

# Translation and Gender

*Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'*

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### **3. Revising Theories and Myths**

Feminist influence on translation and translation studies is most readily visible in the metatexts – the statements, theoretical writings, prefaces and footnotes that have been added to work published since the late 1970s. In these texts a noticeable trend is the developing sense of self exhibited by translators, increasingly aware that their identities as gendered rewriters enter into their work. Translators are introducing and commenting on their work, and offering explanations for it. They are exerting further influence by writing scholarly essays and ‘workshop reports’ that draw attention to the work of translators and the historical, literary and biographical research that often accompanies a translated text. Other theoretical work is visible in criticisms of the conventional rhetoric of translation and the myths surrounding it. This is all part of a concerted move away from the classical ‘invisible’ translator, the idea of the translator as some kind of transparent channel whose involvement does not affect the source or the translated texts. With gender viewed as an integral factor in textual production, attention has increasingly focused on politically aware and sometimes politically engaged translators, who are conscious of their influence on the text and may seek to impose it overtly. However, it is often considerably easier for a translator to proclaim political action in prefaces and other materials than to actually take action in the translation; this may explain the manifesto-like quality of the more combative statements, a quality that is not always reflected in the translated work. This chapter will discuss the more theoretical developments that result from the intersection of gender and translation, noting the tentative and ethically difficult processes by which women translators have extricated themselves from the classical notion of submission to the original.

#### **Proliferating Prefaces: The Translator’s Sense of Self**

Translations published in a cultural context affected by feminism are remarkable for the metatexts that draw attention to the ‘translator-effect’, the mark each translator, as a gendered individual, leaves on the work. In the case of translators who identify themselves as feminists, these texts display a powerful sense of the translator’s identity. As Jean Delisle has shown in his discussion of the astonishing similarities between medieval translators and feminist translators, the feminist translating subject “is explicitly present, affirming feminine and feminist values”

(1993:209; my translation). In Canada, the feminist translator's sense of self is reinforced by other paratextual items such as translator/author photographs and translator/author bio-bibliographies, which in no way make a difference between the importance of the author's and translator's respective contributions or positions.

The Canadian scenario may be something of an anomaly, specific to a situation where related feminist interests have come together at the same time in a fortuitous mix. Delisle's assertion that the translator sees herself as co-author of the new (translated) work (1993:223) may not apply in all cases. The more conventional view that still pertains in many cultures has recently been described by German translator Beate Thill (1995). In a study of the prize acceptance speeches made by women translators and published in *Der Übersetzer*, the German translators' journal, Thill found that these women translators described their work in the most humble terms: they are the 'sherpa' silently bearing the burden and following in the footsteps of the master; they are 'ferryman' (sic), transporting materials and running errands between cultures; their work is one of transition, and thus transitory. In Thill's assessment, this modesty, maintained despite impressive achievements and public recognition, is linked to problems of identity. Translators live between two cultures, and women translators live between at least three, patriarchy (public life) being the omnipresent third. Women's socialization into the private sphere, where empathy, submissiveness and industry are valued, and the double orientation they must undertake when they participate in professional life may render them uncertain, oscillating, continually having to cope with an 'ambivalence of identity'. This partially underlies their self-evaluations as 'sherpas' or 'coolies of the literary market'. Such rhetoric is what contemporary English-language approaches to translation seek to overcome, as they incorporate the subjective and gendered aspects of the 'translator-effect'.

### *Asserting the Translator's Identity*

Suzanne Jill Levine goes to some lengths to explain the attraction the Cuban writers had for her despite their misogynist thrust; and her explanations clearly involve her personal identity and interests: she responds to the punning, streetwise language of Cabrera Infante because of her own New York Jewish sense of humour. She assumes the licence to 'subvert' aspects of Cabrera's and other Latin American writers' work, because she has discovered the grounds for such 'subversion' in their work. The author's own view that translation is "a more advanced stage

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of writing” (1983/1992:79) makes it easier for her to impose or extend wordgames or alliterations in English, since she is thereby ‘advancing’ their writing. The authors’ literary styles favour ‘subversive’ multiplicity and openness leading her to draw parallels to feminist views of women as a ‘subversive’ element. In other words, her subjective readings of these works are the basis for her equally subjective translations. Levine explicitly includes personal, biographical information in this ‘translator-effect’ and draws on contemporary authoritative feminist theorists such as Domna Stanton, Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous who legitimate such women’s work, and whose approval she considers important. These references to ‘authorities’ may be due to the fact that hers is an early contribution to feminist reflection on translation. But it is also because, ‘in an era of feminism’, she needs to justify translating (co-authoring) material that is not necessarily supportive of or supported by feminist thought.

