Lingue e Linguaggi

72/2025

Special Issue

# Translation as a Site of Agency and Activism: Acts of Resistance and Change

Edited by

Eliana Maestri

Eleonora Federici

Giulia Giorgi

UNIVERSITÀ DEL SALENTO

2025

# LINGUE E LINGUAGGI

Pubblicazione del Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici dell'Università del Salento. Tutti i contributi pubblicati in *Lingue e Linguaggi* sono stati sottoposti a *double-blind peer-review*.

Numero 72/2025



DIREZIONE E REDAZIONE
Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici
73100 LECCE, via Taranto, 35
tel. +39-(0)832-294401, fax +39-(0)832-249427
Copertina di Luciano Ponzio: *Ecriture* (particolare), 2007.


http://siba.unisalento.it
ISSN 2239-0367
eISSN 2239-0359 (electronic version)
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it

# Indice

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 5-14
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p5


# TRANSLATION AS A SITE OF AGENCY AND ACTIVISM
## Acts of Resistance and Change

ELIANA MAESTRI[1], ELEONORA FEDERICI[2], GIULIA GIORGI[2]
[1]UNIVERSITY OF EXETER, [2]UNIVERSITÀ DI FERRARA

## 1. Introduction

The alliance between sociology and translation has fostered the development of studies centred around the agency and performativity of the translator and their role in society (see Baldo, Inghilleri 2018; Lange 2025). Far from being a secondary activity which mimics or reflects original texts, translation is a powerful practice whose impact has ideological and political outcomes and implications (Maestri 2018, p. 1). The powerful practice put in motion by individual translators and/or translator networks demonstrates that translation is a privileged site of agency and resistance, central to activism and action. In a world driven by political figures and institutions who misuse power to advance the interests of the rich, the white, the male, the Westerner and the colonizer, there is an urgent need to devote attention to the action taken to support those whose rights are underrepresented or inadequately protected: the vulnerable (including the environment), the defenceless and the marginal exposed to social injustice. Due to the ethical responsibility that translation holds and the ability to disseminate messages across borders, translation has enormous social, cultural and political potential. It can stand in opposition to the forces that insist on placing privilege in the hands of those who perpetrate injustice. It has the potential to resist structures of power established to perpetuate social, political and cultural subordination (House 2024, pp. 44-45). It can rewrite narratives which are in tension with the dominant ones (Baker 2006). It can also foster collaboration, which is vital in sharing not only resources, tools and examples of good practice (Mason 2014), but also political agendas and the social energy needed to move to action. Our view is therefore in line with the existing scholarship on activist translation, starting from the work carried out by Translation Studies scholars Mona Baker and Julie Boéri. Whereas the former sees activist translation as a practice that "challenge[s] the dominant narratives of the time" (Baker 2006, p. 462), the latter defines it as an activity set out "to connect across the globe and to bring about social and political change" (Boéri quoted in Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, p. 246). For

this reason, it is crucial to explore activism and agency as prismatic reflections of action, resistance and change. Either as part of a group or as single individuals, translators can set new ideas in motion, adopt corrective approaches, bring about change and speak for the vulnerable and the one in need. They can also initiate collaborative practices and confront society with the power of language. As Baker says (2006, p. 471), concrete activism, including demonstrations, is not enough to undermine hegemonies. Activism must challenge narratives and stories and in order to do so, it needs to target language. As language specialists, translators have the skills, the competence and the knowledge to do so. In an attempt to take up Julie Boéri and Carol Maier's encouragement and "rethink translation […] in socio-, geo-political and ethical terms" (2010, p. 1), we situate activism and agency at the heart of translation and unpack its potential as a language practice to aspire to.

This special issue responds to the need for an in-depth investigation of activism and agency and brings to light translation work and translation networks created to support a culture of change across the world. It aims to celebrate the values and the principles endorsed and validated by activist translators and/or networks. As Julie Boéri and Carmen Delgado Luchner claim, "the very purpose of activism is to defend specific values and principles associated with social change (for instance 'participation', 'deliberation' and 'horizontality' […]) and to usher in alternatives that embody these" (2021, p. 247). Contrary to being a solitary activity, translation bridges gaps, promotes relationality and increases involvement and engagement. Engagement is an important concept in activist translation. Not only does engagement include linguistic interventions applied to the translated texts and their content, but it also comprises actions around the translated text – the choice of what to translate and/or disregard, events organized to promote translations, etc. (Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, pp. 252-253). What we uncover and discuss here is the relationality and the engagement in action that translation supports to address injustices. In so doing, we have intentionally broadened our scope, embracing examples of translation activism and agency from the present as well as from the past. In particular, we have included studies on courageous and exemplary women that have paved the way for further work in support of justice and equality. We have also fostered an approach to the study of activism in translation that promotes and enhances fluidity and non-hierarchical constructions, acknowledging asymmetries and/or complementarities between Source Texts and Target Texts. As we are aware that "hierarchy is a condition and consequence of the reification of the binary that is difficult to challenge from within a representational epistemology that continues to dominate" (Knights, Kerfoot quoted in Linstead, Brewis 2004, p. 359), we wholeheartedly support methodologies that inform feminist visions of social and linguistic activism. Finally, the special issue seeks to redress the imbalance in how the very concepts of activism and agency are at times considered in society. As

Eliana Maestri's contribution reminds us, activists are sometimes portrayed, perceived and depicted in a negative light (see also Bashir *et al.* 2013), which does not just do a disservice to them and the values that they represent. These negative depictions have all sorts of negative knock-on effects, to the detriment of the vulnerable, the disadvantaged, the fragile and the peripheral. It is only by bringing to light the amount of work carried out by translators and those involved in social and/or cultural movements of texts and people that we demonstrate and support the positive and valuable action taken by them.

The special issue is also a celebration of the research-intensive collaboration between the following institutions: the University of Exeter, UK, the University of Ferrara, Italy, and the University of Valencia, Spain. Notably, the volume comes out of the 5th edition of the European Colloquium on Gender and Translation, entitled *Gendering Activism* and organized by the University of Ferrara (Prof. Eleonora Federici and Prof. Giulia Giorgi), the University of Exeter (Dr Eliana Maestri) and the University of Valencia (Prof. José Santaemilia) on 6-7 July 2022, in Ferrara. The main aim of the European Colloquium, which was inaugurated by Prof. Eleonora Federici and Prof. José Santaemilia (as co-founders) and which has shifted venue from edition to edition since 2016, is to periodically offer an overview of the latest trends in the research on translation and gender around the world. One of the volumes that emerged from the collaboration between the co-founders is the 2021 study on *Gender and Translation: New Perspectives and New Voices for Transnational Dialogues*. Being mindful of the impact of translation on social, political and cultural transformations, the 5th edition of the European Colloquium opened a forum for discussion on the contribution offered by practitioners, stakeholders and scholars to the study of translation as activism and agent of change. Our intention was to follow the trend established by previous editions of the European Colloquium, by continuing the study of the various interconnections between gender and translation. However, since activism is a research area that needs to be developed and explored further within the field of Translation Studies, we wanted to enrich and complicate the gender and translation pairing, by prioritizing the interplay between gender and activism in translation. The 5th edition of the European Colloquium attracted international attention and strengthened links between institutions and colleagues, which we continue to cherish as vital steps towards transnational cooperation and work in support of diversity and inclusion. It also brought to light new visions and perspectives on both activism and agency in translation, which we now offer to our readers. This volume, which is the outcome of fruitful discussions and reflections hosted in Ferrara, recognizes the importance that feminisms have in shaping and/or reshaping approaches to the study and practice of translation and its role in society. In addition, it embraces and enhances other, complementary and supplementary, methodologies which

go hand in hand with various feminisms and the actions taken to challenge the *status quo* vis-à-vis justice, diversity, equality and inclusion.

Since *Gendering Activism*, work has continued to grow and evolve and other venues have offered to host subsequent editions of the European Colloquium, embracing its ethos and broadening its vision. The latest European Colloquium was held last July at the Universitat Autònoma in Barcelona, opening discourses beyond European borders and Universities through the topic of transnational feminisms. We are keen to continue to plant the same seeds for productive work as the ones that we used to celebrate the blossoming of our research trajectories, but we appreciate that different soils produce different plants – which we welcome. It was and it is very important to see how the issues surrounding feminist translation have adapted and grown on different European soils and how the dialogue among these different voices can help scholars and translators to develop new strategies and methods, which in turn are likely to encourage new and fruitful dialogues, collaborations and interconnections. Finally, the advent of AI has posed challenges to the theory and practice of translation. We therefore strongly feel that the transnational collaborations that we have forged serve multiple purposes, including the support offered to Translation Studies itself, a discipline which is much needed in today's society ruled more and more by technocracies and machines.

The volume welcomes the cross-pollination with a number of disciplines, including but not limited to Translation Studies, Gender Studies, Migration and Mobility Studies, Cultural and Media Studies, Sociology, Ethnography, Politics, Linguistics and Literary Criticism among others. Besides its overview of the growing diversity of research (both theoretical and practical) on translation, this volume has a thematic orientation focused on the role played by translation as agent of resistance and change of the dynamics between gender, class, race and power, the human and the other-than-human in society. Starting from the work carried out by Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism* (2020), the volume develops further the notion of the translator as activist, namely as champion of political change, advocate of gender equality, promoter of gender diversity, voice-giver of minorities and migrants and agent of change capable of putting "into words the perspectives and experiences of oppressed and silenced peoples" (2020, p. 2). Our work also follows in the footsteps of Olga Castro and Emek Ergun's research on *Feminist Translation Studies. Local and Transnational Perspectives* (2017) in order to widen the discussion on the interplay between feminist translation, agency and activism as academic fields of enquiry. Finally, our collaboration and research follow the groundwork laid by Helen Vassallo's (2023) study of translation and the publishing industry. Her monograph demonstrates the continuous need to question and challenge the principles that regulate the involvement of women in translation and publishing. For Vassallo, both action and activism are

essential in achieving greater inclusivity and successful translations. As she claims: "There can be no successful translation without feminist politics" (2023, p. 15). We share her view and apply this principle to our practice.

The volume aims to make the important role of translators visible in: 1) promoting and enabling social, political and cultural change around the world; 2) promoting equality; 3) fighting discrimination; 4) supporting gender diversity; 5) supporting human and other-than-human rights; 6) empowering minorities; 7) challenging authority and injustice not only across European countries but all over the world; 8) facilitating network-building activities among activists and agents of change and 8) teaching feminist translation as a pedagogical act in support of social and gender equality. In so doing, the volume places emphasis on how language and translation can construct a different reality, a reality that aspires to protect against violence and unfair treatment. Moreover, as we live in a multimodal world, we are aware that communication is not limited to verbal language or, even, human language. And for this reason, we are in line with Baker's research practice and examples – as discussed in the Translation Studies scholar Jan Buts's work (2023). Although Baker is adamant that language plays a crucial role in activism, she also states that it is not enough to put in place modes of investigation of prefiguration focused exclusively on verbal interaction. The concept of prefiguration is particularly important, when scholars work on activism. Prefiguration is "the embodiment within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture and human experience that are the ultimate goal" (Boggs quoted in Buts 2023, p. 267). In other words, prefiguration is "the principle of embodying the change one wants to see" (Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, p. 255). As we want to tease out the activist potential that translational practices hold, we embrace Baker's encouragement and expand "the powerful concept of prefiguration" to include "the use of verbal, visual and aesthetic languages" (Baker quoted in Buts 2023, p. 267). In so doing, we have encouraged multimodal and intersemiotic approaches to translation and activism already established by some of us (Maestri, Wilson 2017), along the lines of what Baker maintains. As a result, we have included studies by scholars working on the cusp not just between activism and advocacy, but also language and the visual.

## 2. The contributions

The issue opens with Maria Escobar Aguiar's article on the concept of militant translation. Escobar Aguiar draws from her experience as volunteer translator in the Proyecto Desclasificados, an interdisciplinary project run by three renowned Argentinian human rights organizations: Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) and Memoria Abierta. Within

this project, a group of eight translators works collaboratively to translate into Spanish an archive of declassified documents issued by U.S. intelligence agencies and government (e.g., CIA, FBI, Department of State, among others). This article focuses on the role of feminist translators/militants in Argentina, offering a new perspective on this field and demonstrating the energy that groups can produce and capitalize on. Individuals also drive change and pave the way for future work as activism. This is what Claudia Capancioni's article establishes. Capancioni helps us to appreciate how important it is to look at the past and retrace the role of pioneering feminist translators. She examines the work of the British writer Sarah Austin who, in the nineteenth century, asserted her intellectual and political agency as a translator. Austin was a highly acclaimed interpreter of innovative philosophical and scholarly texts originally produced in French and German and showed the significant role of translation for a social, political and cultural change. Through her work as a translator, Austin outlined the need for primary education for women. Education is an extremely crucial arena in which activism can be practiced and extended. It is within this arena that Lupe Romero operates. Her article shows the significance of teaching feminist translation theory and practice in class today. Teaching becomes activism when developing gender competence in the translation classroom acquires a manifold purpose. The purpose is not only to stimulate critical thinking in students, providing them with new tools to recognize stereotypes, norms and social gender roles present in the starting texts. The purpose is also to guide them in learning how to problematize socialization patterns and develop skills and strategies imbued with a feminist conscience and ethics.

As mentioned above, translation and activism are extremely powerful especially because they employ language, fashioning its rhetorical and stylistic means to achieve their ends. However, they can also rely on the visual, taking advantage of the multimodal aspect of communication. For example, Julia Kölbl's contribution considers paratextual resources. In a manner similar to Capancioni, the author goes back in time focusing on specific social and political contexts, namely the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire and the German Empire in the years 1871-1918. However, to tease out relevant observations, Kölbl analyses (auto)biographical data as well as paratextual materials. In so doing, Kölbl demonstrates how historical and extratextual perspectives are needed in order to heighten our understanding of the intertwining of translation and activism. Paratexts also represent the privileged site for intervention in Eleonora Federici's study. In her article, Federici underlines the role of feminist translation in the reception of feminist theories and practices around the world. Through a diachronic perspective Federici shows how translators, intellectuals and writers have collaborated to translate, publish and disseminate key feminist texts into the Italian context. The article delineates a history of collaboration, agency and action among American and

Italian feminists. Action also represents a compelling milestone in Eliana Maestri's work on ecotranslation and care. Her article focuses on her 2022-23 Arts Council England project, discussing innovative strategies of visual translations and how we can take creative and collective action to tackle the current environmental crisis. Translating across media borders, namely from fiction to visual artefacts, is not just a way to improve the quality of climate change communication, by enhancing public participation, amplifying artistic voices and supporting climate justice. It is also a way to reflect on how we advocate for the planet and respect the agency that the other-than-human holds and exercises. The originality of her work rests on the emphasis that she places on the need to care, both to maximize the contribution that translation offers to environmental communication and to take firm steps towards action and climate advocacy. Drawing on theories advanced in ecotranslation and ecofeminism, Maestri discusses fruitful common grounds between these disciplinary approaches and a practical, creative example to be drawn on in the name of climate advocacy and activism.

The last four articles highlight the cultural value that translational agency encapsulates, demonstrating the importance that individual interventions acquire within different situational contexts and textual scenarios as sites of action. As Anne Lange claims, "activist translators and interpreters do receive academic attention more as a group" (2025, pp. 438). We appreciate the reasons for it and have given attention to groups and how translation agents join forces. However, we also want to bring to light the unique agency of individual translators and their contribution to society. Ray Wang looks at the translations of André Aciman's highly acclaimed English *Bildungsroman*, entitled *Call Me by Your Name* (2007), into Chinese. Specifically, Wang conducts a textual comparative study of the term *fuck* across six instances in the four Chinese editions published in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in 2009, 2012 and 2018. In so doing, the author outlines how changes in translation are due to ideological implications in different cultural and political contexts and shows how activism can be carried out in different forms. In order to reflect on individual interventions and agency, Nataša Raschi takes us to non-Anglophone contexts and readers. In particular, Raschi analyses: Paulette Nardal, who translated American texts for French-speaking authors of the Négritude at the beginning of the 20th century, Véronique Tadjo, who wrote an African myth in French, self-translating it into English and Werewere Liking, who mixes many African languages in her literary production, in the Ivory Coast. Her analysis shows how translation and self-translation are also part of feminist activism in African contexts. The translator's act also takes centre stage in Bruna Mancini's contribution, a contribution which focuses on two translations of an iconic woman writer. In particular, Mancini compares two Italian translations of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's utopia *Herland* (1915) outlining how the translation of feminist utopias can be connected to activism

and to a rethinking of our cultural values. The comparison between the two translations enables us to consider the active presence and creativity of the translator in the utopian text and appreciate them as a self-sufficient node in a dynamic web, connected to the principle of the fidelity that translation pursues. The last article, by Anna Lee-Popham, takes a different spin, while continuing to focus on the creative agency of writing, and, in particular, poetry. Lee-Popham examines how poetry might act as a translation of the Empire. She posits that such translation is a critical component of resistance, following Gould and Tahmasebian's (2020) framing of translator as witness-bearer. Lee-Popham considers poetry as an art engaging in acts of translation across a single language to reflect on the historical and contemporary contexts of imperialism and colonialization and welcome this process as a political practice. The article specifically examines a collection of poetry written by the author and entitled *Empires of the Everyday*.

This volume evidences the commitment of colleagues across Europe and beyond to the study of activism, action and agency, by placing translation at its core. Translation stands for not only difference but also diversity and for this it represents the ideal locus to negotiate actively, personally, collectively and conscientiously power dynamics and the opportunity for the vulnerable or the underrepresented to be supported and unveiled. The contributions to this volume not only offer valuable case studies, but they also articulate the desire to reach out to fellow colleagues, practitioners and stakeholders, by strengthening networks and building dialogues for a better and just society.[1]

**Bionote:** Eliana Maestri holds a PhD from the University of Bath and is now Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies at the University of Exeter. Her research interests centre on translation, gender, mobility and visual culture. Among her publications are: *Female Filiations* (2022, with C. Horvath) and *Translating the Female Self across Cultures* (2018). Her latest work focuses on ecotranslation, supported by a UoE AHRC-IAA award (2024), an Arts Council England grant (2022-2023) and UoE Open Innovation Platform Translational Fundings (2022; 2023). Maestri is one of the core faculty members of the VIU Summer School *Linguistic Landscapes: Using Signs and Symbols to Translate Cities*.
Eleonora Federici is Full Professor of English Language and Translation Studies at the University of Ferrara. Her main research areas are: specialised translation, feminist translation, and LSP. She is currently the President of the Equal Opportunities Committee at the University of Ferrara. Among her publications: *Translating Gender* (Peter Lang, 2011), *Translation Theory and Practice Cultural Differences in Tourism and Advertising* (Loffredo, 2018), *Gender issues. Translating and mediating languages, cultures and societies* (Peter Lang, 2021), *New Perspectives on Gender and Translation. New Voices for Transnational Dialogues* (Routledge, 2021).


