to pay for the work, and finally, even book designers and typesetters who create the final product, and can change a text. Never is a translation the responsibility of only the translator; it is a collaboration. This has become evident in much of the work around translation within the women's movement, and since, and is exemplified in the examples of re-reading and re-translating below.

### Bible Re-translations

Re-translating such hefty works as the Bible requires massive collaborative efforts; in Anglo-America these emerged in the early 1980s, with the production and regular updating of a book entitled *The Inclusive Language Lectionary* (1983ff). This book is a compilation of excerpts from the Bible used in liturgy, in daily church services. Given the premise that the Bible is a «fundamental text» of Western culture—which Elizabeth Cady Stanton had already recognized and severely criticized in her *The Woman's Bible* (1895)—, the members of the editorial/translation committee of this *Inclusive Language Lectionary* set out to reword the English versions of these texts, re-reading the ancient sources and making the translations reflect new realities and understandings of women's position in society. Suddenly, it was possible to read the Hebrew Elohim as being both feminine and masculine, and translate it as «God the Mother and Father»; suddenly it was possible to see that it might be inappropriate to address members of the Church as «brethren» only—in line with the male-focus of all previous English Bibles—; suddenly, and even more drastically, it became evident that in the story of creation in Genesis II, «the adam», in most Bible translations the first human, is in fact not a human male called Adam, but simply a sexless creature made from «adamah», from the earth. The human female, Havva, is made from a piece of the earth taken from the side of this adam—and not from the rib of a man. She is the first human created in this version of the story, and the name given her—Havva—is as meaningful as the common noun «adam». It means 'life' in ancient Hebrew, with all that connotes of joys and sorrows, successes and failures.

Over the hundreds of centuries of adaptation and translation in aggressive patriarchal cultures, these details had disappeared, been hidden and lost, so that entire social and political systems could be founded on the «secondary» nature of women, coming second in Creation, derived from the body of Adam, the first human, and so on. This is something that Stanton already traced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; she saw this patriarchal religious discourse as the foundation of the political discourses that deprived women of the vote, and in Canada, of the status of «persons» until 1929.<sup>3</sup>

3. <http://www.canadaonline.about.com> (June 24, 2011).

Such deliberate twists and mistranslations of Biblical materials were confirmed in 1992, with the publication of Mary Phil Korsak's *At the Start*, a careful, detailed, and commented new translation of Genesis II, and have led to other re-translations, notably one into French of the entire Bible, entitled *La Bible 2001*. This *Bible 2001* was produced not only for feminist purposes, but more generally to take account of the changes in the French language and especially its literary language of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But in the process, many similar discoveries as in English were made. As Bible historians worked together with francophone writers, and editorial teams assessed the texts that were produced, it was another giant collaboration that found, for instance, that in the ancient Greek texts of the New Testament there is no mention of the term *virgin* for the mother of Jesus. Consequently, in the translation, she is referred to as «la jeune fille» or «la jeune femme» —a change that may be taken lightly today and shrugged off. For hundreds of years, however, this pseudo-condition of «virginity» existed and was constantly asserted to terrorize real women and demean and soil their human sexuality.<sup>4</sup>

### Simone de Beauvoir (in English)

Now a more mundane but also «fundamental» example of re-translation in feminist times: Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* (1949) published as *The Second Sex* by Knopf, New York in 1953. A bestseller at first and then continuing to sell well enough in that English version, it became the target of noisy feminist criticism in the 1980s and 1990s, with numerous academic and newspaper articles condemning this or that aspect of Beauvoir's work in English. This critical impetus was the result of an important change in the cultural climate: Beauvoir, seen as a second-wave feminist *avant la lettre*, a fundamental thinker, a fore-thinker, was being reclaimed by English feminists and philosophers. They expounded on various aspects of the 1953 translation they disagreed with, disapproved of, and in the end, condemned. The most important of these were unmarked cuts in the text that reduced Beauvoir's original work by about 15% and various mistranslations and misunderstandings of the French, especially in regard to philosophical concepts she used and developed. The barrage of criticism finally led to a re-translation (2009) that has earned the two translators a certain recognition, but also more controversy.<sup>5</sup>

Again, the «group» aspect of this translation, translation criticism and re-translation is noteworthy: in examining the first English translation, for example, Anna Bogic (2011) found that one particular constituent of the «group» involved in producing the English text, namely the publisher Knopf, had exerted enormous pressure on the English text. While the translator, Howard Parshley, has been

4. The Vatican responded to these radical translation projects in 2001, issuing a brief entitled *Liturgiam authenticam* which dictates rules for translation of Catholic texts. It can be found in the Vatican library on-line.