Carol Maier’s thoughts on translating Octavio Armand stem from a similar disjunction: her American feminist background conflicts with a Cuban source text that obscures or mocks women (Maier 1985). Her accompanying essay, written in the first person singular, traces her personal responses to Armand’s *machismo* and tries to reconcile her feminist ethics with her role as a mediating voice of clearly patriarchal material. As in the case of Levine, the translator’s own voice and feminist conscience clearly make themselves heard.

There are fewer ethical problems for translators who work on women writers and make ‘lost’ or new material available. They are writing within the feminist project. An interview with Sharon Bell (one of the translators of the *Translating Slavery* anthology) shows, however, that this feminist project is not always easy either. As an African-American, her sensitivity to condescending and clichéd representations of blacks in texts by Germaine de Staël was much sharper than that of a European translator; Bell says, “I read [the text] according to my own suppositions, shaped in part by the racial discourse of America, and by the fact that I’ve personally been a victim of that discourse” (in Kadish & Massardier-Kenney 1994:175). Thus, while the other Americans and Europeans involved in the project focused on reconstituting the “tradition of women writing about race, a tradition which is a generous tradition that is not part of the racist discourse” (ibid), Bell was offended by certain text passages that repeated the type of racist discourse she had grown up with in the United States. In one instance, for example, she had to change a reference to blacks as “savages”, because “[it] offended me so much I could not put down what the sentence actually said” (ibid).

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This type of personal difficulty in translation has not often been the subject of scholarly discussions; in contemporary work by women translators, however, it is not unusual to find references to the translator's persona. Diane Rayor's scholarly introduction to her translations of archaic Greek women poets, *Sappho's Lyre*, clearly states

... the translations here reflect my individual response to the ancient poetry. My response is informed by my knowledge of Greek and of the historical context of the poetry. My gender, my background in contemporary American culture, and my personal enjoyment of contemporary American poetry also influence that response. (1991:18)

To what extent her translations reflect these personal factors is not the issue here. What is important is the woman translator's repeated reference to herself, her gender and her cultural context as influences on her work. This stands in direct contrast to the traditional view expressed in the 'sherpa' and 'coolie' metaphors and recently reiterated by Canada's most prolific woman translator, Sheila Fischman. Replying to a question about reviewers' responses to her work, she says,

even if a reviewer says something as simple as "it reads well" [...], I'm pleased enough, because at least they are acknowledging the fact that it *is* the translator who has produced the English text. We don't ask for much more than that! (in Simon 1995:193)

Fischman doubtless belongs to an older school of translators who expect to have their work viewed as largely invisible. Feminist translators, and women working in the wake of feminist activism, reject this stand. They want recognition of the work and recognition of the translator's individuality, and are willing to move their work into the "light of accountability and responsibility" (Kolias 1990:217). Hence the proliferating prefaces, introductions and commentaries that 'flaunt' the translators' signatures (Godard 1986:7), citing biographies, political affiliations, sexual orientations and ethnic backgrounds as aspects of the 'translation-effect'. Recently Alice Parker (1993) has linked sexual practices with the attempt to develop 'multi-gendered' or 'polysexual' translation theories; De Lotbinière-Harwood (1995) has shown how personal development is intimately connected to her development as a translator; Marlatt (1989) has made her political affiliations with 'radical lesbian' thought the basis of her translational cooperation with Brossard;

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Flotow (1995) has discussed the role that a translator's personal biography plays in the selection and translation of texts. As ongoing discussions in North American academic journals such as the *Publications of the Modern Language Association* (October 1996) confirm, personal aspects always affect the production of texts, translations and scholarly work. Currently, they are also the stuff of scholarly reflection. When these aspects are made apparent in translation, they undermine claims for 'invisible' aspects of translation or 'objective' readings and rewritings of any text.