**Disclosure Statement:** no potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Giulia Giorgi (PhD University of Ferrara – Italy, PhD University of Córdoba – Spain) is Professor of Spanish Language at the University of Ferrara. Her main research areas are: Philology, Diachronic Linguistics, Translation Studies, Spanish varieties and Spanish Golden Age short novel and theatre. She is part of several national and international research projects on Spanish language and literature, and she has organized various seminars and congresses about Translation, Spanish Language as L2 and Golden Age Spanish Literature. Among her publications: the critical edition of *El Otro* (2018) by Miguel de Unamuno and *Lisardo enamorado* (2024) by Alonso de Castillo Solórzano.

**Authors' addresses:** E.MAESTRI@exeter.ac.uk, eleonora.federici@unife.it, giulia.giorgi@unife.it

**Acknowledgements**: we would like to thank our contributors for their patience and commitment to this project.

# References

Baker M. 2006, *Translation and Activism: Emerging Patterns of Narrative Community*, in "The Massachusetts Review" 47 [3], pp. 462-484.

Baldo M. and Inghilleri M. 2018, *Cultural Resistance, Female Voices: Translating Subversive and Contested Sexualities*, in Harding S-A. and Carbonell Cortés O. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Culture*, Routledge, New York/London, pp. 286-313.

Bashir N.Y., Lockwood P., Chasteen A., Nadolny D. and Noyes I. 2013, *The Ironic Impact of Activists: Negative Stereotypes Reduce Social Change Influence,* in "European Journal of Social Psychology" 43 [7], pp. 614-626.

Boéri J. and Delgado Luchner C. 2021, *The Ethics of Activist Translation and Interpreting*, in Koskinen K. and Pokorn N.K. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics*, Routledge, London, pp. 245-261.

Boéri J. and Maier C. 2010, *Introduction*, in Boéri J. and Maier C. (eds.), *Translation/Interpreting and Social Activism – Compromiso social y traducción/interpretación*, ECOS, Granada, pp. 1-6.

Buts J. 2023, *Activist Approaches*, in Meylaerts R. and Marais K. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Theory and Concepts*, Routledge, London, pp. 263-282.

Castro O. and Ergun E. (eds.) 2017, *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, London.

Federici E. and Santaemilia J. (eds.) 2021, *Gender and Translation: New Perspectives and New Voices for Transnational Dialogues*, Routledge, London.

Gould R.R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.) 2020, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London.

House J. 2024, *Translation: The Basics*, Routledge, London/New York.

Lange A. 2025, *Translation and Social Activism*, in Tyulenev S. and Luo W., *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Sociology*, Routledge, New York/London, pp. 433-446.

Linstead A. and Brewis J. 2004, *Editorial: Beyond Boundaries: Towards Fluidity in Theorizing and Practice*, in "Gender, Work and Organization" 11 [4], pp. 355-362.

Maestri E. 2018, *Translating the Female Self across Cultures: Mothers and Daughters in Autobiographical Narratives*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Maestri E. and Wilson R. 2017, *Singing Translators and Mobile Traditions: Cross-cultural Performances of Italian Folk Music in Contemporary Australia*, in "LEA – Lingue e letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente" 6, pp. 141-156.

Mason I. 2014, *Discourse and Translation: A Social Perspective*, in House J. (ed.), *Translation: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Vassallo H. 2023, *Towards a Feminist Translator Studies: Intersectional Activism in Translation and Publishing*, Routledge, London/New York.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 15-40
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p15
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# MILITANT TRANSLATION
# Towards a Definition of a Situated Concept[1]

MARÍA ESCOBAR-AGUIAR
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE LA PLATA
UNIVERSITAT DE VIC-UNIVERSITAT CENTRAL DE CATALUNYA
CONSEJO NACIONAL DE INVESTIGACIONES CIENTÍFICAS Y TÉCNICAS (CONICET)

**Abstract** – The research and practice of activist translation is one of the most important issues on the current agenda of Translation Studies. Its impact on the discipline, in particular, and on societies, in general, is undeniable and the number of activist translators grows by the day. Academically and geopolitically situated in Argentina, I recognize the relevance of situatedness in Translation Studies and the importance of developing concepts that acknowledge situated translation practices in all their complexity. This article draws from my experience as volunteer translator in Proyecto Desclasificados, an interdisciplinary project run by three renowned Argentinian human rights organizations: Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) and Memoria Abierta. Within this project, a group of eight translators works collaboratively to translate into Spanish an archive of declassified documents issued by U.S. intelligence agencies and government (e.g., CIA, FBI, Department of State, among others). Articulating this experience with a theory of militancy (Selci 2018), and in dialogue with the concept of *activist translation*, this article ponders on the specificity of Argentinian socially and politically engaged translation practices and advances a definition of a new situated concept: militant translation.

**Keywords**: translation; militancy; activism; declassified documents; dictatorship.

## 1. Introduction

Social, political and economic changes, as well as the emergence of new social actors, allow for new approaches to general social activism and specific, organized political action. As evidenced by numerous contributions (Meschonnic 2007; Boéri, Maier 2010; Tymoczko 2010; Pym 2012; Drugan, Tipton 2017; Carcelén-Estrada 2018; Boéri 2020; Koskinen, Pokorn 2020;

[1] This article is a result of my doctoral research, funded by Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET, Argentina) and framed by Proyecto de Investigación y Desarrollo "Traducción, subjetividad y género. Responsabilidad ética y social en prácticas de traducción e interpretación" (UNLP, 2022-2025, Director: Dra. María Laura Spoturno) and Grupo de Estudios de Género: Traducción, Literatura, Historia y Comunicación (GETLIHC, UVic-UCC, Director: Dra. Pilar Godayol).

De Sousa Alves 2021; Spoturno 2022), there is a growing interest in the field of Translation Studies in articulating the axes of ethical responsibility, activism and translation. Academically and geopolitically situated in Argentina, I am interested in analysing the socially and politically engaged translation practices that are currently being performed in the region.

The search for memory, truth and justice constitutes the hallmark of current Argentinian human rights movements. The last Argentinian military dictatorship[2] (1976-1983) designed and implemented a clandestine system of intelligence to hunt what they called 'subversives' to kidnap them from their homes and places of work, to keep them in clandestine detention centres, to torture them and later murder them. Kidnapped pregnant women were kept in captivity until they gave birth – in the most atrocious conditions – and were later murdered. Their children were then illegally relocated by the military regime to new families and brought up with false identities, with the aid of health and law professionals that intervened in the babies' appropriation. Many groups and organizations were created to fight this dictatorship as well as its long-lasting and devastating consequences. Together, they constitute the Argentinian Memory, Truth and Justice Movement.[3] Truth: to shed light on the crimes and genocide practices (Feierstein [2007] 2011) committed by the last Argentinian military dictatorship. Justice: to hold those responsible for these crimes accountable. Memory: the Argentinian people shall not forgive nor forget.

Human activity is linguistically, materially and territorially bound (Selim 2016, p. 79). As shown by Aníbal Quijano (2000, pp. 215, 226, 242), analysing the particularities of Latin America implies a methodological approach that acknowledges its social and political spheres and actors in all their specificity. Such a perspective challenges the hegemony of the so-called 'global North' in the academic field, which accommodates humanity to its own experience by setting its historical and cultural specificity as the norm to which the rest of the world is expected to comply (Lander 2003, p. 4). It is

[2] Theoretical concepts are inevitably political. Following Daniel Feierstein (2019), I use the term *military dictatorship* instead of *civic-military dictatorship*. As explained by the author, the term *civic-military dictatorship* suggests an equal distribution of responsibility between the military and the civilian actors, ultimately dissolving the reached strong popular agreement in Argentina on the delegitimation of the military. While some civilian sectors –and, in particular, the corporate sector – did indeed play an important and necessary role, it is worth noting that the last Argentinian dictatorship featured the greatest degree of militarization not only in Argentinian history but also in Latin America (Canelo 2021). The term *military dictatorship* therefore, reminds us that it was the State, in the hands of the military, who committed genocide against its own people.

[3] For a summary in Spanish of the Memory, Truth and Justice Movement in Argentina, visit https://www.cels.org.ar/web/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Informe-proceso-de-MVJ-2017.pdf. For another summary, in English, please visit https://www.cels.org.ar/common/documentos/PonenciaLASABalardini-CELS.pdf.

imperative, therefore, that Latin America forges its own paradigms in order to address and analyse its own processes (Dávalos 2002, p. 3; Longa 2017, p. 44). Given the existence of a very long tradition of socially engaged, Latin-America-oriented political activities and organizations in Argentina framed under the name of *militancia*, it is best to avoid employing terms or concepts that frame this rich, situated, local tradition under the scope of a Western[4] notion such as *activism*. To name is, indeed, an exercise of power (Ashcroft 2009, pp. 27-28), and it is key that Latin America names its processes with Latin-American-coined terms. In consequence, I deem it necessary to make academic contributions to the field of Translation Studies that acknowledge and vindicate Latin American and Argentinian traditions in the analysis of Latin American and Argentinian-situated translation practices and processes.

This article draws from my experience as a volunteer translator in Proyecto Desclasificados, a transdisciplinary project run by three renowned Argentinian human rights organizations: Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) and Memoria Abierta. Within this project, a group of eight translators work collaboratively to (re)translate into Spanish an archive of declassified documents issued by U.S. intelligence agencies and government (e.g., CIA, FBI, Department of State, among others). The article will then articulate the experience and practice of this group with a militancy theory (Selci 2018) to create a dialogue with the concept of activist translation and, ultimately, advance a definition of a new situated concept: militant translation.

## 2. Towards a definition of militant translation

### *2.1. Activist translation*

Translation as a political, cultural and discursive practice serves to support, transgress, rethink or question the values that are hegemonic at a certain moment. Translation, thus, plays a key role in constructing and performing identities, shaping cultures, bringing about political change and enabling or resisting appropriation, and it allows for the dissemination of marginalized voices and challenges hegemonic values (Carcelén-Estrada 2018, p. 254). In this sense, translation is an ethical, political and ideological activity, which potentially renders the translator an agent for social change (Tymoczko 2010, p. 3; Baker 2006, p. 2).

[4] Following Maria Tymoczko (2006, p. 13), I understand the term *Western* to refer to "ideas and perspectives that initially originated in and became dominant in Europe, spreading from there to various other locations in the world, where in some cases [...] they have also become dominant".

It has been argued that, broadly speaking, any act of translation is ideologically and politically motivated (Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, p. 246). From the very choice of what to translate (choice of content) and how to translate it (choice of translation strategies and techniques), translation is, like any other discursive practice, a political activity. There are, however, translation practices that are specifically and deliberately adopted and developed with a political intent in mind. An activist is often described as someone who challenges hegemonic political, economic, cultural or social values and worldviews, and offers alternative interpretations and imaginaries (Baker 2019, p. 453). In this sense, translation is thought to be necessary for political activism as it enables resistance to narratives of violence and conflict (Armida de la Garza, Rosar 2022, p. 171).

Recently, the concept of activist translation has been the object of a great deal of reflection on the part of many translation scholars. Following Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian (2020, p. 4), activist translation is more than simply exhorting readers into action. Julie Boéri and Carmen Delgado Luchner (2021, p. 247) point out that the main goal of activist translation is to protect and provide certain values and principles such as participation, deliberation and horizontality, and others associated with social change. As such, activist translation is not limited to political action and it reaches other kinds of activism, e.g., social, cultural, linguistic and aesthetic (Baker 2019, p. 453; Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, p. 247; Koskinen, Kuusi 2017, p. 191).

Activist translation is thus "an engaged and empowering activity that decenters power" (Carcelén-Estrada 2018, p. 261) and comprises a set of different cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication practices seeking to engage in various political agendas and struggles locally and globally (Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, p. 245). By means of these practices, activist translators assume a new role and engage in collective actions that aim to express non-hegemonic perspectives and ideas, produce alternative meanings, decentre power and, ultimately, bring about social change (Boéri 2008, p. 22, 2020, p. 1; Carcelén-Estrada 2018, pp. 254, 255). In this sense, activist translation allows translators to deliberately engage politically in their communities at different levels, usually by forging bonds of solidarity.

Activist translation usually materializes in collaborative translation practices, given their importance for the creation of memory networks and the production of solidarity discourses (Spoturno 2022). Collaborative translation acknowledges the intrinsic plurality of translation practices (Cordingley, Frigau Manning 2017, p. 1), challenging the traditional idea of an isolated and individual translation practice. On the contrary, various actors intervene in the translation process, making the translator one of a network of agents working together rather than an individual person. It is worth making a distinction here between collective translation and collaborative translation.

The former, also known as "co-translation" (Cordingley, Frigau Manning 2017, p. 24) or "collaborative translation in its narrow meaning" (O'Brien 2011, p. 17), implies the interaction of at least two translation agents. Collaborative translation, on the other hand, is framed in a relational paradigm which abandons the idea of the translator as a fixed mediator between texts and cultures and highlights their role in a dynamic network of agents intervening in the translation process and product (Cordingley, Frigau Manning 2017, p. 4). Also known as "transcollaboration" (Zwischenberger 2020), it is a space of democratic participation that allows for an innovative conceptual play between translation and collaboration.

Given their collective or collaborative natures, some instances of activist translation can also be framed under the concept of institutional translation. This concept refers to a typically collective and anonymous process of linguistic mediation which, regulated by institutional norms and agents, deals with texts that affect the development and legitimation of institutions (Kang 2020, p. 257; Schäffner *et al*. 2014, p. 494). The desired translation strategies are, therefore, dictated according to the translating institution's commercial, political or ideological agenda at the time of translation (Koskinen 2011, p. 59). In this sense, translators may be thought of as vehicles of power for the institutions where they work (Carbonell i Cortés 1999, p. 218) by translating the institution into different languages. Their agency, i.e., the degree of independence in the decision-making process regarding their translation, depends on the constraints imposed by institutional procedures and the desire for the predominance and prioritisation of the standardized 'voice' of the institution (Schäffner *et al*. 2014, p. 494). Considering the great volume of texts requiring translation in institutions, there is a common desire for standardization, consistency of vocabulary and style, regularization and high fidelity to the source text. The quality of translation within an institution is therefore tested by adherence to internal norms and customs that provide the institution with a homogeneous (translated) discourse (López Medel 2021, p. 128).

The research on activist translation focuses mainly on agency, power and ideology and questions traditional notions of neutrality and invisibility, while addressing translation practices in civil society, social movements and in digital culture (Boéri 2020, p. 1). As regards fidelity, Sherry Simon (1996, p. 2) claimed that it should be directed neither to the author nor reader, but to the writing project. Gould and Tahmasebian (2020, p. 4), for their part, understand that an activist translator should be faithful to the "situation". Along the same line, Jasmin Esin Duraner argues that activist translators are loyal to "their own motivation to disrupt the voice of hegemony" (2021, p. 305) and they explicitly insert their voices in paratexts to openly display their translation context and ideological agenda. In consequence, research in this area is usually linked to other topics such as cultural domination, human

rights, sexuality, dictatorships, censorship, gender, postcolonialism and migration.

Scholars, however, also highlight some problems, controversies and tensions around the concept and practice of activist translation. First, activist translation practices articulate and negotiate the values, norms and practices of two heterogeneous social fields whose boundaries are not always clear: activism and translation (Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, pp. 248-249). In this regard, on the one hand, activist translators are pulled by the expectations imposed by the institutions, organizations, networks and communities for which they work and their corresponding agendas, and, on the other hand, by the predominating norms and theoretical approaches of translation. According to Carmen Delgado Luchner and Leïla Kherbiche (2019, p. 255), this hybridity produces a high degree of uncertainty for the activist translator who faces the dilemma of deciding between which doxa to follow and prioritize.

This is closely related to a second dilemma, i.e., that of positionality. The ethics of positionality refers to the translators' position as regards the set of norms, values and principles of their society. Often these sets include the desire for accuracy, neutrality, confidentiality and invisibility, and may clash with the "discourse of engagement and partisanship" adopted by activist translation communities (Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, p. 249). The notion of neutrality has been particularly challenged by activist communities, resulting in the dichotomy of impartiality vs. engagement. Pulled in different directions by two forces, i.e., individual agency and sociopolitical context, and two sets of norms and practices, i.e., from activism and from translation, the activist translators face a double dilemma and often their political engagement wins over expectations of impartiality and neutrality (Boéri, Delgado Luchner 2021, p. 249).

Third, studies and discourses dealing with activist translators very often feature the term *resistance* borrowed from the activist discourses, to name clandestine movements opposing oppressive forces (Tymoczko 2010, p. 7). However, as Maria Tymoczko points out, there are two problems with the resistance paradigm. First, it implies that the activist translator's task is to react to an opposing power which functions as an original source of action (Tymoczko 2010, pp. 10-11). Within this paradigm, translation is once again seen as reactive to and derivative from an original source of power, when, on the contrary, activist translators should go beyond resisting or opposing social and political powers (Tymoczko 2010, p. viii). Second, there is no clear opponent or target in the resistance paradigm. That is, the concepts of colonialism, imperialism or hegemonic power that are frequently used to identify the target of activist translation are still too vague as objects of resistance (Tymoczko 2010, p. 8). It is clear, then, that a new, proactive paradigm is needed.

In the following subsection, we will turn to an Argentinian-situated theory of militancy that will help us to address these problems and ultimately develop the concept of militant translation.

## *2.2. Militancy theory*

The complexity of the concept of *militancia* resides precisely in its situatedness. The English language understands *militancy* as being "engaged in warfare or combat", being "aggressively active" (*Merriam Webster* 2023) or "having a combative character" (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* 2022). These meanings have clear negative connotations that circulate widely in Anglophone academia with reference to violent conflicts (Gow *et al.* 2013; Moghadam 2013; Naz *et al*. 2013; Pektas, Leman 2019; Basit 2020; Helfert 2020; Ojo 2020; Kendall 2021; Neogi 2022). The word *militancy* can also be found in academia to refer to labour union movements (Briskin 2012; Buckley 2021; Kallas 2022) and gender movements (Marche 2019; Grabe 2022). In Latin American Spanish-speaking communities, however, a completely different set of meanings and connotations are associated with this word. In this article, we use the term *militancy* to import into the English language the meanings associated with *militancia* in the Spanish language.