5. Toril Moi. *The London Review of Books*, February 2010.

maligned for years, the publisher was actually the one responsible for wanting to change Beauvoir's work from a pioneering philosophical feminist manifesto and history of women to what he wished to sell as an easy-reading, «dumbed-down» sex manual for mainstream American readers. The barrage of late 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist critics —literary scholars, philosophers, gender specialists— who took an interest in the English text once it had been identified as a «fundamental text» for the women's movement finally mobilized the re-translation. And even that has been a joint effort by two translators: Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevalier (2009).

### **Queer: where some people «are referred to as women»**

An important question, I think, is whether such massive translation and re-translation of «fundamental» and many other texts by women authors could have been done in a cultural/academic climate where «women» do not exist as a social category or group? And where they are just «people referred to as women»?<sup>6</sup> One can only speculate on these matters, but the fact is that since the advent of what have come to be called «queer theories», which generated this discursive solution to problems of essentialism and identity politics that plagued feminisms, there has been a notable decline in research relating to women and translation. While queer theory in the humanities derives from feminisms, as does the term «intersectionality» in the social sciences, these approaches have had the effect of softening, if not completely dispersing, the category of «women»:

- Intersectionality focuses on what has been called the «micro-cosmopolitan», a dimension that «situates diversity, difference, exchanges at the micro-levels of society» (CRONIN 2005). It describes a theoretical approach to the diverse and changeable aspects of the local, and in terms of feminisms, is deployed to describe, assess, and investigate the many different types of discriminations that a person can suffer, mitigating the effect of «gender» as a single important identity factor. Sociologists work on the intersections of gender, racial and ethnic difference, religion, class, age and sexual orientation —thus getting away from the binary bind of female and male, categories on which earlier power feminisms were based. Intersectionality focuses on and addresses the differences between women.
- Queer theories similarly avoid the old binaries; while they view gender as a construct, it is one that is performatively contingent —on individuals, situations, discourses, and other aspects of social interactions/interventions. Gender is theorized as mobile, dynamic, a condition that can be assumed or rejected, imposed or refused. Indeed, as one recent article in the area of translation studies states, «the very idea of “queer” is to avoid definitions and categorizations» (LEWIS 2010) which, as its author admits, causes a methodological problem. *What exactly do you study if you avoid definitions and categories? Can you do*

6. This is «anti-essentialist» terminology currently in use in certain gender studies programs.

research on more than one lone individual if you cannot categorize or group people? As another commentator pointed out early on in the development of queer, without fixed identity categories «which are both a basis of oppression and the basis for political power, there is neither a politics of identity nor a politics of transgression» (GAMSON 1995). This may be why «queer» has not (yet) been a particularly fruitful theory *in translation*, which always occurs in a social context, and is always affected by and responsive to socio-political «group» developments, or for *translation studies* which have provided much insight into power differentials and group dynamics as revealed and enacted through textual manipulations.

And yet, there could be a lot of room for «queerying» translation: concepts such as *contingency* and *performance* —even *the performative*— resonate with translation, which has often been viewed as a sort of contingent performance of a text, a momentary version. Further, queer theorists' Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work originates in motivations and purposes that were highly socio-critical, and oriented against oppression on the one hand and toward transgression on the other. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Butler, for example, explains that what originally motivated her to write *Gender Trouble* (1990), where she developed her theory of gender performativity, was her own personal experience, her own «trouble» with the apparently limited choice of gender options —either female or male, woman or man— at a time when she could neither subscribe nor correspond to either of the two limited and limiting «performances» that came with these options. She describes how this personal experience led to a broader socio-politically activist intention to

imagine a world in which those who live at «some distance» from gender norms, who live in the confusion of gender norms, might still understand themselves not only as living livable lives but as deserving a certain kind of recognition. I wanted something of gender trouble to be understood and *accorded dignity*, according to some humanist ideal... (207; my emphasis)

Butler's wish to revise the thinking and the socio-political systems and epistemologies that underlie this untenable situation locate her work in social activism.

However, this activism pales as Butler intimates that the social agent/human subject is in fact «the *object* [her emphasis] rather than the subject of constitutive acts» (BUTLER 1988: 519). She sees gender identity as produced through a «stylized repetition of acts», as a performance that «always and variously occur in a situation of duress». Not only is gender identity a stylized, inescapable, social fiction, but it is pre-determined by what Butler calls «the performative». Any gender performance, even if it is highly individual, is an «act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene» (1988: 526). Her analogy is theatrical —and reminiscent of some views of translation: Butler parallels the performance of gender identity with the performance, by different actors, of the same (predictable, conventional, prescribed, rarely radical) script.

Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick also draw on notions of performance in theorizing queer, casting it as a connection between saying and doing, or rather saying as doing. Their introduction to *Performativity and Performance* (1995) tends to stay on the «intentional», «active», side of the argument around discourse, examining how,

as a certain stress has been lifted momentarily from the issues that surround *being something*, an excitingly charged and spacious stage seems to open up for explorations of... how saying something can be doing something. (16; original emphasis)

Like Butler's, their writing also stems from personal concerns and is motivated by socio-political goals, all of which are related to freely living out homosexuality in the contemporary United States. Unlike Butler though, their position does not necessarily preclude the active subject, which in fact actively «does things with words». The words this subject deploys, and the way it deploys them, dramatically, and in performance, allows interventions «in interlocutory space» (13). By speaking out, even in fragmented almost incoherent form, a human subject asserts and performs their subjectivity. Parker/Kosofsky Sedgwick associate this «explicit performative» and its transformative effect on interlocutory space with political activism, and also link the theatrical performative and the politically activist.

Parker and Kosofsky Sedgwick's description of the performative aspects of gender identity is rather more optimistic than Butler's because they see the potential of being politically active. While not negating the power and the effects of discourse, they view performance as a creative activity.

The male/female binary (and its implied heteronormative stance) that had proven so productive for feminisms was effectively shaken up and displaced by these discourses of the early-mid 1990s, as was perhaps necessary at the time. But how useful can the «queer» approach be for translation and translation studies?

First, the socio-critical, activist foundations of the ideas around «the performative» are very pertinent: as much work on feminism and translation has shown, the translator (and the team made up of editor, copy editor, revisor, publisher) have considerable leeway in how they prepare and present a text for a new readership. Not only can the choice of text be made from a socio-critical standpoint, but the translation itself can reflect and draw attention to aspects of the source text that are new, or innovative, or deemed *useful* for the new readership. Social activism is never neutral, as is evident in the motivations driving performance theories and as has also been shown by feminist analyses of translations. It can work to both criticize and inform; it can reveal *abuses* but also draw exaggerated attention to *desirable* aspects of texts. It is part of an ongoing struggle about «doing things with words».

Second, Parker/Kosofsky Sedgwick's emphasis on the importance of «interlocutory space», even for the most fragmented discursive performances, seems most useful for the study and perhaps the vindication of translation: every translation claims interlocutory space, every translator seeks access to it. Some transla-

tors may overstep the usual bounds of this space, or they may struggle against the confinement this space imposes. Nonetheless, they take up and fill the space, however inadequately, fragmentedly or brilliantly, providing transformances of new texts, and with that, new possibilities of reading and understanding. Contrary to Butler's pessimistic assessments of discourse as a restricted performative cage, but *with* her socio-activist motivations in mind, translation studies scholars, who choose to view translation as a deliberate and intentional act carried out between discourses, may well find aspects of performance theory useful. Translations allow various performances of a text; they foment differences in these performances—from one language to many others but also from one language to many versions of another—; but most importantly, they take up «interlocutory space»—gaining more in this transformance than they «lose in translation», to counter that tedious old saying.

Finally, Butler's determinist stance that sees «the performative» as always discursively predating, predetermining and thus producing a certain performance of gender identities, in texts as well as «on the street», recalls, and to some extent parallels, the discussions around translation always being ethnocentric (BERMAN 1995) and always, somehow, reducing the foreign materials to the local, unable or unwilling to accommodate or perform difference. In this, her work is useful as a critical apparatus. However, such a blanket stance ignores the experimental work of several well-known feminist, gender-interested scholars and translators, Susan Knutson, Barbara Godard, Kathy Mezei and others (1989) in *Tessera*, who first presented translation as «transformance» (translation + performance), especially in the case where various translators work with, understand and perform the same text differently. They showed precisely how flexible and creative discourses, and translators, and translations can be, intimating that it may well be possible to «do [and rewrite] one's gender» in individual ways.

While there has not been a glut of research and publication in the area of queer or performance theory and translation, there are doubtless avenues open and theoretical tools in place; for the moment, the blurred boundaries or *unfixed* gender categories that Gamson evokes may, however, be hampering development.