### *Claiming Responsibility for 'Meaning'*

Not only have women translators brought their personal histories and political positions to bear on translation, foregrounding the translator's subjective input into work, they have also consciously filled the roles of scholar and teacher. This role is most evident in the essays and commentaries produced to accompany translations of works long out of print, 'forgotten' or dispersed in anthologies. It is also evident in the interpretations and explanations of the sometimes highly experimental feminist material. The translators take on the role of interpreter, educator and specialist in such literary experiments.

A good example of this approach is the work of Barbara Godard on Quebec feminist writers Nicole Brossard and France Théoret. Her translation of Brossard's *L'Amèr* (Brossard 1977/Godard 1983) is prefaced by a translator's commentary in which the interpretive thrust is already apparent. She explains certain key wordgames that could not be translated, such as the play with the silent *e* in French. She goes on to interpret the intention of these features: the *e*, she says, is dropped by the author in words like 'laboratoire' to mark the absence of the feminine in the activities carried out there. It is removed from the title *L'Amèr*, she continues, to "underline the process of articulating women's silence and moving toward a neutral grammar" (Godard 1983:7). She then indicates the methods she used to supplement her English version: graphic modes and wordplay such as that on *hisstory* and *herstory*, which are more familiar to anglophone feminists. In a clearly educational move, she ends by drawing attention to other aspects of the text that secular, i.e. non-academic English readers might miss, noting references to contemporary French theorists Derrida and Deleuze. All this on one page. In subsequent translations – *Lovhers* (1986), *Picture theory* (1991a) and *The Tangible Word* (1991b) – the scholarly prefaces swell in size.

In *Lovhers* Godard begins with a reference to the translator's preface

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as a place for the translator to “immodestly flaunt her signature” (1986:7) thereby destroying the illusion of transparency, underlining the differences between two cultures and their linguistic systems, and insisting on translation as an act of reading and writing by a specific historical subject. She goes on to present *Lovhers* as the third book in a lesbian triptych in which Brossard sets up a

sapphic semantic chain, constituting a differential analysis of what it means to write as a woman from a position of deferred meaning outside the patriarchal symbolic order ... (1986:8)

Continuing in this vein, Godard operates as literary critic, describing what to her are important aspects of the two preceding books, notably the idea that story-telling and representational detail are no longer possible, and that Brossard is in search of “a locus for the lesbian text” (ibid:9). She ends with a history of the translation of *Lovhers*, mentioning the ‘ventriloquist translation’ she produced when parts of it were read in public, as well as her labour over the wordplay and connotative wealth of Brossard’s work. Her introductions to *Picture theory* by Brossard and *The Tangible Word* by Théoret are similar, phrased in language that curiously resembles that of her authors. Théoret, she says, is concerned with the “exploration of the construction of femininity and subjectivity, the ways in which doxa and codes inflect language, representations and bodies” (Godard 1991b:7) and Brossard transforms “holography, or writing [...] in the whiteout of the scene of production/seduction where desire, time, memory, ‘flow as information in optical fibres’ [...]” (1991a:7). The fact that the translator’s discourse mimics certain qualities of the authors’ styles serves to emphasize the cooperation and co-authorship that Delisle (1993) has pointed out in Canadian feminist practice. It also indicates how the immediate literary interpretation of this experimental work has been frustrated by a lack of interpretive language to comment on it. The discourse is consistently interpreted in its own formulations. There is little other language for it.

While Godard’s scholarly metatexts, which also include essays, book reviews and conference texts, clearly have an educational intention, brief translator’s footnotes can fulfil a similar function, though not as flamboyantly. Footnoting is used extensively in the German translation of Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology*, where the translator explains countless references to American culture and the intricacies of the English wordplay for her German readership. Yet the translator takes the process a step further by also punctuating the body of the text with translator’s notes.