In Argentina, *militancia* refers to a socially engaged political practice seeking to create, restore and strengthen bonds with and between different popular social groups (Svampa 2005, p. 137). In this sense, a militant person is someone who actively and organically participates in a political organization, whether it is associated with a political party or not. Its different practices are developed during a concrete historical time and in a specific place, within the structures and dynamics of a collective organization and by reference to the past actions of said organization. This does not exclude violence, although it is by no means a necessary component of *militancia*. That is, militant practices are built and developed by means of dialogue and interaction, which allows for the incorporation and interiorization of the organization's logics, traditions and ideologies and their articulation with present experiences and political engagement. Interaction between militants and other social actors, as well as between militants themselves, is a process of political socialization, necessary to access and produce knowledge that nourishes existing or new militant practices (Berardi-Spairani 2020, pp. 189-190). As such, these practices are framed by already existent meanings while they are also sources of new meanings.

Militancy in Argentina in the 1960s and 1970s featured revolutionary organizations such as Montoneros and Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) [People's Revolutionary Army] as two of its most prominent

examples. These and other organizations were inspired by Cuban guerrillas, Chilean democratic socialism and popular anticolonial uprisings in Asia and Africa (Longa 2017, p. 72) and were therefore closely linked to similar movements in other countries of Latin America. In this geopolitical context, Argentinian socially and politically engaged movements in the 1960s and 1970s were convinced that it was their duty to conduct a revolution against hegemonic liberal and colonial systems of dominance (Massetti 2009, p. 11). After the military *coup d'etat* of 1976, these organizations became the main targets that the military dictatorship sought to destroy, both physically and discursively, in order to annihilate any trace of political engagement in Argentina and, consequently, implement a liberal economic system that would benefit the dominant corporate sectors and impoverish the Argentinian people.

At this point it is worth acknowledging that the resistance paradigm has proven useful for some militant groups and organizations at specific periods of Argentinian history. Peronism, for example, did go through a period of resistance (1955-1973), after the *coup d'etat* known as *Revolución Libertadora* (1955) [Liberation Revolution] proscribed, in 1956, not only the participation of Peronism in elections but also Peronism in itself. Human rights organizations such as Madres de Plaza de Mayo and H.I.J.O.S. have also relied on the resistance paradigm during the 1990s, when the Argentinian president Carlos Saúl Menem delivered a heavy blow to human rights and to Argentinian society by issuing two laws that granted official State pardon to the genocidal military. Apart from their weekly marches in Plaza de Mayo, known as *las marchas de los jueves* [Thursday marches], Madres de Plaza de Mayo held annual special 24-hour marches called *Marchas de la Resistencia* [Resistance Marches] on every 10 December between 1981 to 2006 and between 2015 to 2019. I therefore acknowledge the important role that the resistance paradigm played for militancy in Argentina, but I argue that this is only one of the possible forms of militancy. Militancy in Argentina existed long before resistance periods and, once these were over, it continued to exist. That is, militancy practices may be associated with resistance, but they are not at all limited to it. As I will argue in the following pages, militant practices encompass so much more.

The words *militancia* (as a noun) and *militante* (both as a noun and as an adjective) appear very frequently in different Argentinian discourses but almost never as theoretical concepts in themselves. Although numerous particular instances of militant practices are profusely researched in Argentinian academia, little attention had been granted to providing an academic definition and a theory for militancy. Argentinian writer, militant and politician Damián Selci (2018, p. 18) acknowledged the need for militancy to become a theoretical concept in order to vindicate its value as a political category and, therefore, advance a theory of militancy that studies

this matter in depth.

Within this theory, militancy implies holding oneself accountable for reality (Selci 2018, p. 119). That is, militancy is understood as a claim on reality, not to possess reality or control it, but to act upon it. In this sense, militant subjects are born at the moment they hold themselves accountable for something that falls outside the scope of their limited human power and capability (Selci 2018, p. 121). Militant subjects abandon the discourse that revolves around demands and proceed to analyse reality including an extra factor – their own intervention in it (Selci 2018, p. 118). Optimism at this point becomes a moral imperative. Acknowledging their own role in reality, they shift the focus: instead of presenting demands to an alleged powerful other, they assume full responsibility over reality and optimistically take action in consequence.

For this to happen, a triggering element is needed. Following Alain Badiou ([1988] 2005), the *événement* is an enlightening flare which exceeds all existing meanings and knowledge produced about any given situation. The event bursts in any historically construed, taken-for-granted situation, producing a disruptive displacement between what a situation is supposed to be and what it actually is (Marchart 2019, p. 15). The displacement caused by the event breaks all hegemonic discourses, knowledge, meanings and representations about a given situation (Selci 2018, p. 109). It is time-specific and place-specific; that is, it has a strong singular nature, and it carries these coordinates with it (Badiou [1988] 2005, pp. 176, 179; Badiou [2006] 2008, p. 415; Exposito 2015, pp. 233-234). In the face of the event, a subject can either find it so unbearable so as to react against it or embrace the (often distressing) insights it triggers, and later reorganize life according to these (Selci 2018, p. 72). Those who are struck by the event can no longer remain innocent in the face of reality: they are overwhelmed with a sense of duty and responsibility over that reality.

There is, therefore, no *a priori* political subject; political subjectivity is, rather, built as a consequence of political action (Selci 2018, p. 23). In this sense, politics is a matter of collective fidelity to an event which breaks all existing knowledge about a social situation (Exposito 2015, p. 236). Born from the ashes of the event, militant subjects remain faithful to the insights triggered by it and the alternative knowledge that can be produced drawing from it, and seek to extend its effects wherever they go (Selci 2018, p. 110). Many of the Argentinian militant groups and organizations even carry these coordinates on their banners, by naming themselves with participants of the event or the date of the event, such as La Cámpora, Movimiento Evita, 17 de octubre, Tupac Amaru, Movimiento Social y Cultural Tupaj Katari, Agrupación Maximiliano Kosteki and Frente Popular Darío Santillán, among many others.

For this to be successful, one last key element is further needed: a collective political organization. The organized group of militants calls the militant subject to work with others for their common collective cause following two lines, namely organicism and logic (Selci 2018, p. 132). That is, militant subjects should acknowledge their role and the responsibilities and tasks associated within the structure of an organization which is organic in nature. Second, they should comply with the protocol or general criteria devised and shared by the organization to approach different topics and problems (Selci 2018, p. 139). The world in which the militant subject develops is, therefore, a site to dispute representations, meanings and logics of militancy (Berardi-Spairani 2020, p. 194).

Much like Selci understands the importance of relying on a theory of militancy, I acknowledge the need to further theorize on and open a dialogue with the notion of activist translation in order to provide situated concepts that account for the experience of politically and socially engaged translation practices in Argentina and Latin America. In the following section, I will present the experience of the translators of Proyecto Desclasificados and, pondering on it, I will advance a definition of militant translation.

# 3. Translating in Proyecto Desclasificados

## *3.1. Framing human rights organizations*

### *3.1.1. Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*

From the military *coup d'état* which started on March 24, 1976, until 1983, Argentina was seized by its military forces. With military *juntas* composed of the chiefs of the three Argentinian military forces, the government was militarized, as well as all spheres of civilian life. The self-proclaimed "Proceso de Reorganización Nacional" [National Reorganization Process] implemented State terror[5] with the double aim of, on the one hand, carrying

[5] Following Daniel Feierstein (2019), I avoid the term *State terrorism*. Although the idea of a terrorist State, coined by Eduardo Luis Duhalde in 1983, proved useful during the 1980s and 1990s, it is time we updated this paradigm, especially after the uses given to the term *terrorism* since 2001. The term *terrorism* was used as an empty signifier to stigmatize any resistance to authority (Feierstein 2019, p. 50), embodied by armed militant groups in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Argentina. Presenting the government as a terrorist organization was a necessary discursive impact strategy employed in the 1980s to denounce the genocide carried out by the military forces. However, this move can nowadays lead to a 'terrorism vs. terrorism' paradigm that would potentially justify a repressive State. Therefore, a new paradigm is needed. According to Feierstein (2019, p. 55), the Argentinian military dictatorship was not terrorist but genocidal, in that it sought to annihilate and destroy specific groups of the population by means of the use

out genocide (Feierstein [2007] 2011) by using State violence to destroy certain ideological and political sectors of the Argentinian population and ultimately reorganize the population's social relations; and, on the other hand, establishing an economic model based on the concentration of capital in only a few hands (Secretaría de Derechos Humanos 2021, p. 3), that destroyed Argentinian industry and caused the country's economy to collapse (Duhalde 1983, p. 9).

The military government set up a clandestine system of kidnapping, torture and murder that resulted in the disappearance[6] of 30,000 people and the kidnapping and appropriation of more than 500 babies. Facing the genocidal military government, a group of women whose children and grandchildren were disappeared[7] started to gather in front of Casa Rosada (the national executive branch offices in Buenos Aires) to demand their re-appearance alive. These gatherings gave birth to Madres de Plaza de Mayo (1977) and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (1977), two of the most globally renowned and significant Argentinian human rights organizations. The two organized groups of women burst into the most important public space used for social demands in Argentina (the Plaza de Mayo) at a time when the use of public space, as well as any social or political expression, was prohibited (Torras, Perelman 2017).

From their origins, Madres and Abuelas learned to take advantage of the prejudices they suffered for being women and "housewives" (Barrancos 2013, p. 209). As explained by Estela de Carlotto (president of Asociación Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo) in an interview with Gabriela Castori (1999):

> Pero hay otra cuestión que es la visceral: la de mujer, la de madre, que nos impide dejar de hacer todo lo que tenemos que hacer para seguir buscando. [...] Y que para los militares el hombre era más peligroso. '¡Déjenlas a esas lloronas viejas locas!, ya se van a cansar'.
>
> [But there is another issue, which is crucial: that of being women, mothers, which stops us from abandoning everything we have to do to keep searching. […] And for the military, it was men that were dangerous. 'Leave those old crying crazy women! They'll get tired soon'].[8]

of State terror – i.e., a clandestine system of intelligence, kidnapping, torture and murder (not to be confused with State terrorism).

[6] For more information on the meaning, scope and connotations of the term *disappearance* in Argentina, see Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (1984) and CELS (1981).

[7] Given its situated meaning (i.e., to illegally kidnap, torture and murder a person), the verb *to disappear* is used here as a transitive verb (e.g. "The State disappeared 30,000 people"). As a transitive verb, the verb *to disappear* allows for a passive voice construction such as this one.

[8] Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

These women's achievements are extraordinary. They started their search together, but alone as a group, demonstrating their cause publicly and investigating the whereabouts of their children and grandchildren on their own. Thanks to their travels around the world, they made their voice heard and, as the years passed, gained global recognition and respect. Madres de Plaza de Mayo has a strong political commitment which advances and boosts the search for memory, truth and justice. Indeed, their socialization of maternity, their vindication of the revolutionary militancy of their disappeared children, their promotion of current militancy locally and globally, and their vindication of their political engagement, among other aspects, are key parts of the Argentinian human rights movements.

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo makes two other enormous contributions to society. Working collaboratively, Abuelas and U.S. American geneticist Mary Claire King developed the "index of grandpaternity" in 1984, which allowed for genetic identification of children using DNA from their grandparents. This is, indeed, a great contribution to science and society, and it represented a significant step in the search for the kidnapped grandchildren (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo undated). Their other great contributions are their legal engagement and research work in the trials – still taking place – against those responsible for the genocide carried out by the last military dictatorship in Argentina. Thanks to these two achievements, 133 kidnapped grandchildren – now adults – have been found and they have recovered their true identity, shedding light and truth on Argentinian history.

### *3.1.2. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS)*

Created in 1979, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales is an Argentinian human rights institution which promotes the protection and exercise of human rights, as well as justice and social inclusion both nationally and globally. In its origins, CELS focused on the struggle for truth and justice regarding the genocide committed by the last Argentinian military dictatorship, and it later expanded its scope to violations of human rights in periods of democracy. Nowadays, it relies heavily on research, dissemination activities and legal action to seek to consolidate a democratic State, support public policies, guarantee the exercise of human rights, accompany victims and seek justice. Its research and scope of legal action covers the search for memory, truth and justice regarding crimes committed during the last dictatorship in Argentina; institutional violence; imprisonment policies; social inclusion; economic, social and cultural human rights; mental health public policies; reforms of the justice system; migrants' rights; sexual rights and freedom of speech (CELSa). CELS also runs an important legal clinic on human rights that provides legal counsel to the population, and apprenticeships in an interdisciplinary and collaborative workspace for law

students. Last, it is worth mentioning the free and open-access handbooks CELS publishes every year with papers written by its researchers on various topics linked to human rights, that undoubtedly set the tone of the research completed within that sphere.[9]

### *3.1.3. Memoria Abierta*

The third organization, created in 2000, is an alliance of different Argentinian human rights organizations, which seeks to promote memory over the human rights violations of the recent past, as well as over resistance activities and struggles for truth and justice. This macro-organization runs a multimodal archive of several institutional and personal documentary resources, including that of CELS and Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora. Memoria Abierta also runs interviews to feed its own audiovisual archive, about the State terror of the last Argentinian military dictatorship; social movements; cultural, social and political life during democratic and dictatorship periods; militancy, among other topics. Research is also conducted within this organization in order to investigate clandestine detention centres of the last dictatorship and the systematicity of its repressive practices. With all the gathered and produced information, Memoria Abierta develops reconstructions of buildings, maps, blueprints, animations and scale models of spaces related to human rights violations during said period in Argentina. Once again, all these materials are free and can be easily accessed via the institution.[10]

## *3.2. The group of translators of Proyecto Desclasificados*

In response to a historical demand from Argentinian human rights organizations, as well as attending to internal diplomatic and political debates, in 2016 the United States announced the declassification of all documents issued by their governmental bodies and intelligence agencies that dealt with the last Argentinian military dictatorship (1976-1983). Between 2016 and 2019, four batches of declassified documents were released, a total of over 49,000 pages issued by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of State (DOS), military departments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). This project received the name of Argentina Declassification Project, and it is, according to the Office of the

[9] To access all CELS publications, please visit https://www.cels.org.ar/web/publicaciones/.
[10] To access these materials, please visit https://memoriaabierta.org.ar/wp/.

Director of National Intelligence (undated), "the largest government-to-government declassification release in United States history". This is not surprising if we consider the scope and success of the system of repressive cooperation operating in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s known as Plan Cóndor (Ministerio Público Fiscal 2018; CELSa), developed with the training, assessment, funding and technical assistance of the United States (Calloni 1994; Pérez Esquivel 1999, p. 7; Fernández, Ramírez 2015, p. 137). Indeed, the U.S. Department of State ran another three declassification projects related to military dictatorships in Latin America in that period, namely the Chile Declassification Project (1999-2000), the El Salvador Declassification Project (2018-2019) and the Guatemala Declassification Project (1994).

The declassification of U.S. documents dealing with the last Argentinian military dictatorship was a significant step towards the search for memory, truth and justice and in the search for the disappeared and their children. As remarked by the U.S. government itself, the volume of this collection of records is extraordinary and the information within it – originally produced with the aim of carrying out monitoring, intervention and control activities (CELSb) – is enormous. However, the nature of the collection poses two problems. First, its exceptional volume presents considerable effort and difficulty in searching for information and in approaching the entire collection. Second, the fact that the documents are written in English poses a language barrier that may hinder the reading of the documents, as Spanish is the official language of Argentina.

Acknowledging these problems, as well as the importance of guaranteeing access to information as a human right (Ministerio de Defensa) and the urgency of the search for grandchildren, the above-mentioned Argentinian human rights organizations joined in 2019 to create an open-access database[11] that systematizes the information produced on the basis of the 4903 documents contained in the last batch of the Argentina Declassification Project. The project, which was named Proyecto Desclasificados, is structured on two levels: the managerial level, on the one hand, composed of senior members of these organizations; and the executive level, on the other hand, composed of nineteen volunteers – including myself – who, at the time of applying to participate in the project, were undergraduate students of different disciplines, namely translation, communication, social work and labour relations, in public national universities and higher education institutes in Argentina. The tasks of these volunteers included the individual reading and interpretation of a set of declassified documents, the filling of forms that feed the database, the

[11] To access the database, please visit https://desclasificados.org.ar/.

selection of one or two fragments that they deemed representative of the content of each document and, finally, the translation into Spanish of said fragments. Senior members of the organizations, on their part, held regular meetings with the volunteers which always featured a specialist as a key speaker, who provided information on different topics related to the last Argentinian military dictatorship, such as the system of baby kidnapping and relocation by the military, the development and scope of Plan Cóndor, the ideological persecution during the dictatorship, among other topics.

In 2021, eight of the volunteers, who had graduated from different courses of study in translation, gathered to form a subgroup within Proyecto Desclasificados with the goal of revising and retranslating the translations into Spanish produced by non-translator members of the project. From its start, the group of translators has collaboratively revised over 800 translations, and has published a paratext on the Project website,[12] as well as a glossary of acronyms,[13] and held workshops and talks in different public national universities and higher education institutes of Argentina. Moreover, the group keeps a diary in which they note their debates, the information they gather and their translation criteria. This diary helps us to keep track of our decisions and negotiations, and ultimately to maintain our preferred style and positioning throughout this high volume of translated declassified documents.

The value of the translators' group's work also comes from the collaborative nature of the group. We hold meetings twice a week using a video conferencing tool and together we revise, (re)translate, conduct research and debate. No work is done outside the meetings or individually – all our work and tasks are collaborative and simultaneous. Our main goal is to revise and (re)translate all the fragments that are featured in the database, previously selected, transcribed and translated by non-translator members of Proyecto Desclasificados. In the meetings, these eight translators – each one performing a specific role within the group – take one document at a time. First, we read the whole document in English, check that the fragments have been correctly transcribed, add the page number from which the fragment has been extracted, correct any errors and finally add any textual intervention we deem appropriate in brackets. Our criteria for textual intervention are recorded in the group's translation diary. The importance given to these interventions reveals the group's concern for the distinction and visibility of both the authors' and translators' voices. In the second stage, we read the translation into Spanish rendered by our fellow project members. Then, we proceed to search all the information we need in order to revise or retranslate the fragment with resources provided by the organizations that run the

[12] To read the text, entitled *La importancia de llamarse Malvinas*, please visit https://desclasificados.org.ar/.
[13] To access the glossary, please visit https://desclasificados.org.ar/.

project. Once we gather all the information we need, we discuss the possible translation techniques to be applied and discursive options to choose. When a final agreement is reached, we retranslate the fragment, mark the document as *revised* in the database and move to the next document.