### **To End on a Two Strong Notes. Women's health: an international feminist translation success**

A recent study of a famous alternative health manual for women, *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and its translations into almost 30 different languages tells a different *developmental* story—not only about the collaborative efforts invested in such translation and adaptation, but also of the «performative» aspects of seizing «interlocutory space» in very different societies for a text generally deemed subversive. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* is not a literary work. It started in 1971 as a self-help book on women's health, a manual meant to inform and provide knowledge with which women could bypass, or at least, confront the excesses of institutionalized medicine which have tended to pathologize women's bodies. *The Making*

of *Our Bodies Ourselves: How Feminism Travels Across Borders* (DAVIS 2007) sets out to understand how a book that was and is subversive, oppositional, and empowering for women in Anglo-America could become a highly effective instrument in the politics of knowledge for women internationally. Researcher Kathleen Davis examines how *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, potentially a very local, *micro-cosmopolitan*, white middle-class text, became a book that allowed people to imagine and implement feminist political alliances «across lines of considerable difference», internationally. She notes various strategies, used by translators, publishers and the source text authors, notably:

- Strong interventions in the early European versions in the 1980s, with the American team imposing its feminist aesthetics, and travelling to Italy, for instance, to remove the lurid covers of the book and replace them with covers with less racy images.
- Very strong adaptations of the texts into cultures beyond Europe (Egypt, China, India, Japan) with the editors of the source texts helping negotiate the cultural as well as the political limits, such as those imposed by state censors.
- A strong statement of women's health activism (in each version) and critical engagement with Anglo-American feminist *body theory*, which eliminates reference to actual bodies of actual women.
- A focus on women's experience as a form of sentient, situated knowledge and a resource for feminist critiques of science and medicine.

Consistently, throughout the forty year history of writing, re-writing, translating and adapting *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, Davis shows that the teams responsible have clearly been concerned first and foremost with women (not shying away from this categorization), but have also learnt to be fully cognizant of and responsive to their social and cultural contexts in the production as well as adaptation/translation processes. The purpose of cross-cultural communication of this women's health manual was strong enough to counter many *intersectional* issues of difference. For example, the source text itself was rocked by problems around *women of colour* that developed strongly in 1980s United States; and in translation, it underwent many changes: Davis notes that the text was made more *poetic* for South American Latina readers (and included much more material about the effects of Catholicism on women's health issues), while it was made more individualistic for post-1989 Bulgarian women, who were distrustful of ideas of sameness and pseudo-unity that had circulated under the communist system; however, it included especially written new sections on substance abuse and good nutrition in this post-1989 version. In fact, Davis found that «direct», verbatim translations were very rare; only produced in areas where there were not enough funds to do a full-fledged adaptation.

All in all, the story of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and its now almost 30 versions, validates local (micro-cosmopolitan) and international (macro-cosmopolitan) exchanges between women as not only possible but as highly fruitful. Through the work of production, translation, adaptation, and distribution the book created

contacts, discussions and alliances between women of all cultures, and showed how necessary ingenuity, flexibility and cultural sensitivity are to make such a publication useful and readable in very different places.

### **Finally, «the non-rejection of the unknown non-I(s)» —recent feminist psychoanalytic theory for translation**

Perhaps the most enticing way yet to look at and understand the collaborative and macro-cosmopolitan nature of translation and adaptation across/through borders of all kinds, and to exploit its historic (though usually denigrated) connection with women has been enunciated in the psychoanalytic theories of Bracha Ettinger. As Joan Wallach Scott (1999) reminds us in an essay on gender and politics, the most important 20<sup>th</sup> century theories in the realm of gender and human sexuality have been psychoanalytical, involving the examination of the human psyche and its production and perception of sexual difference. While Scott acknowledges that «specific readings of particular instances» (73) are important, such readings need to be informed by theory. Psychoanalytic theory posits sexuality and sexual difference as *central* to human pre-occupations and myth-making, primary among these being fantasies that «relate to the problems of origin, the origin of the individual, the origin of sexuality, the origin of the difference between the sexes» (75). The one primal human focus is sexual. Intersections are important, and interesting —but actually, they provide details that inform and embroider on the bigger picture.

An Israeli-French psychoanalyst and artist, Ettinger, uses a very specific time in human experience to theorize human pre-occupations, specifically, *the special relationship between mother and unborn child in late pregnancy*. This relationship is especially productive for the idea of *threshold*, rather than border, for collaborative interdependence, rather than individual glory. Ettinger refers to it as «the non-rejection of the unknown non-I(s)».

If we take a moment to imagine this time in late-pregnancy —which every human has experienced, consciously or not— we can see it is as particularly evocative of the encounter with difference: two or more separate entities (mother and child) are in close conjunction, in close communication, in constant interaction, living at closest quarters —one impinging on the other, yet tolerating each other— separate (and separable) beings but together in one. Ettinger's «non-rejection of the unknown non-I(s)» implies acceptance and tolerance of difference and otherness, exchange and communication across boundaries that are never completely hermetic, and interdependence. She counterposes it to the rule of separateness or uniqueness of the Phallus, a figment of male fantasies, the male imagination. In her work, separateness is tenuous, mitigated, and her focus is on thresholds through which movement and communication occur, rather than on defined borders or frontiers. She posits the relationship with the unknown, or the foreign as a matrixial relationship, a metramorphic<sup>7</sup> activity.