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For example, she is conscious of the progress anglophone feminist scholarship has made in analyzing patriarchal aspects of language, and she consistently tries to make the connection to German. When Daly analyzes the pronoun system which focuses on and reproduces the male generic, Wisselinck adds “und auch im deutschen [System]” (in the German system too; Daly 1978/1980:39) in the middle of the text. She intervenes in other places as well, providing clarification of a pronoun, presumably because Daly’s text appears too vague (ibid:40), and supplying additional meanings for certain semantic items (ibid:48) by commenting on them directly in the text. Wisselinck visibly functions as an educator, assuming that her readers are not quite ready for Daly’s text and need guidance.

However, this didactic approach in explaining linguistic and cultural issues in wordplay also raises problems since the translators cannot help but ‘explain’ via their own set of cultural values and assumptions. This can lead to curious forms of misinterpretation, with emphasis placed on semantic or cultural items the source text does not stress at all. In the case of *The Aerial Letter*, for example, the translation of Brossard’s *La lettre aérienne* (1985; tr. 1988), unmarked literary resonances in the source text are identified by the translator, and the source – including title, date of publication and page number – is given in a footnote. Thus an unidentified line from Mallarmé or a borrowing from Roland Barthes in the French text is concretized into bibliographical order in the translation. The translator imposes her assessment of the value of French cultural references.

Thus, while the confrontational situations of Levine and Maier may involve a certain amount of justification in an ‘era of feminism’, the explanatory function assumed by some translators can reveal the limits of cultural transfer. Some material cannot be transferred; and explanations may say as much about the translators as about the text in question.

### Revising the Rhetoric of Translation

Feminist theories have also led to a revision of the terms in which translation is discussed. This revision clearly challenges clichés such as the one promulgated by the adage *les belles infidèles*, a tag used to describe translation in 18th century France and often referred to today. It implied that if translations (and women) were faithful, they were probably ugly, and if they were beautiful, they were likely to be unfaithful. The feminist translators’ sense of self and their objections to such comparisons have led to revisions of the tropes of translation.

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### *Tropes*

In a survey of the metaphors used to describe translation over the past centuries, Lori Chamberlain (1988/1992) explains how translational relations have regularly been expressed in terms of gender stereotypes and the power relations between the sexes. Her analysis focuses on the close link between women's oppression in language and culture and the devaluation of translation. According to Chamberlain, terms such as *les belles infidèles* express the traditional disparagement of both women and translation. Twentieth-century accounts of translators having to 'rape the text' in order to gain control of it confirm such attitudes. Chamberlain advocates a rhetoric of translation that deconstructs the power play between the sexes and between hierarchies of texts. This would ideally be a way to free our thinking from more traditional negative approaches to understanding and doing translation.

Chamberlain's argument is based on three factors. First, she demonstrates how metaphors of translation have historically been couched in terms of power relations within the family, focusing on the control of female sexuality by male authorities or male family members. Thus male translators cast themselves as 'guardians' of the purity of the text, lest it be besmirched or deflowered. They couch this guardianship in language that refers to the text as a young virgin who requires protection and moral education. The implication is that a text (and a woman) must be kept in check in order for the man/husband to be sure that the offspring – the translation or the children – are legitimately his. Second, Chamberlain shows how traditional metaphors of translation accept and promulgate violence against women; for example, when used to describe translation, the Biblical reference about the need to shave the heads and pare the nails of enslaved women before forcing them into marriage connotes an offensive abuse of power that cannot be tolerated by feminist thought. And third, Chamberlain shows how twentieth-century theorists such as George Steiner and Serge Gavronsky have exploited the language and mythology of male sexuality to describe translation in terms of ejaculation and the Oedipus complex, again both ignoring women's participation and contribution, and perpetuating a discourse of disdain or violence against them.

Chamberlain's listing and analysis of these metaphors has been highly influential for feminist approaches to translation theory; her concluding remarks, however, remain tentative. She limits herself to citing the potential usefulness of post-structuralist theories that blur the boundaries between original texts and translations, theories that look for ways

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to get beyond confrontational positions taken by binary patriarchal male vs feminist female viewpoints.