Senior members of CELS and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo – researchers and professionals from different fields such as archival science, sociology, communication and law – attend some of these meetings. On such occasions, translators and senior members of the organizations discuss the retranslations rendered up to that moment on the basis of different approaches coming from their respective disciplines. These meetings provide the translation process with both a transdisciplinary and an institutional framework. Both the group of translators and its products have triple institutional affiliation and, therefore, the translation process and products are discussed, revised, modified and devised horizontally, considering the institutional goals, values and traditions.

Apart from the translations themselves, the group of translators of Proyecto Desclasificados has also produced three other outputs in its four years of existence. First, the glossary, which lists words and acronyms frequently found in the declassified documents and their translations into Spanish. This tool is not only designed for database users but for Proyecto Desclasificados members, too. As explained above, there is great urgency in searching for truth and justice over the crimes of genocide and especially for the disappeared and their children – the latter are still alive, living under false identities, given to them after their kidnapping. As a group within Proyecto Desclasificados and aware of the time pressure, these eight translators aim to facilitate the reading and understanding of this large volume of declassified documents as much as possible. The glossary becomes, then, a tool for deciphering the meaning of the several acronyms that appear throughout the collection of documents, as well as understanding the scope and aims of certain positions, agencies and organizations, some of whom no longer exist. Altogether, the glossary allows for a better and more comprehensive reading of the declassified documents and, therefore, a better and more time-efficient interpretation and understanding of their importance in the search for memory, truth and justice.

Visibility and gender militancy are also at the core of the drafting process of the glossary. As published on the project website, the glossary is introduced by a paratext signed by the translators' group which briefly describes the group's criteria for the creation of this tool and asserts its commitment to the movement of Memory, Truth and Justice. The glossary itself, moreover, indicates whether the featured translation of a term or an acronym is official (i.e., as recognized by the institution in question), if it pre-exists but is not official (i.e., that circulates widely in the media, for example) or has been developed by the Proyecto Desclasificados translators' group. As

regards their commitment to feminist movements and agendas, the translators made explicit interventions in the glossary by refusing to specify grammatical gender when Spanish grammar requires it. In order to avoid using masculine or feminine grammatical gender (typically signalled by *o* and *a*, respectively) in their translations, the group has used *x*, which constitutes a marked option that has been circulating recently in some Argentinian discourses committed to gender agendas. Moreover, this choice is explicitly attributed to the group by means of the use of square brackets, a widely recognized strategy that holds translators accountable for the text within them. In many ways, therefore, the glossary directs the attention to the translators' group, giving them visibility, both on the website and in the translation community, enhancing its role within Proyecto Desclasificados.

The second output is a paratext on our translation of the name *Falkland Islands*. The sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the Islas Malvinas has always been a sensitive topic for the Argentinian nation, and its government has consistently brought the problem to international organizations.[14] In its 1965 General Assembly 2065 (XX) Resolution, the United Nations states that this occupation is an instance of colonialism.[15] CELS, Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo and Memoria Abierta all vindicate Argentina's sovereignty over the Malvinas (Lorenz 2012; Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo *et al*. 2022; Memoria Abierta). Acknowledging the great power that the action of naming entails (Ashcroft 2009, pp. 27-28) – indeed, the renaming of land is "a long-standing feature of colonialism" (Ashcroft *et al.* 2007, p. 28) – and aligning the engagement of our framing institutions with this issue, the group of translators discussed the translation of "Falkland Islands" (as it appears in the declassified documents issued by the U.S.) at length.

In commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the war of Malvinas, the group published a paratext on the website of Proyecto Desclasificados entitled *La importancia de llamarse Malvinas* [The importance of being (called) Malvinas] (Escobar-Aguiar 2022). This paratext collects the reflections of the group of translators and explains our decision to make explicit intratextual interventions in our translations for documents that include the names "Falkland Islands" or "Falklands". After continuing and thorough debates with senior members of the human rights organizations, the group decided to keep the names "Falkland Islands" and "Falklands" to make fully visible the positioning and ideology of the U.S. government regarding these islands. That is, by naming them "Falklands", the U.S. asserts Britain's

[14] For more information on this topic, visit https://cancilleria.gob.ar/es/politica-exterior/cuestion-malvinas.

[15] https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/222/03/IMG/NR022203.pdf?OpenElement.

colonialist sovereignty over the islands. Because naming matters, the group retained these terms in their translations, even when their connotations are radically opposite to their own ideology and militancy, in order to denounce the U.S. denial of Argentina's rights. However, as they explicitly state in this paratext, these translators will not let any opportunity to claim the sovereignty of Argentina over the islands go by and, therefore, for every "Falkland Islands" and "Falklands" they keep in their translation, they add the names "Islas Malvinas" and "Malvinas" in square brackets. Once again, the group signals their intratextual interventions by means of this punctuation mark, which holds them accountable for the political implications of the use of the term "Malvinas" and serves as a marker of their voice in translated discourse. In this reflective paratext, Escobar-Aguiar (2022) shows how these translators not only address this issue, but also raise their voices to explicitly display their commitment to the struggle for national sovereignty over the Islas Malvinas.

Last, the group has held free, open-access annual workshops and talks at Universidad Nacional de La Plata and at Instituto de Enseñanza Superior en Lenguas Vivas Juan Ramón Fernández since 2021, as a group and with senior members of CELS. At a general level, the aim of these presentations is to communicate their work and publicize the database, so that more people (researchers, persons concerned, and the general public) use it, read it and interpret it. At a more specific level, the workshops and talks offer a first-hand description of the creation, development and operation of a socially and politically engaged group of translators working on an unprecedented project led by three of the most renowned Argentinian human rights organizations. Depending on the audience, these presentations may feature a theoretical analysis of the group's work based on different Translation Studies approaches.

It is clear, then, the collaborative and transdisciplinary nature of the translators' group's work and the importance we give to accessibility, readability, visibility, promotion and positioning in translation when engaged with the search for memory, truth and justice. As evidenced by our commitment to the institutions that frame the group and its discursive activity, we acknowledge that the search by Madres and Abuelas, marked by a white-cloth diaper covering their heads, is intimate and collective. Rising from the loss of their disappeared children and grandchildren, these women are key figures in the human rights struggles in Argentina and Latin America and a powerful symbol of feminism. The group of translators follows the event that triggered our social engagement *as translators* – the struggle of the Madres and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo against the genocide committed by the last Argentinian military dictatorship and against the ideological and economic consequences it entailed. Their now 48-year search for their children and grandchildren serves as an enlightening point of no return which

compels us as translators to act in such a way that the effects of this search are even more deepened and extended. Our loyalty is not with the texts we translate, not with our translations, not with our readership, and even less with the U.S. drafting officers and agents, but with Madres and Abuelas's struggle for memory, truth and justice.

### *3.3. Militant translation*

At this point and after having reviewed the experience of the group of translators of Proyecto Desclasificados, we can now focus on developing a new concept that acknowledges the specificity of Argentinian-situated politically engaged translation practices. Militant translation comprises a series of collaborative translation practices aimed at and designed by the desire of expanding the effects of the event (Badiou [1988] 2005) that triggered the social and political engagement and, in fact, the birth of the militant translator. As any other militant subject, militant translators are faithful only to the event that sparked their social and political engagement. Their interpretation of the event and what "expanding its effects" means and entails is discussed with their militant peers. Together, they form an organization that frames and gives meaning to all their activity. It is this collaboration that ensures not only the possibility of performing actions in the present but also the continuity of their action in the future in the hands of peers.

Given the utmost importance of the organization in which militant translators develop their tasks, militant translation features elements typical of collaborative translation and institutional translation, but differs in other ways. It does, indeed, recognize the necessity of different agents' democratic interplay and, therefore, the intrinsic plurality of translation practices within the organization. As in instances of institutional translation, the volume of texts to be translated may be high, leading to a preference for standardization, consistency of vocabulary and style, and regularization. Militant translation as a product and as a process is framed by the organization's norms, values and discourse but militant translators cannot be thought of as vehicles of power or subordinates to the institution. As active members of the organization, militant translators *are* the institution. They do not translate the institution or for the institution, but for the cause they follow, to which they are ultimately faithful. The organization's agenda is *their* agenda and, therefore, they put their professional, academic and militant knowledge to use to decide on the translation strategies to be used according to the debates they hold with other militants of the organization.

With a strong Argentinian situatedness, the concept of militant translation can address the problems or grey areas around the notion of

activist translation, which have been highlighted by translation scholars. As regards the problematic resistance paradigm, militancy theory provides us with a theoretical gear that encourages us to redefine fidelity and provide the specificity that the resistance paradigm lacks. Faithful to their triggering event, militant translators do not need an opponent and they do not demand anything. They pre-exist before any demands and any opponent they may find. They are born as a consequence of an event that shakes their very core and serves as their engine, and they will continue to exist as long as they seek to extend its consequences. Moreover, militant translators openly assert their political and ideological stance by proudly claiming their affiliation to an organization that vindicates the event in all its specificity, raising flags with names and surnames, historic contexts and geopolitical coordinates. In this sense, neither neutrality nor impartiality can be expected from the militant translator.

## 4. Conclusion

Drawing from my experience as volunteer translator in an important militant project related to human rights in Argentina and reviewing the literature on translation, activist translation and militancy, this article has sought to contribute to the creation of an Argentinian-situated body of knowledge on politically engaged translation practices that acknowledges and vindicates Latin American and Argentinian traditions in the analysis of Latin American and Argentinian-situated translation practices and processes.

The Argentinian-situated use of the noun *militancy* marks the specific coordinates of the politically motivated and socially engaged participation of civil groups and organizations, while evoking the long and rich tradition of social and political mobilization of Argentina. As such, the semantic field of militancy holds dialogues with local genealogies that are different – and sometimes even explicitly opposed to – Western genealogies. In this sense, militancy entails embracing our intrinsic political dimension as social subjects and embodying a non-individual, with-others life, motivated by and engaged with the community in which militant subjects develop their roles.

As I understand it, the militant translators' task is to extend the effects of the event that pushed them into existence, by joining others in the pursuit of a collective cause. In this sense, militant translation is nothing but openly political. Politically organized, militant translators negotiate their role within the organization, with the optimistic conviction that others will continue their legacy. The concept and practice of militant translation allows us, therefore, to pick up the thread extended by thousands of militants before us and keep weaving translation into the thick fabric of a Latin American militancy tradition.

**Bionote:** María Escobar-Aguiar holds a five-year university degree in Translation from Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP, Argentina), where she now teaches technical-scientific translation. She is currently a PhD student at Universitat de Vic-Universitat Central de Catalunya (UVic-UCC, Spain) and of UNLP. She has been awarded two DAAD scholarships to study at Universität Bielefeld and Bergische Universität Wuppertal (Germany) and an EVC-CIN scholarship to conduct a one-year research project at UNLP. In 2023, she was awarded a CONICET scholarship to conduct her doctoral research at UNLP and UVic-UCC. Since 2019, she is a member of Proyecto Desclasificados (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales and Memoria Abierta), where she performs translation and research tasks. She has also worked at the Historical Archive of Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. Her current research focuses on the articulation of translation, archive, militancy, memory and gender.

**Author's address:** mariaescobaraguiar@gmail.com

# References


Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo undated, *Genetic Aspect - The Identity*. https://abuelas.org.ar/idiomas/english/genetic.htm (15.8.2023).

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, Madres de Plaza de Mayo Línea Fundadora, Familiares de Desaparecidos y Detenidos por Razones Políticas, H.I.J.O.S. Capital, Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos, Asamblea Permanente por los Derechos Humanos La Matanza, Asociación Buena Memoria, Comisión Memoria, Verdad y Justicia Zona Norte, Familiares y Compañeros de los 12 de la Santa Cruz, Fundación Memoria Histórica y Social Argentina, Liga Argentina por los Derechos Humanos, Movimiento Ecuménico por los Derechos Humanos 2022, *A 46 años del golpe genocida reafirmamos la lucha*, March 24. https://www.abuelas.org.ar/noticia/a-anos-del-golpe-genocida-reafirmamos-la-lucha-1598 (15.8.2023).

Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo 2022, *La Abuela de las Malvinas*, April 2. https://www.abuelas.org.ar/noticia/la-abuela-de-las-malvinas-1608 (15.8.2023).

Ashcroft B., Griffiths G. and Tiffin H. 2007, *Post-Colonial Studies. The Key Concepts*, Routledge, London/New York.

Ashcroft B. 2009, *Caliban's Voice. The Transformation of English in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Routledge, London/New York.

Badiou A. 1988, *L'Être et l'événement*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris; translation into English by Feltham O. 2005, *Being and Event*, Continuum, London/New York.

Badiou A. 2006, *Logiques des mondes. L'Être et l'événement, 2,* Éditions du Seuil, Paris; translation into Spanish by Rodríguez M.C. 2008, *La lógica de los mundos. El ser y el acontecimiento 2*, Manantial, Buenos Aires.

Baker M. 2006, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*, Routledge, London/New York.

Baker M. 2019, *Audiovisual Translation and Activism*, in Pérez-González L. (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Audiovisual Translation*, Routledge, New York, pp. 453-467.

Barrancos D. 2013, *Mujeres y crisis en la Argentina: de las Madres de Plaza de Mayo a las piqueteras*, in Lanes Marshall J., Marcilhacy D., Ralle M. and Rodríguez M. (eds.), *Los conflictos en los mundos ibéricos e iberoamericanos contemporáneos. Entre las elaboraciones sociales y políticas y las construcciones simbólicas*, Éditions Hispaniques, Paris, pp. 201-224.

Basit S. 2018, *Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran–Pakistan Relations*, in "Small Wars and Insurgencies" 29 [5-6], pp. 1040-1064.

Berardi-Spairani A.P. 2020, *Mundo militante: algunas caracterizaciones de la militancia en la provincia de Jujuy, Argentina*, in "Universitas" 33, pp. 181-200.

Boéri J. 2008, *A Narrative Account of the Babels vs. Naumann Controversy: Competing Perspectives on Activism in Conference Interpreting*, in "The Translator" 14 [1], pp. 21-50.

Boéri J. 2020, *Activism*, in Baker M. and Saldanha G. (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 1-5.

Boéri J. and Delgado Luchner C. 2021, *Ethics of Activist Translation and Interpreting*, in Koskinen K. and Pokorn N.K. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 245-261.

Boéri J. and Maier C. (eds.) 2010, *Compromiso social y traducción/interpretación – Translation/Interpreting and Social Activism*, ECOS, Granada.

Briskin L. 2012, *Resistance, Mobilization and Militancy: Nurses on Strike*, in "Nursing

Inquiry" 19, pp. 285-296.
Buckley J. 2021, *Vietnamese Labour Militancy Capital-Labour Antagonisms and Self-Organised Struggles*, Routledge, London/New York.
Calloni S. 1994, *Los archivos del horror del Operativo Cóndor*. http://www.derechos.org/nizkor/doc/condor/calloni.html (15.8.2023).
Canelo P. 2021, *La última dictadura marcó una bisagra en la historia argentina*, March 24. https://www.conicet.gov.ar/la-ultima-dictadura-marco-una-bisagra-en-la-historia-argentina/ (15.8.2023).
Carbonell i Cortés O. 1999, *Traducción y cultura. De la ideología al texto*, Ediciones Colegio de España, Salamanca.
Carcelén-Estrada A. 2018, *Translation and Activism*, in Fernández F. and Evans J. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 254-269.
Castori G. 1999, *Entrevista a Estela de Carlotto*, in "El Mensajero" 3.
CELSa undated, *Presentación*. https://www.cels.org.ar/web/presentacion/ (15.8.2023).
CELSb undated, *Desclasificados*. https://www.desclasificados.org.ar/ (15.8.2023).
CELS 1981, *La política de desapariciones forzadas de personas*. https://cels.org.ar/sitios/publicacionesenladictadura/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/03/la-politica-de-desapariciones-forzadas-de-personas.pdf (15.8.2023).
Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas 1984, *Nunca más. Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas*, in Ministerio de Cultura de la Nación, *El Nunca más y los crímenes de la dictadura*, Ministerio de Cultura de la Nación, Buenos Aires.
Cordingley A. and Frigau Manning C. 2017, *What Is Collaborative Translation?*, in Cordingley A. and Frigau Manning C. (eds.), *Collaborative Translation. From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*, Bloomsbury Publishing, London, pp. 1-30.
Dávalos P. 2002, *Movimiento indígena ecuatoriano: Construcción política y epistémica, in Estudios y Otras Prácticas Intelectuales Latinoamericanas en Cultura y Poder*, CLACSO, Caracas, pp. 21-46.
de la Garza A., Hernández-Espinosa C. and Rosar R. 2022, *Embroidery as Activist Translation in Latin America*, in "TEXTILE" 20 [2], pp. 168-181.
Delgado Luchner C. and Kherbiche L. 2019, *Ethics Training for Humanitarian Interpreters Working in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings*, in "Journal of War & Culture Studies" 12 [3], pp. 251-267.
De Sousa Alves D.A. 2021, *Tradução e Ética: Sobre ética da tradução como uma prática social de reflexão consciente*, in "Linguagem & Ensino" 24 [1], pp. 1-12.
Drugan J. and Tipton R. 2017, *Translation, Ethics and Social Responsibility*, in "The Translator" 23 [2], pp. 119-125.
Duhalde L.E. 1983, *El estado terrorista argentino*, Ediciones El Caballito, Buenos Aires.
Duraner J.E. 2021, *Translate to Resist: An Analysis on the Role of Activist Translation/Translators in the LGBTI+ Movement in Turkey*, in "Translation and Interpreting Studies" 16 [2], pp. 291-315.
Escobar-Aguiar M. 2022, *La importancia de llamarse Malvinas*, in "Proyecto Desclasificados". https://desclasificados.org.ar/ (15.8.2023).
Exposito J.E. 2015, *Lógicas del acontecimiento. Alain Badiou como pensador de la crisis del Marxismo*, in "Eikasia" 64 [5], pp. 217-244.
Feierstein D. [2007] 2011, *El genocidio como práctica social. Entre el nazismo y la experiencia argentina*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Buenos Aires.
Feierstein D. 2019, *La importancia de los conceptos en la construcción de representaciones colectivas*, in Badano M. del R. (comp.), *Educación Superior y*

*derechos humanos. Reflexiones, apuestas y desafíos*, Editorial UADER, Entre Ríos, pp. 47-65.

Fernández J.A. and Ramírez A. 2015, *A 40 años del Operativo Cóndor*, in Palummo J., Benetti P.R. and Vaccotti L. (coords.), *A 40 años del Cóndor. De las coordinaciones represivas a la construcción de las políticas públicas regionales en derechos humanos*, RAADH-IPPDH del MERCOSUR, pp. 135-156. https://www.raadh.mercosur.int/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A-40-a%c3%b1os-del-C%c3%b3ndor.pdf (15.8.2023).