7. This neologism brings together and resonates with the terms «meta», «mater», and «Morpheus» —referring to processes that do not involve single unities acting through the replacement that is

In regard to translation, such a relationship moves beyond the idealist metaphoric approach to translation, where texts are viewed as separate entities and one version supposedly replaces the other. It also moves beyond the more realist metonymic view of translation, where a translation only ever presents a part of the original that then stands for the whole. Ettinger's metramorphosis applied to translation brings in the female/maternal element that has been excised from conventional psychoanalytic thought. It brings in the «mater», the «matrice» [womb], the «matrix» (conglomerated in the prefix «metra») and adds this to the notion of «morpheus» which, in Greek, refers to form, and changing forms. Ettinger writes:

We are caught in an axiom of equivalence. The Phallus is the value inherited from one signifier to another, each, on top of that, anaphorical to the signifier of a lost unity. So the magic circle is complete. So the Phallus appropriates all.

But the Symbolic is larger than the Phallus!

— Add metramorphoses to metaphors and metonymies.

— Open up a space between Symbol and Phallus (in a psychoanalytic sense).

Matrix is in this space: Symbol minus (-) Phallus. (ETTINGER 1993: 50-51)

Thinking beyond the domineering Phallus and incorporating the feminine matrix, Ettinger writes about the space of the late pre-natal matrixial relations between mother and child/children where *dependency* is not only an ethical value but a given, which is, in turn, useful for theorizing translation. It says much about our multiple dependencies and the connectedness underlying the fictions of absolute autonomy. Theorizing and deploying the matrixial and metramorphic paradigm evokes a feminine Symbolic that welcomes and accepts difference rather than replacing it. Ettinger insists:

Matrix gives meaning to the real which is otherwise unthinkable. [...]

Matrix. The non-rejection of unknown and unassimilated non-I(s) is an unconscious side of the feminine *ab-ovo*.

Matrix: dynamic and temporary assemblage created by non-rejection, without absorption, repeal or fusion. (ETTINGER 1993: 45-46)

Critic Rosi Huhn summarizes:

In contrast to metamorphosis, [...] the new forms and shapes of the metramorphosis do not send [...] each of the preceding ones into oblivion or eliminate it, but lets it [*sic*] shine through the transparency, disarranges and leads to an existence of multitude rather than unity. (HUHN 1993, cited in SHREAD 2005: 224)

Here, Ettinger's emphasis on «non-rejection of unknown non-I(s)» and assemblages created «*without* absorption, repeal or fusion», along with Huhn's comments on preceding forms «shining through» the new forms in which they

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metaphor, or the displacement of metonymy— but instead provoking changes that mutually alter the meaning they create without supplanting or deferring the signifier. (SHREAD 2005)

are presented resonate with recent concerns of translation and translation studies: the problem of recognizing difference, of validating and somehow incorporating and reflecting otherness in the translated text all the while not eliminating or «appropriating» it, and of translation as an activity that is always interdependent.

Figured as a metamorphic activity, translation enables signification within a relationship that transgresses the usual constructions of tight subject boundaries. *Several* comes before the one, as in the late pre-natal relationship, where «a structure of severality precedes individual consciousness» (SHREAD 2008: 221), and the term matrix shifts the associations of «the womb as a passive receptacle to that of an active border space, transformed by a co-emerging I and an unknown non-I» (SHREAD 2008: 221).

The applications to translation and translation studies are manifold; first and foremost, the translational relation is seen as one of encounter, exchange, and mutual transformation rather than assimilation, displacement, or rejection. Then, the more nuanced approach to the Other, to the unknown, and to difference offers a theoretical view of the matrix as a place where meaning is generated rather than foreclosed, transferred rather than buried. This promotes a view of translation as generative, as a labour that, like all such work and contrary to any notions of solitary grandeur, is dependent upon and in conversation with its environment, all the while exerting an influence on it as well. It is not a labour that must end in the deterioration, dereliction, or final replacement of the original. Instead, it evokes a very broad view of a generative, *female* component in human enterprise and activity, long decried as «merely reproductive», yet theorized today as creative, productive, generative and based on interdependence, tolerance of difference, and communication. In other words, what counts are not borders, but interaction and interdependence.

Ettinger's *re-uniting* of women in terms of a Symbolic that figures thresholds, communication, and collaboration rather than hermetic boundaries may be a good note to end on.

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