### *Achieving Political Visibility*

In Canada, more aggressive action-oriented theories have been elaborated as a result of the feminist impact on translation. Godard, for instance, sees women translators usurping the source text, as well as their traditionally subservient roles in reproductive work. They ‘woman-handle’ the text, deriving the right to do so from the feminist source text, which sets an example of how to go about it. They display their creative role in translation in various ways, precisely in order to draw attention to the force of women’s traditionally invisible work.

Godard’s work has a further dimension. She attacks the more conventional, mainstream translations of important women’s texts, focusing her critique on American-English versions of work by French theorists Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous (Godard 1991c:112 ff). The translation of Irigaray’s *Speculum de l’autre femme* (tr. Gillian Gill 1985) was published by an American university press. For Godard, the translation “use[s] the behaviour patterns and models prominent in the canonized system of the target language with the effect of turning the different into the same” (1991c:113). In other words, the translation incorporates Irigaray’s source text into the dominant ‘canonized’ ideology which assigns meaning without taking into account the multiple layers of feminist meaning in Irigaray’s work. This produces a monosemic text – a text that strives for a single message/meaning – which may be easy to read, but, in effect, runs counter to Irigaray’s intention. The translation of Cixous’ work, on the other hand, produced and published in France in cooperation with Cixous, fosters and performs the feminist production of meaning by transferring the polysemic aspects of the text into an English form that is as strange as the French source text.

In this criticism of translation strategies, Godard’s feminist revision of translation theories makes two major points. First, feminist post-structuralist textual theory and writing is seen to have provided women translators with the assurance that no text is neutral or universally meaningful, nor ‘original’, for that matter. Any text carries the mark of its producer, which is also the mark of the ideological and cultural context in which it is produced. Moreover, every reader adds their own individual meaning to the text. Feminist translators (as feminist readers and rewriters) working in a context and culture conducive to feminist writing are thus likely to produce work that is politically congruent with their

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time. Godard formulates this idea as follows: “Translation, in this theory of feminist discourse, is production, not reproduction” (1990:91). Elsewhere, she describes feminist translation as a ‘transformance’, a term she coins to

emphasize the work of translation, the focus on the process of constructing meaning in the activity of transformation, a mode of performance ... (1990:90)

Godard thus sees translators who work in an era of feminism making their translations *perform* what the source text does in the source culture. Such theory moves the text into a third dimension, the dimension of performance. It conceptualizes translation as a three-dimensional activity that not only operates between two languages, but performs the first language *in* the second language, here bringing it to feminist life.

The interest in constructing meaning through translation confronts theories that repose on notions of equivalence. This is the second major aspect of Godard’s approach. To produce ‘equivalent’ texts is to reduce both the source and the target texts to some acceptable, mainstream level, thus producing ‘in-different’ texts. Feminist work wants to disrupt acceptable, mainstream reading and writing and understanding; it wants difference. Further, it wants to draw attention to women translators’ work – to the translator-effect. It is logical then for feminist translation to stress difference, deterritorialization (the fact that the text has been taken out of its territory), displacement (the exile of the text into another culture) and contamination (the confluence of source and translating languages), rather than fidelity or equivalence. Godard demonstrates this with contrastive analyses of wordplay translation; because the American translation of Irigaray avoids wordplay, it reduces Irigaray’s text to one way of meaning. In contrast, the Cixous translation extends the wordplay into English, maintaining elements of the French and Portuguese of the source text. It thus responds to the multiplicity of meaning in the source text

with a movement into the other that results in a (con)founding of languages, voices, texts. *A theory of translation as combination* is elaborated in this text in the contamination of French, Portuguese and English ... (1991c:116; my emphasis)

In this case the translation combines various languages by creating neologisms out of Portuguese, French and English, or by recognizing the

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various elements that make up a term and translating it in several different ways, thus stressing its foreignness. Godard here comes out in favour of “translation attentive to the letter” (1991c:118) since this opens up established, conventional meaning, and through contamination forges connections across languages and texts, as well as between women. Contamination and combination in a translated feminist text stand for women’s understanding across barriers of language and culture. Further, these factors demonstrate feminists’ refusal to opt for one sole meaning, and therefore emphasize multiplicity and the fact that it is sometimes impossible, even destructive, to decide one way or the other.