Godayol P. 1999, *Escriure (a) la frontera: autores bilingües, traductores culturals*, in "Quaderns" 3, pp. 29-37.

Godayol P. 2013, *Metaphors, Women and Translation: From* les belles infidèles *to* la frontera, in "Gender and Language" 7 [1], pp. 97-116.

Gould R.R. and Tahmasebian K. 2020, *Introduction: Translation and Activism in the Time of Now*, in Gould R.R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 1-9.

Gow J., Olonisakin F. and Dijxhoorn E. (eds.) 2013, *Militancy and Violence in West Africa: Religion, Politics and Radicalisation*, Routledge, New York.

Grabe S. 2022, *Feminist Approaches to Gender Equity in Perú: The Roles of Conflict, Militancy, and Pluralism in Feminist Activism*, in "Frontiers in Psychology" 13, pp.1-13.

Helfert V. 2020, *Between Pacifism and Militancy: Socialist Women in the First Austrian Republic, 1918–1934*, in "Diplomacy & Statecraft" 31 [4], pp. 648-672.

Kallas J. 2023, *Retooling Militancy: Labour Revitalization and Fixed-Duration Strikes*, in "BJIR" 61, pp. 68-88.

Kang J-H. 2020, *Institutional Translation*, in Baker M. and Saldanha G. (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 256-261.

Kendall E. 2021, *Jihadi Militancy and Houthi Insurgency in Yemen*, in Sheehan M.A., Marquardt E. and Collins L. (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of U.S. Counterterrorism and Irregular Warfare Operations*, Routledge, London, pp. 83-94.

Koskinen K. 2011, *Institutional Translation*, in Gambier Y. and van Doorslaer L. (eds.), *Handbook of Translation Studies Vol. 2*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 54-60.

Koskinen K. and Kuusi P. 2017, *Translator Training for Language Activists Agency and Empowerment of Minority Language Translators*, in "trans-kom" 10 [2], pp. 188-213.

Koskinen K. and Pokorn N.K. (eds.) 2020, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics*, Routledge, London/New York.

Lander E. (ed.) 2003, *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas*, CLACSO, Buenos Aires.

Longa F. 2017, *Formas organizativas y ethos militantes*, Teseo Press, Buenos Aires. https://www.teseopress.com/ethosmilitantes (15.8.2023).

López Medel M. 2021, *Lenguaje no sexista y traducción institucional*, in "Transletters. International Journal of Translation and Interpreting" 5, pp. 119-138.

Lorenz F. 2012, *II. Lobos con piel de oveja malvineras*, in Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (ed.), *Derechos humanos en Argentina. Informe 2012*, Siglo Veintiuno, Buenos Aires, pp. 461-479.

Marchart O. 2009, *El pensamiento político posfundacional. La diferencia política en Nancy, Lefort, Badiou y Laclau*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Buenos Aires.

Marche G. 2019, *Sexuality, Subjectivity, and LGBTQ Militancy in the United States*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

Massetti A. 2009, *La década piquetera (1995-2005). Acción colectiva y protesta social de los movimientos territoriales urbanos*, Nueva Trilce, Buenos Aires.
Memoria Abierta undated, *Colección Guerra de Malvinas*. https://memoriaabierta.indice.ar/fondoserie/16-coleccion-guerra-de-malvinas (15.8.2023).
*Merriam Webster* 2023, *Militancy*. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/militancy (15.8.2023).
Meschonnic H. 2007, *Éthique et politique du traduire*, Éditions Verdier, Lagrasse.
Ministerio de Defensa undated, *Política de Clasificación*. https://www.argentina.gob.ar/defensa/archivos-abiertos/sistema-de-archivos-de-la-defensa/politica-de-clasificacion (15.8.2023).
Ministerio Público Fiscal 2018, *Alegato del Ministerio Público Fiscal. Plan Cóndor y Automotores Orletti II. Causas 1504, 1951, 2054 y 1976*, Dirección de Relaciones Institucionales, Buenos Aires. https://www.mpf.gob.ar/plan-condor/files/2019/02/Alegato-del-MPF-en-Plan-Condor.pdf (15.8.2023).
Moghadam A. 2013, *Militancy and Political Violence in Shiism Trends and Patterns*, Routledge, London/New York.
Naz A., Hussain M., Khan W., Alam A., Daraz U., Mughal I. and Ibrahim 2013, *Militancy: A Myth or Reality. An Exploratory Study of the Socio-economic and Religious Forces Behind Militancy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan*, in "Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology" 10 [2], pp. 25-40.
Neogi D. 2022, *Women's Struggles in the Kashmir Militancy War*, in "Journal of International Women's Studies" 23 [6], pp. 1-13.
O'Brien S. 2011, *Collaborative Translation*, in Gambier Y. and van Doorslaer L. (eds.), *Handbook of Translation Studies Vol. 2*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 17-20.
Office of the Director of National Intelligence undated, *Argentina Declassification Project: Overview*. https://www.intelligence.gov/argentina/overview (15.8.2023).
Ojo J.S. 2020, *Governing "Ungoverned Spaces" in the Foliage of Conspiracy: Toward (Re)ordering Terrorism, from Boko Haram Insurgency, Fulani Militancy to Banditry in Northern Nigeria*, in "African Security" 13 [1], pp. 77-110.
Pektas S. and Leman J. (eds.) 2019, *Militant Jihadism Today and Tomorrow*, Leuven University Press, Leuven.
Pérez Esquivel A. 1999, *Prólogo*, in Calloni S., *Los años del lobo. Operación Cóndor,* Ediciones Continente, Buenos Aires, pp. 7-10.
Pym A. 2012, *On Translator Ethics. Principles for Mediation Between Cultures*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia.
Quijano A. 2000, *Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina*, in Lander E. (comp.), *La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas*, CLACSO, Buenos Aires, pp. 201-244.
Schäffner C., Tcaciuc L.S. and Tesseur W. 2014, *Translation Practices in Political Institutions: A Comparison of National, Supranational, and Non-governmental Organisations*, in "Perspectives: Studies in Translatology" 22 [4], pp. 493-510.
Secretaría de Derechos Humanos 2021, *Memoria argentina para el mundo. Patrimonio del Nunca Más*. http://www.museositioesma.gob.ar/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Libro-UNESCO-digital.pdf (15.8.2023).
Selci D. 2018, *Teoría de la militancia. Organización y poder popular*, Editorial Las Cuarenta y El río sin orillas, Buenos Aires.
Selim S. 2016, *Text and Context. Translating in a State of Emergency*, in Baker M. (ed.), *Translating Dissent. Voices* from *and* with *the Egyptian revolution*, Routledge, New York/London, pp. 77-87.

Simon S. 1996, *Gender in Translation*, Routledge, London/New York.

Spoturno M.L. 2022, *Ethos colectivo y prácticas de escritura y (auto) traducción en colaboración: El caso de* Revenge of the Apple / Venganza de la manzana, *de Alicia Partnoy*, in "Revista Letral" 28, pp. 46-72.

Svampa M. 2005, *La sociedad excluyente. La Argentina bajo el signo del neoliberalismo*, Taurus, Buenos Aires.

*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* 2022, *Militant*, Harper Collins Publishers. https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=militancy (15.8.2023).

Torras V. and Perelman M. 2017, *Las Madres de las Plazas: "Sobre la marcha fuimos naciendo"*, in "Open Democracy" October 3. https://www.opendemocracy.net/es/las-madres-de-las-plazas-sobre-la-marcha-fuimos-naciendo/ (15.8.2023).

Tymoczko M. 2006, *Reconceptualizing Translation Theory: Integrating Non-Western Thought about Translation*, in Hermans T. (ed.), *Translating Others Vol. I*, St. Jerome Publishing, Manchester, pp. 13-32.

Tymoczko M. (ed.) 2010, *Translation, Resistance, Activism: Essays on the Role of Translators as Agents of Change*, University of Massachusetts Press, Cambridge, MA.

UN General Assembly 16 December 1984, *2065 (XX) Question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas)*. https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/A_RES_2065-Eng.pdf (15.8.2023).

Zwischenberger C. 2020, *Translaboration. Exploring Collaboration in Translation and Translation in Collaboration*, in "Target" 32 [2], pp. 173-190.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 41-65
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p41
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# SARAH AUSTIN'S TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY FOR NATIONAL EDUCATION IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPE

CLAUDIA CAPANCIONI
LINCOLN BISHOP UNIVERSITY

**Abstract** – This article examines the pioneering work of the British writer Sarah Austin (née Taylor, 1793-1867) who, in the nineteenth century, asserted her intellectual and political agency as a translator. A highly acclaimed interpreter of innovative philosophical and scholarly texts originally produced in French and German, Austin ascertained the high-level competence and agency crucial to producing a text for monolingual readers and the significant role that translation plays in stimulating social, political, and cultural change. Notably, translation skills were at the basis of her enduring contribution to shaping the discourse on national education in nineteenth-century Britain, which started with her translation into English of Victor Cousin's *Rapport sur l'État de l'instruction publique dans quelques pays de l'Allemagne et particulièrement en Prusse* (1833). This article reclaims her engagement with intellectual and political debates on compulsory education as a transnational, plurilingual advocate for primary education, and demonstrates how translation activism sustains archival research that recovers women's agency and revises historiographies of translation studies. It focuses on Austin's *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia* (1834) together with *On National Education* (1839) and *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women* (1857) to show how, in the nineteenth century, Austin understands that, in the words of Patricia Hill Collins, "honing skills of translation constitutes both an important intellectual challenge and a political necessity" (in Castro, Ergun 2017, p. xii). In *Women and Education, 1800-1980* (2004), Jane Martin and Joyce Goodman claim a place for Austin in the British history of education. This article asserts her innovative contribution with her distinctive act of cross-cultural literary production to widen our understanding of her transnational legacy as an advocate of primary education by examining specifically her translation theory and practice along with her writing on national education and women's education.

**Keywords**: activism; national education; transnationalism; Victor Cousin; William E. Gladstone.

## 1. Introduction

In the nineteenth century, translating afforded the British writer Sarah Austin authorship, agency, and financial independence. Most significantly, the skills she honed as a translator empowered her to contribute to intellectual and political debates on national education transnationally. From the beginning of

her long and successful career in the 1820s, she believed in the agency of the translator as a cultural mediator, and as a promoter of social and cultural change. She asserted her intellectual and political agency by disseminating literature and new thinking from France and Germany in particular. Her practice fostered an active, authoritative role for the woman translator. A highly acclaimed translator, she anticipated approaches to agency and visibility that scholars such as Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, and Barbara Godard have identified in feminist translators. Her status as a translator was noticeable from the beginning of the 1830s, for Austin's name appeared on the title page of her work and her initials signed prefaces that outlined her decision making. Although she fulfilled Victorian gendered expectations by identifying herself as a "mere translator" (Austin 1832, p. viii) in the prefaces, her paratexts simultaneously exhibit her acute awareness of the politics of translation, along with her intellectual knowledge. They state her agency in creating the target texts, interpreting the source texts, promoting her political views, and assessing the socio-cultural conditions of Victorian Britain. She chose translation as a tool to stimulate change and, as her translation practice demonstrates, her pioneering experiments remain relevant almost two centuries later in reconfiguring a historiography of translation studies and of translation theory that takes into account women's intellectual agency and activism. Significantly, Austin "navigated linguistic, cultural and epistemological communities that were not equal" (Hill Collins 2017, p. xiv), to shape the nineteenth-century debates on national education in her native England and in Europe.

This article reclaims her lasting engagement with intellectual and political debates on education as a transnational, plurilingual advocate for compulsory primary education. Through the lens of translation activism, it establishes how Austin's commitment to national education represents a continuous thread in her writing career, linking her translation practice with her political activities, and her theory of translation with her moral values. Moreover, it maintains that translation activism assists archival research which revises historiographies of translation studies. Austin translated into English significant new work, both on the science of education and on the implementation of national education policy, produced in France and Germany. By gathering this material, she connected major thinkers and politicians across linguistic and national borders. She also promoted national educational reform in Britain through writing reviews, articles, and editorials, as well as lobbying relevant politicians such as William Ewart Gladstone, with whom she communicated for three decades, from 1839 to at least 1864,[1]

[1] In Janet Ross's *Three Generations of English Women: Memoirs and Correspondence of John Taylor, Mrs Sarah Austin, and Lady Duff Gordon* (1888 and 1893), the first of Austin's letters to Gladstone is dated 1839, but in an earlier letter, dated 1838, she writes to Victor Cousin of

before he became the British prime minister whose government passed the first Elementary Education Act in 1870. Their correspondence exemplifies what in *The Times* obituary is defined as "[t]he power she exercised in society" (1867, p. 10). Austin's advice on the latest research on education studies and on educational texts was sought after by many in her transnational, plurilingual circles. In *Three Generations of English Women: Memoirs and Correspondence of John Taylor, Mrs Sarah Austin, and Lady Duff Gordon* (1888),[2] her granddaughter, Janet Ross (née Duff Gordon, 1842-1927), tells Austin's life story through a selection of her correspondence with some of the most influential national and international thinkers of her time. Ross emphasizes that "[t]he chief interest of her life was Popular Education" (Ross 1893, p. 99) and highlights this thread through Austin's letters to friends, intellectuals, and politicians who shared her interest in this cause, but only briefly mentions her publications. This article examines three of her works that are central to understanding Austin's transnational activism: *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia* (1834), *On National Education* (1839), and *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women* (1857). Austin's life-long advocacy for national education, it argues, is crucial to a wider study of her agency as a Victorian woman translator.

## 2. Shaping intellectual and political debates in nineteenth-century Europe

In *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism* (2020), Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian reflect on the agency of "translators, activists, and academics concerned with the politics of language-labour" in our present time (2020, p. 1). It is interesting that, in the nineteenth century, Austin faces similar concerns and uses the term *labour* to describe both her work as a translator and her lobbying for primary education. In her prefaces to two 1833 publications, *Selections from the Old Testament, or the Religion, Morality, and Poetry of The Hebrew Scriptures Arranged under Heads* and *Characteristics of Goethe*, for example, she calls her publications "my humble labour" (Austin 1833a, p. iii) and "this humble attempt" (Austin 1833b, p. xlii) respectively. In a letter to the French historian and politician

Gladstone's involvement in the discussions held by young Conservative party members regarding the reform of church schools. See Ross's 1893 *Three Generations of English Women*, pp. 141-143.

[2] In 1893, a second edition was published by T. Fisher Unwin under the title, *Three Generations of English Women: Memoirs and Correspondence of Susannah Taylor, Sarah Austin, and Lady Duff Gordon*. I cite from the second edition. See Capancioni (2017) on Ross's multigenerational, matrilinear epistolary biography.

François Guizot (1787-1874), she describes her gratification in being awarded an annual pension of £100 in the 1849 Civil List and her "pride and satisfaction" in accepting it as "proof that my humble labours have been thought useful" (Ross 1893, p. 235). Writing to Gladstone, in view of the cause of public education that unites them across political differences, Austin identifies herself as "so humble a fellow-labourer" (Ross 1893, p. 144) and "the humblest of your fellow-labourers" (p. 283). Her epigraph in *On National Education* also associates her choice of the term *labour* with John Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644), a pamphlet within which he argues that those who are at the service of the British nation, such as the members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, ought to be "wise and faithful labourers" (Austin 1839, p. 108).[3] Like Milton, Austin sees her country as a nation pursuing knowledge beyond the interests of political parties. Whilst labour used as a noun stresses the significance of her agency, her active participation in the publishing industry; the adjective *humble* resonates with the tensions between Victorian ideals of womanhood and her professional, public status as a woman writer. By qualifying her work through humility, Austin balances cautiously her authorial voice as a competent translator who disseminates new and potentially controversial European ideas, such as Victor Cousin's *Rapport sur l'État de l'instruction publique dans quelques pays de l'Allemagne et particulièrement en Prusse* (1833), with the expectations of Victorian gender norms in both standards of content and authorship. Gendering labour through feminine qualities, she softens the representation of her intellectual ingenuity but, simultaneously, claims her authorship as a visible translator. In her long, scholarly prefaces, which today give access to her translation practice and theory, Austin articulates her authorial identity and her understanding of the Victorian publishing market, within which she knows the "translator's task is, indeed, fleeting and fragile" (Bhabha 2021, p. x). The literary scholar Judith Johnston, for instance, notices Austin's "business-like and capable approach" (2013, p. 62) in her correspondence with the publisher John Murray II. Austin was experienced in suggesting projects directly to publishers, identifying profitable projects through which she could also raise the profile of the cause she sustained.

As a public education labourer, Austin disseminates relevant materials produced by European intellectuals involved in researching and writing policies on national education because she is aware of their timeliness in shaping the climate of the debate on the subject. This is an "important characteristic of activist translation" (2020, p. 4) in the opinion of Gould and Tahmasebian, who discuss how activist translators know how to motivate readers, they need to "reconfigure" their translations in the times and

[3] Milton's words are cited here directly from Austin's *On National Education* (1839).

circumstances in which they produce them (p. 4). Austin may not indisputably fit into one of the four paradigms they identify in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism* but, in advocating national education, she displays some of the characteristics of the translation activist as a pioneer of new thinking, including reconfiguring her work for a target audience under time pressure. The obituary in *The Times* summarizes her writing career by locating her authorial voice in her prefaces:

> Mrs Austin never aspired to original literary composition. Except in some of the prefaces to her translations, she disclaimed all right to address the public in her own person. She, therefore, devoted the singular power of her pen to reproduce in English many of the best contemporary works of German and French literature. (Anon. 1867, p. 10)

The exceptional quality of her translations is also praised in *The Athenaeum* obituary. In this literary magazine, which published her work, they suggest that her texts are "not so much translations as reproductions in another language of her French and German originals" (1867, p. 209). Moreover, with a definition that recalls her assessment of Goethe as *the Artist* in *Characteristics of Goethe* (Austin 1833, p. xxiii), she is hailed as a "complete, selected and distinguished literary artist" (1867, p. 209). Austin's "humble labour", this article contends, also brings to light her role as an activist translator who contributed to political change by developing the discourse of national education in the nineteenth century and connecting the most relevant contemporary minds and stakeholders to advocate national and compulsory education from an early age as the basis of equal opportunities.