A strategy for translating politically ‘offensive’ texts has not yet been theorized. Bassnett (1992:72) writes of the impossibility of any union between a translator and an author with diametrically opposed views, while Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz (1985:19) points to the cultural differences separating women that can foreclose on any hope of mutual textual expression; the issue in this case is the problem of translating Adrienne Rich’s lesbian poetry into Spanish. For the moment, such translators largely insist on their new-found right as producers of meaning to struggle with the source text, and if necessary, translate against it.

### Revising A Fundamental Myth

#### *Pandora’s Cornucopia*

Most recently, revisions of fundamental myths of translation are beginning to emerge as gender is applied to the philosophical and mythological underpinnings of translation theory. One of these revisions criticizes theoretical preoccupations with the myth of the Tower of Babel and examines the figure of Pandora as a possible feminist alternative. According to the story of Babel, God scattered the one language that once existed into hundreds of different languages in order to punish the people for the pride and arrogance they displayed in building a tower designed to reach into heaven and thereby imitating the power of the divinity. According to Karin Littau (1995b), the continued references to this myth by contemporary theorists such as George Steiner and Jacques Derrida imply a belief in some originary language, a state of grace in which people understood one another because they spoke only one language, a pre-Babelian ‘Adamic tongue’. Speculation about what happened ‘after Babel’ focuses on the confusion that ensued from God’s intervention and tends to emphasize the subsequent communication break-down that

translation never completely transcends. Citing Derrida's discussion in *Des Tours de Babel* (1985), Littau uses his elaboration of the multiple designations of Babel as not untypical of the view that language 'after Babel' is "divided, bifid, ambivalent" (1995b).

The post-Babelian discourse about translation describes translation in terms that have largely negative associations: translation is difficult, incomplete, even impossible; it is traitorous and untrustworthy. Theorists such as Derrida may take this difficulty and incompleteness as an occasion for expounding on the polysemy of language, as Littau shows in citing Derrida's phrase "plus d'une langue" and interpreting it to mean "more than one language, no more of one language" (1995b). Yet the references to Babel also suggest a certain nostalgia for a mythic time when it was not necessary to distinguish between an original and a translation.

Littau proposes another theoretical approach, via a feminist rewriting of the myth of Pandora, the other translation myth. The story traditionally relates how Pandora, the first woman of the Greek creation myth and wife to Prometheus, opened a box out of sheer curiosity and unleashed all the ills of the world, including linguistic chaos. Littau points out, however, that there are many other versions of this story. In the one she favours the box is a cornucopia that contains all the provisions to feed mankind, and connotes fertility (Littau 1995a:890). Littau argues that the many versions of the Pandora myth, collected and discussed in *Pandora's Box: The Changing Aspects of a Mythical Symbol* (Panofsky and Panofsky 1962), show that the history of Pandora "is a history of her images, which to be precise is a history of *his* images, that is, male images of her" (1995a:891). These images largely embody "phallogocentric anxieties about Woman, both as regards language – the mother tongue – and as regards her gender – female sexuality" (1995b).

In rewriting the story of Pandora for use as a paradigm of translation, Littau stresses the fact that the figure of Pandora is itself a translation. It has been assigned positive or negative female attributes depending on the contexts and designs of her mythographers, her translators. In twentieth-century Freudian discourse, this figure, as a female archetype, as *Urweib*, has been associated with notions of women's 'lack' (of sex organs), with incompleteness, with silence, and with mystery. Feminist revisions of these views, notably by Luce Irigaray, conceive of 'woman's body' and 'woman's language' as a multiplicity from the outset. Thus, Pandora, with her cornucopia and her *his*story of interpretations, functions as an example of women's multiple meanings, becoming the epitome of *this sex which is not one* (Irigaray 1977). Littau revises the

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figure of Pandora to emphasize the richness and surplus of the cornucopia and the values feminist theory places on women's multiplicity and plurality, on the fact that 'woman' cannot be pinned down or forced into a mould. This, she says, contrasts sharply with the reductionist approach of the traditional phallogocentric order that "in accordance with the procedure Irigaray calls 'hom(me)ology' focuses on *the* one (man) and views woman as '*its* other'" (1995b).