Austin's advocacy for national education is central to assessing her intellectual and political agency as a pioneering translator who relied on translation as an intentional "socially-activist activity" (Flotow 2011, p. 4). In 2002, the historian Joyce Goodman studied Austin's writing on national education within the context of nineteenth-century England and comparative education; then, in *Women and Education, 1800-1980* (2004), which she co-authored with Jane Martin, she claimed a place for Austin in the British history of education. This article examines her translation theory and practice along with her writing on national education and on women's education to widen our understanding of her transnational legacy as an advocate of primary education. It examines her "translation literacy" (Bertacco, Vallorani 2021, p. 9) and how it is central to her intellectual and political agency. In *The Relocation of Culture: Translations, Migrations, Borders* (2021), Simona Bertacco and Nicoletta Vallorani propose translation literacy as a "critical literacy […] that can be established by seeing translation as an experimental and epistemological condition of human life" (p. 16). Intersecting translation and migration studies, they conceptualize translation "as a relocating act: of meanings and texts, but also people and cultures" (p. 1), emphasizing the

constant and multiple ways in which processes of translation are inherent, not only in communicating and expressing the complexities of human experience but also in seeing the nuanced intricacies of the world. They affirm translation "as a foundational epistemological and communicative mode, a condition of living, and as one of the most important processes that train us to become cultural agents" (p. 22). Austin's wide-ranging use of translation speaks of the way in which it provides her with a method of deciphering her European cultural, social, and political contexts "translingually" (Bertacco, Vallorani 2021, p. 16) and transnationally.

This study of Austin's translation activism also adds to the "European gender and translation map" Eleonora Federici and José Santaemilia propose in *New Perspectives on Gender and Translation: New Voices for Transnational Dialogues* (2022), a book that validates the diverse potential for polyphonic translational dialogues and negotiations promoted by the practice and theory of European women translators. In my contribution to this volume, I investigate Austin's legacy in the long nineteenth century by recovering her model for women translators as transnational "interpreters of cultures" (Capancioni 2022, p. 45) to her daughter, Lucie Duff Gordon (née Austin, 1821-1869), and granddaughter, Ross. Here my focus is on Austin's strategies as an advocate for primary education and the centrality of European geopolitics. Her work projects a nineteenth-century map of Europe as a multilingual transnational network to which women are active contributors. Her understanding of the diverse, multilingual theories and policies on national education is at the core of her comparative studies. It is also vital for her ability to promote, sustain, and broaden the discussion on the subject. It is through these strategic dynamics that her work attests to her active and visible agency in producing and circulating knowledge within a European geography of networks that connect across linguistic, national, cultural, and political borders.

After Ross's multigenerational family biography was published towards the end of the nineteenth century, Lotte and Joseph Hamburger reignited an interest in Austin's life with *Troubled Lives: John and Sarah Austin* in 1985 and *Contemplating Adultery: The Secret Life of a Victorian Woman* in 1992. Scholarly attention for Austin as a Victorian translator has developed from the end of twentieth century, starting with Christopher Schweitzer (1996), who appraised Austin's contribution to the studies of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe focusing on her *Characteristics of Goethe* (1833), a volume that stems from her translation of Johann Falk von Müller's reminiscences of Goethe, and comprises relevant selected resources, including memoirs, articles, and a literature review of scholarly works on

Goethe published in German.[4] Johnston (1997, 2008, 2013) has acknowledged how Austin, together with Thomas Carlyle and Samuel Coleridge, "spearheaded an industry that introduced German intellectual thought into England" (2008, p. 101) and established an excellent reputation as a successful translator. She mostly examined Austin's translation of Hermann Pückler-Muskau's German bestseller *Briefe eines Verstorbenen*, entitled *Tour in England, Ireland, and France in the Years 1828 and 1829* (1832).[5] The latter and *Characteristics of Goethe* made Austin's reputation as a leading English translator of German contemporary literature, one who was both popular and critically well received: in 1832, Pückler-Muskau "became a literary sensation, earning more from world-wide sales than any other German author of his day, except Goethe" (Hamburger, Hamburger 1994, p. 107); in 1833, *Characteristics of Goethe* secured her reputation as an excellent translator of German literature, whose "elegance of expression, […] felicitous rendering of each original phrase by its English counterpart, at once with accuracy and freedom" was praised (Merivale 1833, p. 372).

Advocating for national education characterizes Austin's life and writing, and the three texts which span her career are key to understanding the significance of this commitment and they illuminate differences and similarities in her approach to translation activism as well as those of her political views. Together with her English translation of Victor Cousin's study titled *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia*, *On National Education* and *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women* exemplify the ways in which she produced timely texts for her target audience, whom she addressed directly in her prefaces. Johnston has previously observed that, "[u]nlike most women translators in this period Austin produced lengthy explanatory prefaces to her translations" (2013, p. 73). *On National Education* and *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women* also present explanatory prefaces that provide an insight into Austin's agency as a cultural mediator for the wider English readership, showing her capable of astute publishing decisions to reach a general English readership. In 1839, for instance, she seized the opportunity to reissue parts of an article that had appeared four years before in *Cochrane's Foreign Quarterly Review* under the title *National System of Education in France* (1835), in *On National Education*. In a letter to Gladstone, then Member of Parliament for Newark,[6] she seeks his advice on

[4] A second edition was published in 1836 under the title *Goethe and his Contemporaries*.

[5] The source text was first published anonymously and when Austin's translation was released it did so without her name, but her abilities were already recognisable because reviewers acknowledged that she was the translator. See Johnston (2008, 2013).

[6] Before serving four terms as Prime Minister, Gladstone was a member of Peele's cabinet and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

publishing *On National Education*, explaining that she approached John Murray to "reprint [the article] separately" because the review "died at its birth" and her "article was buried with it" (Ross 1893, p. 149). Only two issues of the *Cochrane's Foreign Quarterly Review*, founded by John George Cochrane in 1835 (Stephen 1887), were published and, in her letter, Austin voices her paramount interest in disseminating previously unpublished material on the implementation of national education in France, including "official documents" (Ross 1893, p. 149), and in reaching a wider readership. She points to additional notes for the forthcoming volume, and to her effort in conceiving an appealing publication that could "reach the eye of any English readers" (Ross 1893, p. 149). She effectively underlines the importance of her work to expand the readership of official documents and research.

Austin's correspondence also sheds light on her agency and long-standing commitment to promoting social change through compulsory national education. The aforementioned letters to Gladstone are an example of the importance in contextualizing her work as a translation activist. In her more private letters, she also voices her continuous attention and involvement in promoting national education, a cause that, in her later years, she still hopes will define her public legacy. In November 1866, in a letter to Elizabeth, Lady William Russell, she exposes her frustration at being increasingly ill and unable to work but finds her friend's request for a copy of her translation of Cousin's *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia* uplifting because it reminds her that she "introduced that matter to the enlightened English public" (Ross 1893, p. 423). Memories of the past, such as George Cornewall Lewis's certainty that her preface to Cousin's work would have secured her legacy for future generations, are linked to her desire to receive information about the curricula in "a 'Working Women's College'" (p. 423) she read about. Her long correspondence with Gladstone presents her as a trusted linguistic and cultural mediator who circulated intellectual ideas and the latest scholarly research on education, an expert on comparative primary education who reached across political, social, and religious differences. In her letters there are examples of how she urged politicians, journals' editors, publishers, influential family members, and friends, to support her cause and circulate the results of her comparative analysis of different educational systems in Europe.

The focus of this article, however, will remain on the three works that are key in understanding Austin's involvement in promoting national education and the education of working-class women in England. *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia*, *On National Education*, and *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women* exemplify the ways in which she produced timely texts for her target audience, whom she addressed directly in her writing. Together the texts also demonstrate that, in the nineteenth century, for Austin, to use Hill Collins' words, "honing

skills of translation constitutes both an important intellectual challenge and a political necessity" (in Castro, Ergun 2017, p. xii). Alongside her commitment to being an agent of social change, their timeline also highlights how her radicalism changed. After she witnessed the violent consequences of some attempts at social reforms in France, she aligned more with the growing conservativism of her husband, John Austin (1790-1859), and his theory of a stable government based on compromise that could be achieved only through an elitist, gentlemanly political leadership that could independently apply the principle of utility (Hamburger, Hamburger 1985). This study firstly examines how Austin developed her translation literacy and established a successful, remunerative career as a visible translator in the nineteenth century. Then, it analyses the politics of her language-labour, how she contributed to shaping intellectual and political debates on compulsory national education as an active transnational advocate and a translingual cultural agent.

## 3. A zealous and humble labourer

Sarah Austin was the youngest daughter in a radical, forward-looking Unitarian family who were central to the literary and political life of Norwich, and promoted equality for dissenters. Her parents, John and Susannah Taylor, also sustained an egalitarian educational philosophy that fostered an excellent education for both sons and daughters, within the limitations of the period, which included the exclusion of women from higher education (Watts 2013). She received a remarkable, wide-ranging education at home: she learnt Greek and Latin, French, German, Italian, and English literature (Waterfield 1937; Ross 1893). She enjoyed what Watts recognizes as, "excellent, yet gendered, opportunities" (2013, p. 80). Unitarian educational philosophy sustained the importance of learning and intellectual activities for daughters and sons, but it also mirrored the socio-cultural values of the nineteenth century which differentiated social roles on the basis of gender. Girls' education, therefore, was meant to prepare them for the domestic sphere. Denied access to higher education, they could not aspire to public positions but were meant to apply their knowledge instead as marriage partners and mothers. However, as the correspondence between mother and daughter indicates, Susannah Taylor was also careful to encourage her daughter towards "a stronger desire, and a higher relish for intellectual food" (Ross 1893, p. 39) as a guest in London of her brothers and family friends, such as the writer Anna Barbauld (née Aikin, 1734-1825). An assured and comprehensive knowledge, Taylor reiterates, could secure access to suitable teaching and writing professions and a financial income. Unitarians envisioned a rational, well-educated woman as an ideal marriage companion,

but they also esteemed teaching and writing as suitable employment for women.

Reading Taylor's letters, we become aware of how, within this nineteenth-century network of Unitarian dissenters, Austin developed her linguistic skills together with that critical skill Bertacco and Vallorani describe as translation literacy, an ability to move across different languages and cultures, and acquire transnational and translingual perspectives (Bertacco, Vallorani 2021). From a young age, her mother insisted Austin honed those communication skills that were key to the dissemination of knowledge in multiple languages. Susannah Taylor recommended practising conversation skills by engaging with national and international guests her family and their friends hosted to debate current and developing intellectual and political thought. By reminding her daughter about the importance of exercising reading and writing, she advised Austin to read English literature classics and the works of contemporary writers, and to compare them to other European writers. In terms of contemporary English literature, it is important to notice that she directed her daughter to examine, together with Barbauld's works, those of other women writers she knew, such as Amelia Opie and Joanna Baillie. Furthermore, she wanted her daughter to consider letter writing as preparation for professional writing by focusing on its reception. In criticizing a letter dated 1812, for example, she prompts her daughter to consider the complexities of communication by reminding her that, "according to the rules of Aristotle and Longinus, the mind of the reader requires (in all important narratives) a beginning, a middle, and an end" (Ross 1893, pp. 44-45). Austin's success as an activist translator demonstrates her acute ability to negotiate the expectations of publishers and readerships. As her prefaces show, she understood her translations as new cross-cultural texts to be consumed by monolingual readers.

After her engagement to the future legal theorist John Austin in 1814, Sarah's efforts turned more to philosophical thought as she prepared to become the "thinking, feeling, high-minded woman" he wanted her to be by steering her intellectual interests towards his (Waterfield 1937, p. 29). The record of books she read between 1815 and 1821 includes the writing of Tacitus, Cicero, and Caesar in Latin; Adam Smith, John Locke, and David Hume; Niccolò Machiavelli and Cesare Beccaria in Italian; Goethe in German; and her husband's mentors, Jeremy Bentham and James Mill (Ross 1893). Despite an absence of women writers, her reading lists suggest she prepared to be the intellectual companion on whom John hoped he could "securely rely", as his proposal letter indicates (Waterfield 1937, p. 29). Despite difficulties, Sarah was the strong, sympathetic, and supportive partner John Austin noticed. She was in fact remembered by her contemporaries for her dedication to disseminating and promoting his work after his death in 1859. In 1861, she prepared the second edition of his

seminal scholarly work *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, which was firstly released in 1832, and then published *Lectures on Jurisprudence or the Philosophy of Positive Law* in 1863. The latter was a two-volume endeavour that, her obituary in *The Athenaeum* emphasized, "she bent herself" to achieve (1867, p. 209). These two publications, examples of her dedication to her husband, were instrumental in accessing his work, which still remains in the British jurisprudential canon.

In the twentieth century, this image of intellectual companionship between Sarah and John Austin was complicated by biographies which recovered Sarah's correspondence with one of the German authors whose work she translated, Hermann Pückler-Muskau. Whilst she destroyed her passionate letters, Pückler-Muskau did not. When Gordon Waterfield revealed for the first time that these were "'love' letters" between them (1937, p. xi) in his 1937 biography of Lucie Duff Gordon, he compared them to the "sentimental letters" (p. 52) readers of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* sent to Lord Byron and considered them escapist. In 1980, Pückler-Muskau's letters were located in Jagiellonian University Library of Cracow (Hamburger, Hamburger 1994), and used by Lotte and Joseph Hamburger in their biography *Contemplating Adultery: The Secret Life of a Victorian Woman* (1992), which reflects on Austin's psychology and sexuality. The Hamburgers stress how her correspondence with Pückler-Muskau presents an epistolary romance that never became real, but, nonetheless, echoes the gendered inequalities of the Victorian era in the professional and private lives of women writers. Ben Downing interestingly contrasts the ability she shows in these letters "to act on her more erotic yearnings" with the "great resourcefulness" she harnessed in "making the most of every place she went and knitting together a Continental network of friends" (Downing 2013, p. 21).

From the beginning of her married life in London in 1819, Austin dedicated herself to creating an energetic, intellectual network in which her husband could thrive. She hosted a salon attended by radical and prominent thinkers such as Bentham and Mills, and Mills' son John Stuart Mill, Thomas and Jane (née Welsh) Carlyle, George and Harriet (née Lewin) Grote, and Sydney Smith, as well as Risorgimento refugees, like Ugo Foscolo, Giuseppe Pecchio, and Santorre di Santa Rosa, whom she assisted in finding work, learning English, and translating their writing into English (Ross 1893; Waterfield 1937; Wicks 1968). In *The Athenaeum* obituary her salon was compared to that of Madame de Staël (1867, p. 209), a woman of letters who, like Sarah Austin, admired contemporary German literary and philosophical works and contributed to their circulation across European borders. Moreover, it is important to note that the publication of de Staël's *De L'Allemagne* in English and in French by John Murray in 1813 renewed British interest in "significant Continental books" (Butler 1981, p. 119),

which Austin enriched and broadened. Austin's salon became more international as she established her translating career and, with her husband, she spent time in Germany in the late 1820s and early 1840s, in Malta from 1836 to 1838, and in France in the 1830s and 1840s. Her Parisian salon was described by Jules Barthélemy Saint Hilaire (1805-1895) as "a centre where France, England, Germany, and Italy met, and learnt to know and appreciate each other" (Ross 1893, p. vi), underlining how the polyglot hostess could run an effective European cultural network in ways the European political leaders could not.

By 1825, Austin had started to increment the family's earnings by translating from French and German texts such as Voltaire's *History of Charles XII* (1827), and *Lays of the Minnesingers, or German Troubadours of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (1825), published anonymously with her cousin Edgar Taylor (1793-1839).[7] This anthology, Diego Saglia observes, "is a milestone, and an often overlooked one, in the early phase of popularization of German literature in the 1820s" (2019, p. 94) in Britain. In the same year, Austin also showed her interest in German poetry with the publication of an essay in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* entitled, *The New German School of Tragedy*, which, as Schweitzer points out, represents the first instance of her "excellent knowledge of some of Goethe's works, especially of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*" (1996, p. 148) and of her skilful criticism of Goethe. In this article, she states her "highest admiration" for Goethe's work, adding however, her assessment of his characterisation of women as limiting. She remarks that "To him, woman is either a toy, or a mere housewife" (Austin 1825, p. 296). In this observation, Schweitzer sees her sympathy with the radical views of Bentham and Stuart Mill, and describes her as "an active woman" (Schweitzer 1996, p. 148). Then, after her husband failed to maintain his career as a solicitor and then a legal scholar,[8] she secured her family's financial independence by becoming a prominent translator for French and German intellectuals and scholars she often knew personally and with whom she corresponded, such as the already mentioned Guizot, Cousin, and Saint Hilaire, along with Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831), August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845), and Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886). She also contributed essays, editorials, and reviews to British periodicals, although her reputation remained mostly associated with her linguistic skills and competence in producing translations

[7] With David Jardine, Edgar Taylor had published *German Popular Stories*, a translation of the tales of the Brothers Grimm in two volumes in 1823 and 1826. In the case of *Lays of the Minnesingers,* Austin was the translator and Taylor authored the long preface entitled *Preliminary Dissertation* on the history of the Minnesingers, which preceded the selection of the works collected by the author.

[8] John Austin became University College London's first Professor of Jurisprudence when the University was founded in 1826. He held the post from 1828 to 1833.

for her English target audience. The obituaries in both *The Times* and *The Athenaeum* remember her as a much-praised translator whose work represents a benchmark of excellence.

It was *Characteristics of Goethe* in 1833 that established her reputation as a cultural interpreter of German literature. This was the first translation that included her name on the title page and her initials at the end of an authoritative, long preface that outlines her methods regarding the exclusion, inclusion, or additions to the selected number of source texts, together with her philosophical position "on the only matter connected with this book in which I have a personal interest – the theory of translation" (Austin 1833, p. xxix). She disagrees with Samuel Johnson and John Dryden, but agrees instead with Goethe's thesis that identifies the agency of the translator as central. She argues that the mode of translation depends on its scope and principally on whether only content, or content and form, matter to the translation process. In the case of Goethe's work, she claims the scope includes the translation of content and form because his writing demands to be understood both in terms of the value of its content and its stylistic features. Hence, as the translator, she sought to experiment with the plasticity of the target language to expand her scope and "place him [Goethe] before the reader with his national and individual peculiarities of thought and of speech" (Austin 1833, p. xxxvi). She positions her translation theory and practice within a European field of translation studies and, in defining her scope, promotes a methodology that does not aim for "domesticating translation" (Venuti 2018) of the source text but, on the contrary, to make its foreignness visible.