This rewriting of the Pandora myth reveals the serial nature of translation: there are always more translations, retranslations. The emphasis is thus not on the one perfect translation (that can never be achieved), nor is it on the deconstruction of the traditional hierarchy between translation and original. The emphasis is not on equivalence or on equality, nor for that matter on some mythic linguistic wholeness. Precisely because every text can be retranslated and every myth can be rewritten, seriality is a condition of translation, a condition that has no end, and no beginning. As Littau puts it,

To translate her [Pandora's] name is therefore not finally to translate her, to translate her at last, to approximate some original condition, but rather to translate again, to retranslate. (1995b)

Littau's Pandora in translation is thus an argument for the proliferation of difference, for excess, for multiple translations as a positive, and indeed inevitable activity.

Littau demonstrates this principle in a discussion about the figure of Lulu, a figure created around the end of the nineteenth century by the German playwright Frank Wedekind. Lulu is a character of uncertain parentage: Lulu has no mother and whether Schigolch is her father, or her first lover, or both is unclear (1995a:909 fn. 12); her stage 'life' in the 'Lulu-Plays' revolves around her interaction with men – beginning as a young sex object, passing through a number of relationships, and in one version, ending in the East End of London at the hands of Jack the Ripper. Wedekind referred to Lulu as the *Urgestalt des Weibes* (the archetype of woman), yet the figure itself underwent numerous modifications in the various versions of the plays. Littau parallels the multiple versions of the Pandora myth with the multiple refractions/translations of the Lulu figure, rendered famous by her author's continuous clashes with censors and the resulting rewrites. The parallel becomes even clearer in the title of Wedekind's play: *Die Büchse der Pandora* (*Pandora's Box*; 1895/1902/1904/1988/1990), whose multiple publication dates, indicating early, censored, rewritten, re-edited and annotated versions,

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underscore this multiplicity. Littau demonstrates how since then “each and every re-presentation of Lulu [...] projects an image onto her by means of which her refractors [playwrights, film makers, composers, novelists, scholars] hope at last to grasp her” (1995a:901). Indeed, it is impossible to establish whether there ever was an original Lulu, and whether each ‘translation’ – Alban Berg’s Lulu opera, G.W. Pabst’s film *Pandora’s Box*, or Kathy Acker’s pastiche, to name just three – is even an approximation of the whole version. Attempts to reconstruct Lulu “from the hundreds of little notes that Wedekind left scattered over Europe” (1995a:902) only contribute to the ongoing series of textual productions.

Littau’s analysis of Lulu’s transformations ends on the same positive note as her theoretical considerations of translation: referring to the latest ‘translation’ of Lulu by Acker, she concludes that this work “pours lifeblood into the Lulu-figure to revive her” (1995:907). By accepting the fact of translation, by demonstrating it in the figures of Pandora and subsequently Lulu, and by thus connecting and re-evaluating the labour of translation with revised images of women, Littau places translation into a context of constant movement and change. Her work demonstrates that it is as pointless to produce theories that implicitly hark back to some original state of linguistic grace as it is presumptuous for one sex to posit itself as the measure of humanity.

Littau’s work presents a view of translation as movement that she couples elegantly with contemporary feminist work in the areas of literary criticism, film criticism and psychoanalysis. Her approach demonstrates the results of a co-mingling of women’s studies/feminist theory and translation studies. Having developed simultaneously over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, these disciplines have inevitably influenced each other; as Susan Bassnett has commented, feminist translation scholars “work with the idea of the in-betweenness of the translator and of the space between the poles [of the original and the translation]” (1992:66). Feminist translators are less concerned with the final product and its equivalence or fidelity than with the processes of reading, rereading, rewriting, and writing again, and with issues of cultural and ideological difference that affect these processes. Such an approach is expressed symbolically by the image of Pandora’s cornucopia, overflowing with translations that bear witness to cultural and political differences.

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