Though admiring "the truly extraordinary manner in which she has rendered all their various contents – metaphysical reasonings, poetical declamation, and social dialogue" (Merivale 1833, p. 372), contemporary reviewers like Herman Merivale in the *Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* critique her distinctive approach that departs from "the dominance of the fluency in English-language translation" (Venuti 2018, p. 5). In the nineteenth century, as Austin acknowledges, readers expect a familiar, fluent translation which aims to make the foreignness of the source text and their writer invisible. Merivale in fact points out how Austin pays little attention to how Goethe would have written the text in English but interprets the distinctive style of Goethe's writing through English. Merivale explains how she employs those German philosophical terms that have no English substitute, thus effectively drawing attention to her innovative inclusion of traces of the otherness of the source texts and their writers. To her, their difference is essential to her work because it promotes diverse epistemological and communication modes. In putting forward her interpretation of Goethe's work she astutely discusses the difficulties that delineates those "glimpses of the varied beauties of the original" that her

translation approach provides (Austin 1833, p. vi). Austin may stylistically choose adjectives that dismiss the value of her intellectual input in producing a target text, but the contents of her prefaces firmly locate her as a visible translator within a transnational discourse of translation studies whose scope is to be an agent of change.

In a letter published later, in 1848, in *The Athenaeum*,[9] she affirms her "duty as an interpreter between nations" (1848, p. 86). After more than a decade, she proposes that the role of the translator is clearly located within the public political sphere and political activities, as a civil service. She compares the work to that of a diplomat who, in order to achieve compromises between different positions, must interpret socio-cultural discourses along with linguistic differences. Like a diplomat, a translator, in her opinion, takes on the complexities and risks of acting publicly and politically through language. She underlines how translation is a cross-cultural exchange as much as an interlinguistic transposition which, as Alexander Fraser Tytler explained in his 1791 *Essay on the Principle of Translation*, creates "a free intercourse of science and literature between all nations" (Tytler 1791, pp. 2-3). Austin positioned her work transnationally in a European geography of connections and intersections that moved across linguistic, religious, social, and political differences to instigate social change, which, in her opinion, depended most significantly on inclusive access to education. The "zealous translator of Cousin" (Ross 1893, p. 284), she persistently sustained the debates promoting a new legislation on education in Britain but died without witnessing the Elementary Education Act become a reality under the government of Gladstone, a politician she correctly identified in 1838, as a promising advocate for national education.

## 4. An advocate of national education

Instrumental to the 1833 Guizot law establishing a national educational system in France, Cousin's *Rapport sur l'État de l'instruction publique dans quelques pays de l'Allemagne et particulièrement en Prusse* was mentioned in the House of Commons since its French publication in 1833. Austin published *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia*, her English translation, in 1834. She had met the French philosopher in Bonn in the late 1820s, when he was busy collecting the material for the aforementioned report commissioned by the French government. They formed a bond based on their mutual friendship with Santa Rosa that flourished into "a warm

[9] Austin wrote this piece to defend her choice of title for Ranke's *History of the Reformation in Germany* (3 vols., 1845-47), which reviewers criticized for being misleading.

friendship" (Ross 1893, p. 426),[10] which lasted forty years, strengthened by their common interest in promoting public instruction and attested by an informative and personal correspondence that depicts, in particular, matters concerning the development and implementation of legislation on compulsory national education in European countries. Since the beginning of their friendship, Austin had been certain of the importance of his work and the role its dissemination could play and, to this purpose, she obtained a contract for an affordable English translation as soon as the original was published.

Writing to Cousin on March 5 1833, she describes her enthusiasm for his report and determination in distributing the copies he sent her to politicians and promoting it to friends such as Charles Babbage (Ross 1893, pp. 99-100). She wants *The Times* to notice it and to secure a publisher "to bring out a translation – a cheap one – so that the people may see what is being done elsewhere" (Ross 1893, p. 100). A month after, in another letter, she tells Cousin of "working for [his] glory" (Ross 1893, pp. 99-100) discussing reviews of the report with the editors of the *Edinburgh Review*, *The Times*, and the *Examiner*. Her active involvement in maximizing the reception of Cousin's report in England is explicit. So is her strategic intervention in reconfiguring the materials in the report to consider only "the subject of Primary Instruction" (Austin 1834, p. vii). She does not include materials on secondary education in Prussia but focuses her translation on advocating compulsory primary education only, without possible departures from this subject, even if pertinent: a decision she bases on moral grounds stating, "that education […] is absolutely necessary to moral and intellectual well-being of the mass of the people" (Austin 1834, p. vii).

In her translator's preface, Austin openly clarifies this selective choice and affirms Cousin's approval of it signalling not only her agency as a translator but also the collaborative nature of creating the target text for the English readership timed to provide information that would suit current debates on primary education, the level of education which was at the centre of British politics. The target text is the result of her negotiations with Cousin and the publisher, Effingham Wilson. Her scope is a timely, informative text that provides comparative studies, pragmatic examples, illustrative documents, statistical data, and explanatory notes. The latter follow the preface and begin by clarifying that "National Education is the more common English expression, and therefore preferable" (Austin 1834, p. xxv) to translating *instruction publique* as public instruction; nevertheless, this

[10] Austin wrote to Cousin and Saint Hilaire in French. Ross translated the letters into English. This letter was composed in response to the news of Cousin's death sent by Saint Hilaire. It is a meditative, sorrowful letter Austin composed when she was already unwell and found writing difficult, at the end of January 1867. She died on August 8 of the same year.

distinctive mark of otherness remains visible in the volume's title. The reception of her English translation of Cousin's report demonstrates its impact in the remarks of educationists such as Leonard Horner (1785-1864), a member of a royal commission on the employment of children in factories since 1833 (Bartrip 2008); James Kay-Shuttleworth (1804-1877),[11] the future assistant secretary to the committee of the Privy Council on Education (from 1839); the Unitarian minister William Johnson Fox (1786-1864); and of the then Poet Laureate, Robert Southey (Martin, Goodman 2004; Watts 2013).

This preface is distinguished by a conversational tone that emphasizes the dialogic mode of Austin's writing, which addresses her readers directly. She points out that it is not "an amusing book" (Austin 1834, p. vii) but a difficult one that deals with legislation and legislative institutions building a national system of education and, contrary to Gladstone, she understands, at this point, how critical it is to outline the religious input in national education. She agrees with Cousin that, "the whole fabric rests on the sacred basis of the Christian love" (p. xv), because it is the all-embracing Christian teaching across theological differences that should matter not the practice of a creed; all Christians could support a national compulsory scheme for primary education. In deconstructing preconceptions against primary education as a modern invention of the Prussian government, or an outcome of the Reformation, she outlines how it is discussed in other countries and supported by more religions than just the Protestant creeds. She also insists on the importance of making education compulsory for all children, and that by being mandatory, national education would only impose attendance not the type of educational establishments from which parents could choose. In her opinion, the Prussian model is appropriate because it promotes the quality of the learning provided through the training of teachers and school inspections.

In line with utilitarianism, she states that the duty of "an enlightened government" (p. xi) is to achieve the greatest good by promoting happiness or pleasure for everyone, while arguing that national education is a moral duty as it fosters the "moral and intellectual character" of all citizens (p. x). Austin argues that children's education is a question of national duty and, as Stuart Mill later also maintained,[12] a human right, and essential to the development of ethical citizens who understand and protect their freedom by sustaining that of others. She not only identifies education as an "absolute necessity" (p. ix) for supporting progress and the development of modern nation states, but

[11] With Edward Carleton Tufnell, Kay-Shuttleworth founded St. John's College in Battersea, London, a teacher training school for boys that opened in 1840 and became "the most important of the early English teachers' colleges and a model for other colleges, including those established by churches" (Selleck 2004, p. 4).

[12] At the beginning of their married life, the Austins lived near Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. Mill's son John Stuart Mill played with their daughter Lucie and learnt German with Sarah. Janet Ross states he addressed her grandmother as "*Liebes Mutterlein*" (Ross 1893, p. 60).

also sees it as a means to promote a peaceful society. Her preoccupation with social turmoil and desire for stability influenced what her biographers define as her later conventional views on social class and gender, asserted in *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women.* The Austins left Paris because of the civil revolts against Guizot's government which turned into the revolution of 1848. These events marked their radical beliefs in social reform and, in line with her husband's views, Sarah Austin grew more conservative. This was not the case in the 1830s when she supported equal rights to education and called for girls' rights to receive an education. In 1839, she emphasizes to Gladstone how essential it is that "*All* must be taught", and pleads with him "to think of the poor girls" and their training (Ross 1893, p. 145).

The correspondence with Gladstone provides a glimpse into her ability to disseminate materials and information to members of the two houses of Parliament who supported social reform and a legislative commitment to primary education. In his 1839 diary, Gladstone writes that he spent two hours with Austin talking about education and books he needed to buy (Foot 1968, p. 580). About a week after this meeting, Gladstone thanks her for "Mr. Horner's translation of Cousin's Report on Holland" (Ross 1893, p. 143) and includes two papers on national education, one of which he hopes she will send on to Cousin. Gladstone concludes by respectfully asking for her "continued and, if possible, active interest in furtherance of these designs" and signs, "I remain, dear Mrs Austin, Your faithful Servant" (Ross 1893, p. 143). Ross explains that her grandmother's health had been poor at the time and Gladstone's final request acknowledges her illness. He does not doubt Austin's commitment or cooperation; he relies on her ability to collect and circulate the results of international research on national education and on her translation literacy in promoting them. Their cooperation illustrates how committed Austin is as a translation activist to disseminating these resources and proves that her contribution to what she calls, after Cousin, "*la sainte cause*" (Ross 1893, p. 144) is as a transnational specialist in European educational systems. She shares concerns about the reception of her work, which is increasingly of interest to the parliamentary debates on social reform and public instruction. Her primary goal remained to reach out to a wider English readership; hence, she continued to inform and stimulate the discourse of national education and to publish in support of her cause under her name. Her translation of Cousin's *Report* did inspire other publications: sections that were reprinted in New York in 1835 influenced policy on educational provision in Massachusetts, Michigan; and, in Canada, J. Orville Taylor's 1836 American edition of Cousin's report included her introduction (Martin, Goodman 2004).

In preparation for the translation of Cousin's *Report*, Austin had collected relevant comparative material, including official documents, which,

in her opinion, were "not likely to fall in the way of many English readers" (Austin 1839, p. viii). She succeeded in making them available in 1839 in a volume entitled *On National Education*, which comprised a review of France's implementation of a new education policy which, as previously mentioned, was published in 1835. In this case, her English translation of nine selected French and German documents is the source for quotations, case studies, and statistical data used as evidence and references within an essay that she signs as, written by Mrs Austin. It was the first time she published a monograph, and her concerns regarding contributing to a public debate were heightened and articulated in her preface. Before it was published, she also sent a draft to Gladstone "appeal[ing] to his kindness" (Ross 1893, p. 151) for advice. She feared the reaction of his party to her work in support of a legislation for compulsory primary education. This was a heated point for discussion in Parliament, but her main concern was with the press and how their "coarse and disgusting hands" (p. 150) would have handled a woman's public opinion on such a central, political subject. Yet, she reassures Gladstone that, with his approval, she is ready to "bear martyrdom" (p. 150). Despite being a leading translator whose name appears as 'Sarah Austin', in this case, she prefers her name to appear more conventionally as Mrs Austin. The same happens with *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women*. In these two publications that are based on her translation literacy but belong to forms of writings that are not categorized as translations, she calls attention to her marital status. In the context of her letter to Gladstone, this decision suggests modesty; however, it is important to consider that her marital status also associates her with her husband, a pioneering legal philosopher and his philosophical and intellectual circle.

In the preface to *On National Education*, Austin balances her awareness of a need to disseminate those materials that are essential to the British legislative political discussions with a decisive denial of an alignment with party politics:

> I must earnestly and sincerely disclaim the smallest wish or intention of the kind. On the contrary, my wishes, hopes, prayers, are all directed to that moment when the two parties now divided may unite in the great work. (Austin 1839, p. ix)

She does not want to be exposed to risks and thus contextualizes her purpose within an ethical political sphere that is beyond the discords between political parties. She uses the pronoun *we* and identifies herself as one of "the friends of education, and, therefore, of humanity" (p. 5). Indeed, she warns against popular, national prejudices because what is at stake is the "dignity" (p. 3) of human life and its protection. In her view, national education is an important measure for the future of the nation state and, as such, primary education

ought to be both available and compulsory, as France's legislation established. She reiterates three principles that are essential to an effective primary education legislation as an organized system: a national curriculum, trained teachers, and school inspectors. She also insists that the system ought to be compulsory so that all children are included with no exceptions. Although she acknowledges this is a "much-contested point" (p. 58), her argument for compulsory education highlights that the moral responsibility of the state is to act on behalf of all children's best interests by "affixing of a legal sanction to the moral obligation of parents to give education to their children" (p. 58). The future of children as citizens of a nation, she sustains, cannot depend on the temporary interests of their parents, but on those of the state.

Referring to Immanuel Kant's *Doctrine of Virtue*, Austin exhorts collaboration instead of competition between the parties to promote a legislation modelled on the French one and to achieve the distinguishing features of humankind. She states, "we must combine our forces" (p. 4). This is the central message in her essay that is most powerfully framed by quotations from Milton's *Areopagitica,* as an epigraph on the title page and in the conclusion. Milton's pamphlet in defence of press freedom was written as an address to the two Houses of Parliament. Like Milton, by means of logic, historical and comparative studies, Austin argues for a collaborative approach to achieve social change and promote, in the words of Milton, "a knowing people, a nation of prophets, of sages, and of worthies" (p. 108). To this end, she concludes with Milton's words on the country's needs for "wise and faithful labourers" (p. 108), whom she hopes the Houses of Parliament already has. Austin's arguments for new legislation on education in Britain strongly echo the same values to which Milton appeals, including charity, civil responsibility, and dignity. These essential, human qualities, Austin maintains, can be promoted by appropriate instruction through compulsory national education for all children.

In the *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia* and *On National Education*, Austin aligns with Cousin in sustaining her belief in no exception to compulsory primary education, or distinctions. Primary education, she writes, is:

> equally suitable to girls and boys. There is absolutely nothing to retrench in the course prescribed for the elementary schools; and in that of the superior primary schools, it is only necessary to omit the elements of geometry, with its practical applications; all the rest ought to be preserved: we have only to add, of both degrees, certain female works which need not even be mentioned in law […]. The education of girls would thus become as universal as that of boys. (Austin 1839, p. 77)

She disapproves of gender-specific schools but states the need for gender-specific training such as needlework, in line with her belief that education should offer knowledge and skills for life, and the lives of women were different in the nineteenth century to those of men. After a gap of twenty years, in 1857, Austin defines this gender-specific need to include household work in the curricula for girls from a poorer background. *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women* asserts the need for "useful and *suitable* instruction" (1857, p. 5) for girls whose social status determines their need to work both within and outside their households. This must be built upon "the three great and powerful instruments [of education]: Reading, writing, and casting accounts" (p. 5). It is her view that the education girls received at the time could not be applied in their adult lives, putting them at risk of not matching the limited number of roles societal systems called on them to fulfil. She is concerned they lack the skills to appreciate the value of the work they could do as women within the options offered to them.

Austin argues that young girls who need to earn a wage should not receive an education that conceives domestic work as inappropriate or diminishing but that, on the contrary, sees them as "attainments *indispensable*" (p. 5) to their future life, both as labourers and women. She writes that "the *direction*" and "the *application*" of their learning "are not less important" (p. 4) than the knowledge they gain because their material life, their morality and their wellbeing also depend upon them. She presents dissatisfied, elitist utilitarian views on working-class women's education, which she sees as an educational system that fails women because it does not secure their learning of those skills that determine "their own independence, the approbation and respect of their employers, or the love and confidence of those who will look to them as the dispensers of all the best comforts of a humble home" (p. 5). These are gendered opinions that are incapable of envisaging a woman's identity beyond a marital or domestic context. Yet, in reiterating the significance of home as a female space, Austin's argument does not limit this future for working-class women; what she affirms is the inevitability that they must contend with housekeeping and employment simultaneously. Her decade-long experience as a school visitor fuels her advocacy for national education that suits the working classes' needs.[13] The first letter in the volume, for example, narrates her visits to "a school, instituted and supported by Miss F. Martineau, of Bracondale, near Norwich" (p. 16), which she considered a model of good practice. In her opinion, it showed how working-class girls should "learn the principles and arts of

[13] Between 1836 and 1838, when she was with her husband in Malta, where he was royal commissioner, Austin also contributed to establishing new village schools (Ross 1893).

housewifery" (p. 25). Furthermore, she maintains the principle of valuable work for women to attain personal worth. Having an educational system that recognizes the needs of working girls, she suggests, would prepare them for their work both within and outside the home.

Previously published in *The Athenaeum*, she reprints her two letters "in a form convenient for distribution" (p. 3) because they include information, she hopes, could inspire others. In *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women*, reflecting on those male intellectuals whose work she translated, she maintains that they have failed to understand the needs of girls who must earn a leaving as well as run a household. Because of privileges rooted in their class and gender, these male intellectuals have not conceived what, for professional women, is still an imperative requisite to be fulfilled: domestic virtues. Victorian womanhood was defined by idealized domestic virtues, but Austin had experienced and witnessed how middle-class women who benefitted from a suitable education could provide for their families. She knew that managing a home necessitated an understanding of the household as a business as well as containing a family for which one cared: in her own household, she was the breadwinner. For working girls, she asks what, in summary, ought to be the outcome of beneficial education, that is "careful, intelligent, conscientious labour" (p. 6). *Two Letters on Girls' Schools* recalls her concerns about publishing on education at a time when the government's agenda focuses on this and about being as a wife whose successful literary career overshadows that of her husband. Aligning with the values of her own Unitarian education, she differentiates educational curricula on the basis of gender and identifies the woman as a marriage companion. In line with utilitarianism, she argues that national education is a means to promote morality and wellbeing of all members of a society; hence, she argues, school education should not fail girls by preparing them inadequately for their future. Disappointingly, in these letters, she does not envision women in the public sphere. She considers only two options for how working-class women can contribute to society: as wives or domestic servants. It would be a "waste and improvidence" (p. 25), she writes, if the science of education did not reflect those gender and class differences that identify a woman "as a useful helpmate" (p. 26). This is a concept that includes herself as a zealous translator who aptly selects and reconfigures timely scholarly texts for the expanding British readership to promote political and social change, one who is more comfortable in claiming her authority and knowledge "under the cover of" great intellectuals (Ross 1893, p. 150).

## 5. Conclusion

As a Victorian English translator, Sarah Austin is an example of an activist translator who balanced her need to be an agent of change with the gendered socio-cultural expectations of the period. She valued the potential her translation literacy afforded her and seized it through translation activism. In her opinion, translation is an act of production and the result of a creative collaborative process, the product of dialogic relationships between authors and their texts. In particular, she recognized translation as an effective tool in promoting, sustaining, and widening the reception of transnational pedagogical theories and practices and diverse European policies on national education. Furthermore, she understands translation "as an interpretative transformation" (Godard 1995, p. 77), whose active possibilities she affirms as a transnational advocate of national education. Translation activism is also key in recovering Austin's experiments in pursuing translation as an effective means of interpreting and disseminating knowledge, of shaping and shifting the intellectual and political debates in Europe. In the nineteenth century, her work asserted the value of translation as a distinctive act of cross-cultural literary production and the influential value of the woman translator as a translator-activist.

**Bionote:** Claudia Capancioni holds a PhD in English from the University of Hull, UK. She is Professor of English Literature at Lincoln Bishop University (UK), where she leads the English Department. Her most recent publications include the chapters *Off the Beaten Track in the Kingdom of Italy with Thomas Adolphus Trollope: Questioning Masculinity through Narratives of Travel in* A Lenten Journey in Umbria and the Marches (2025) and *The Resilience of the Anglo-Italian Heroine in Margaret Collier Galletti di Cadilhac's* Babel (2024) and the co-edited volume *Rethinking Identities Across Boundaries - Genders/Genres/Genera* (Palgrave Macmillan 2024), comprising her study of nomadic poetics of identity in Ali Smith's *How to be both*. She specializes in Victorian and contemporary British literature, life, travel and women's writing, gender, translation, and transnational studies. She has published on Lucie Duff Gordon, Janet Ross and Charles Dickens, detective fiction and women's suffrage, the Gothic, Elizabeth von Arnim, Michèle Roberts, Alfred Tennyson, and Joyce Lussu. Her current projects focus on solitude and gendered narratives of encounter in nineteenth-century Easts.

**Author's address:** claudia.capancioni@lincolnbishop.ac.uk

## References


Anon. 1867, *Mrs Austin*, in "The Times" (12 August 1867), p. 10.

Anon. 1867, *Obituary of Sarah Taylor Austin*, in "The Athenaeum" (17 August 1867), p. 209.

Austin J. 1832, *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, John Murray, London.

Austin S. 1825, *The New German School of Tragedy*, in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" 18 [104], pp. 286-297. https://www.proquest.com/historical-periodicals/new-german-school-tragedy/docview/6529070/se-2 (27.05.22).

Austin S. 1832, *Translator's Preface*, in Pückler-Muskau H., *Tour in England, Ireland, and France in the Years 1828 and 1829*, 2 vols (1.2), Effingham Wilson, London, pp. iv-xxii.

Austin S. 1833a, *Selections from the Old Testament, or the Religion, Morality, and Poetry of The Hebrew Scriptures Arranged under Heads*, Effingham Wilson, London.

Austin S. 1833b, *Preface*, in Falk J. and von Müller F., *Characteristics of Goethe from the German of Falk, von Müller and c. with Notes, Original and Translated, Illustrative of German Literature*, Effingham Wilson, London, pp. v- xlii.

Austin S. 1834, *Report on The State of Public Instruction in Prussia*, Effingham Wilson, London.

Austin S. 1835, *National System of Education in France*, in "Cochrane's Foreign Quarterly Review" 1 [2] (11 June 1835), pp. 260-301.

Austin S. 1839, *On National Education*, John Murray, London.

Austin S. 1848, *Titles of Translated Books*, in "The Athenaeum" (22 January 1848), pp. 85-86.

Austin S. 1857, *Two Letters on Girls' Schools and on the Training of Working Women*, Chapman and Hall, London.

Austin S. (ed.) 1861, John Austin. *The Province of Jurisprudence Determined*, John Murray, London.

Austin S. (ed.) 1863, John Austin. *Lectures on Jurisprudence or the Philosophy of Positive Law*, John Murray, London.

Bartrip P.W.J. [2004] 2008, *Leonard Horner*, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. https://www-oxforddnb-com.bishopg.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13803 (13.02.23).

Bertacco S. and Vallorani N. 2021, *The Relocation of Culture: Translations, Migrations, Borders*, Bloomsbury, New York.

Bhabha H.K. 2021, *Translation's Foreign Relations*, in Bertacco S. and Vallorani N. (eds.), *The Relocation of Culture: Translations, Migrations, Borders*, Bloomsbury, New York, pp. x-xvii.

Butler M. 1981, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background 1760-1830*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Capancioni C. 2017, *Janet Ross's Intergenerational Life Writing: Female Intellectual Legacy through Memoirs, Correspondence, and Reminiscences*, in "Life-Writing" 14 [2], pp. 233-244.

Capancioni C. 2022, *Three Generations of British Women Translators: Sarah Austin's Legacy in the Nineteenth Century*, in Federici E. and Santaemilia J. (eds.), *New Perspectives on Gender and Translation: New Voices for Transnational Dialogues*, Routledge, New York/Abingdon, Oxon, pp. 33-47.

Collins Hill P. 2017, *On Translation and Intellectual Activism*, in Castro O. and Ergun E.

(eds.), *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Studies*, Routledge, New York, pp. xi-xvi.
Cousin V. 1833, *Rapport sur l'État de l'instruction publique dans quelques pays de l'Allemagne et particulièrement en Prusse*, Ministère de l'Instruction Publique, Paris.
Downing B. 2013, *The Queen Bee of Tuscany: The Redoubtable Janet Ross*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York.
Falk J. and von Müller F. 1833, *Characteristics of Goethe from the German of Falk, von Müller and c. with Notes, Original and Translated, Illustrative of German Literature*; trans. and ed. by Sarah Austin, Effingham Wilson, London.
Falk J. and von Müller F. 1836, *Goethe and His Contemporaries: From the German of Falk, von Müller and c. with Biographical Notices, and Original Anecdotes, Illustrative of German Literature*; trans. and ed. by Sarah Austin, Effingham Wilson, London.
Federici E. and Santaemilia J. (eds.) 2022, *New Perspectives on Gender and Translation: New Voices for Transnational Dialogues*, Routledge, New York/Abingdon, Oxon.
Flotow von L. (ed.) 2011, *Translating Women*, Ottawa University Press, Ottawa.
Foot R.D. (ed.) 1968, *The Gladstone Diaries: Volume 2 1833-1839*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
Godard B. 1995, *Translating (as) Woman*, in "Essays in Canadian Writing" 55, pp. 163-183.
Goodman J. 2002, *A Historiography of Founding Fathers? Sarah Austin (1793-1867) and English Comparative Education*, in "History of Education" 31 [5], pp. 425-435.
Gould R.R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.) 2020, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, New York/Abingdon, Oxon.
Hamburger L. and Hamburger J. 1985, *Troubled Lives: John and Sarah Austin*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
Hamburger L. and Hamburger J. [1992] 1994, *Contemplating Adultery: The Secret Life of a Victorian Woman,* Pan Books, London.
Johnston J. 1997, *Anna Jameson: Victorian, Feminist, Woman of Letters*, Scholar Press, Aldershot.
Johnston J. 2008, *Sarah Austin and the Politics of Translation in the 1830s*, in "Victorian Review" 34 [1], pp. 101-113.
Johnston J. 2013, *Victorian Women and the Economies of Travel, Translation and Culture, 1830-1870*, Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey.
Kant I. 1800, *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre*, Kehr, Kreuznach.
Martin J. and Goodman J. 2004, *Women and Education, 1800-1980*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire.
Merivale H. 1833, *Mrs Austin's Characteristics of Goethe*, in "Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal" 57, pp. 371-403.
Pückler-Muskau H. 1831, *Briefe eines Verstorbenen*, Hallberger, Stuttgart.
Ross J. 1888, *Three Generations of English Women: Memoirs and Correspondence of John Taylor, Mrs Sarah Austin, and Lady Duff Gordon*, John Murray, London.
Ross J. 1893, *Three Generations of English Women: Memoirs and Correspondence of Susannah Taylor, Sarah Austin, and Lady Duff Gordon*, T. Fisher Unwin, London.
Saglia D. 2019, *European Literatures in Britain, 1815-1832*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Schweitzer C. 1996, *Sarah Austin's Assessment of Goethe's Character and Works and of Weimar*, in Hoffmeister G. (ed.), *A Reassessment of Weimar Classicism*, Edwin Meller, Lampeter, pp. 145-156.

Selleck R.J.W. 2004, *Sir James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth*, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Oxford. https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-15199 (13.02.23).
Staël de G. 1813, *De l'Allemagne*, John Murray, London.
Stephen L. (ed.) 1887, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Macmillan, London.
Tytler Fraser A. 1791, *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, J.M. Dent, London.
Venuti L. [1995] 2018, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon.
Waterfield G. 1937, *Lucie Duff Gordon: In England, South Africa, and Egypt*, John Murray, London.
Watts R. [1998] 2013, *Gender, Power and The Unitarians in England 1760-1860*, Routledge, London/New York.
Wicks M. [1937] 1968, *The Italian Exiles in London 1816-1848*, Books for Library Press, Freeport, New York.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 67-88
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p67
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# AVANCES Y RESISTENCIAS EN LA INTRODUCCIÓN DE LA PERSPECTIVA DE GÉNERO EN EL AULA DE TRADUCCIÓN
## Una experiencia docente

LUPE ROMERO
UNIVERSITAT AUTÓNOMA DE BARCELONA

**Abstract** – The aim of this paper is to present the improvements and resistances in the introduction of the gender perspective in the translation class. Specifically, the paper deals with the results of a teaching experience with a gender perspective, undertaken in the translation class (Italian-Spanish). It is part of a teaching innovation project geared to carrying out a pilot study on introducing a gender dimension into a number of subjects of the Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona's Translation and Interpreting degree program, through different learning objectives and learning outcomes specifically related to gender competence. The purpose of developing gender competence in the translation classroom is to stimulate critical thinking in students, providing them with new tools to recognize stereotypes, norms and social gender roles present in the starting texts, so that students learn to problematize socialization patterns and to develop skills and strategies that allow them to translate with a feminist conscience and ethics. The development of these skills often depends on the academic context and the attitude of teachers and students towards the gender dimension. Thus, the article presents: the main resistance of teachers and students to the introduction of the gender dimension in the translation class; the subject of translation and the learning objectives related to gender competence: the description of the teaching experience; the results obtained through the analysis of the translations and the questionnaires completed by the students, and the conclusions.

**Keywords**: gender competence; gender perspective; translation training; translation competence; feminist translation.

## 1. Introducción

La transversalización (o *mainstreaming*) de género es una estrategia que consiste en abordar la desigualdad entre mujeres y hombres. Esta estrategia se concibe como un enfoque integral, que contempla cualquier acción que se planifique, ya se trate de legislación, políticas o programas, en todas las áreas y en todos los niveles, con el objetivo de conseguir la igualdad (Comisión Europea 1996).

En el ámbito de la formación en la educación superior, este enfoque integral implica, por una parte, una reflexión global sobre cómo planificar la

introducción de la dimensión de género en los planes de estudio y un análisis específico sobre cómo diseñamos el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de nuestras asignaturas (objetivos, contenidos, resultados de aprendizaje, metodología y evaluación). Sin embargo, y a pesar de los indudables avances que se han producido en estos últimos años, la introducción sistemática de la perspectiva de género en las titulaciones todavía hoy es insuficiente debido a varias circunstancias que tienen que ver, en gran parte, con la falta de formación y la ceguera de género del profesorado, y la falta de indicaciones y ejemplos prácticos, donde el marco teórico de la perspectiva de género aterrice en los diversos elementos que componen el diseño de las asignaturas (Rodríguez Jaume, Gil González 2021).

En el caso de los Estudios de Traducción, también podemos observar una implementación irregular, dependiente no solo de los factores señalados en el párrafo anterior, sino también de otros que tienen que ver con: la diversa configuración y relevancia que tiene la traducción en los planes de estudios de grado (desde ser una única asignatura en una titulación de Filología a ser la finalidad de la formación del alumnado en las titulaciones de Traducción e Interpretación), su introducción a través de una competencia de género transversal en varias asignaturas, o bien solo como parte del contenido de algunas asignaturas y combinaciones lingüísticas específicas (como en el caso de la traducción entre lenguas con y sin género marcado).

En el caso de la titulación de Traducción e Interpretación de la Universitat Autónoma de Barcelona, y en el marco de un proyecto de innovación docente,[1] hemos realizado un estudio piloto para introducir la perspectiva de género en varias asignaturas del grado, con el fin de elaborar objetivos y resultados de aprendizaje que correspondan a la finalidad de una docencia con perspectiva de género, verificar la idoneidad o no del tipo de actividades didácticas y herramientas de evaluación y sobre todo comprobar si, tras las actividades de traducción con perspectiva de género, el alumnado incorpora esta dimensión en sus habilidades y conocimientos, con vistas a su aplicación en el ejercicio de su futura profesión.

La propuesta que presentamos se enmarca en dicho estudio piloto. Por cuestiones de espacio, en este trabajo se describirá una experiencia docente en el aula de traducción en la combinación lingüística italiano-español, con la finalidad de ilustrar los avances y resistencias que encontramos en la introducción de la perspectiva de género en el aula. Para ello, describiremos los siguientes aspectos: la introducción de la perspectiva de género en el aula de traducción, atendiendo a las causas de las resistencias del profesorado y

[1] Los datos completos del proyecto son: "Introducció de la perspectiva de gènere als estudis de Traducció i Interpretació" Projectes de Millora de La Qualitat Docent. Modalitat B (2018-2020) UAB. Ref. GI513595 / D255800. Responsable: Romero, Lupe. Equipo: Montserrat Bacardí, Mª Carmen Espín, Carme Mangiron, Jordi Mas, Patricia Rodríguez.

del alumnado a su introducción; las características generales de la asignatura de traducción italiano-español, deteniéndonos en la descripción de los objetivos y resultados de aprendizaje con perspectiva de género; la experiencia docente con perspectiva de género, que comprende dos actividades de traducción y los resultados obtenidos, a partir del análisis de los datos del alumnado; y las primeras conclusiones a las que hemos llegado tras la experiencia.

## 2. La introducción de la perspectiva de género (PG) en el aula de traducción

A pesar de que, en los últimos años, la perspectiva de género se ha ido afianzando en la sociedad desde las instituciones y a nivel social, no faltan resistencias en su aplicación. En la educación superior en el Estado español, los planes de Igualdad universitarios recogen las medidas dirigidas a la incorporación de una docencia que integre la perspectiva de género. La mayoría de los planes de igualdad en las universidades españolas se ha aprobado a partir de 2007; sin embargo, su aplicación real en el aula cuenta con diversos escollos debido a creencias heredadas de un sistema de cultura patriarcal que naturaliza y normaliza patrones desiguales de conocimiento, legitimando una visión del mundo que asume que lo masculino es más importante y prioritario, y lo femenino es secundario, y por ello, invisibilizado (Reverter-Bañón 2022). En los siguientes dos subapartados, daremos cuenta de las resistencias que se observan frente a la introducción de la perspectiva de género tanto por parte del profesorado como del alumnado.

### *2.1. Resistencias del profesorado para introducir la perspectiva de género*

En el profesorado universitario podemos encontrar resistencias a introducir la perspectiva de género en la educación superior, que obedecen a diversas causas. Velasco Martínez (2016) señala las siguientes: 1) el peso del espejismo de la igualdad, es decir, la idea de que la igualdad ya es un hecho y, por tanto, la PG no es necesaria; 2) el rechazo a poner en cuestión el *curriculum* y nuestra propia práctica docente, puesto que la PG supone un replanteamiento de los contenidos con una mirada no androcéntrica y una revisión de nuestro papel como docentes; 3) la existencia de un imaginario negativo sobre el feminismo, por desconocimiento del real sentido del feminismo, o bien por un claro apoyo a valores sexistas; 4) la imagen que se tiene de los estudios feministas, como disciplina marginalizada, que implica una falta de reconocimiento de la epistemología feminista; 5) la inversión de tiempo que se necesita y del que el profesorado no dispone.

En el campo específico de la formación en traducción, al introducir la perspectiva de género en el aula, también entran en conflicto conceptos propios de la disciplina como la 'fidelidad' o 'lealtad' al texto original, que se usan como argumentos para deslegitimar cualquier iniciativa de intervención en los textos en clave feminista. De hecho, desde el mundo académico, la práctica feminista de la traducción se suele presentar al alumnado como una práctica excepcional y conflictiva, en lugar de presentarse como una perspectiva positiva a implementar en la práctica profesional cotidiana de traductoras/es y como una realidad cada vez más tangible en la sociedad y en el mundo profesional (Reimóndez 2020).

Estos posicionamientos teóricos, cuando se llevan al aula de traducción, suelen privilegiar conceptos como la clientela o la audiencia de la traducción, obviando o dejando en un lugar secundario investigaciones en traductología más recientes, cuyos resultados indican que el concepto de equivalencia o el planteamiento de un criterio absoluto no son elementos prioritarios para obtener una buena traducción (Vidal Claramonte 2009), y que otros aspectos como la ideología, la ética y la cultura (Bassnett 2007) son elementos decisivos en la toma de decisiones de la traductora o el traductor según los contextos. Tal y como señala Vidal Claramonte (2009, p. 52):

> La traducción no se entiende, pues, como un mero trabajo intelectual –no es posible "'simply' translate –translations are ethical-political acts" […] – sino como un problema ético, como posibilidad para la hospitalidad lingüística […], e incluso también para el conflicto […], porque traducir es interaccionar culturas cuya relación entre sí es, muchas veces, asimétrica.

En ese sentido, cabe destacar que ignorar la cuestión ética en la traducción entre dos culturas que mantengan una relación de poder asimétrica, o plantearla únicamente en términos de fidelidad en relación con el texto original, es no entender que muchas de las decisiones finales que se toman al traducir van a estar motivadas precisamente por tener que tomar partido ante dicha asimetría y, desde ese punto de vista, el concepto de neutralidad en la traducción puede considerarse una ilusión (Baker 2006), un supuesto teórico imposible de llevar a la práctica, ya que, en un contexto de conflicto, podrá utilizarse como herramienta al servicio de las estructuras de poder, con la finalidad de seguir reproduciendo las mismas narrativas, o bien actuar en el sentido contrario.

Si aplicamos este mismo criterio de relaciones asimétricas entre culturas a la relación asimétrica que se da entre mujeres y hombres en el patriarcado, se hace evidente que tampoco en este caso la neutralidad en la traducción es posible.

El patriarcado es un sistema que normaliza y reproduce una cultura en la que la mujer ocupa una posición subordinada respecto al hombre, y que se sirve de la lengua para reflejar y sostener dicha subordinación a través de la

invisibilización y/o la representación estereotipada y/o estigmatizada de la mujer. Si al traducir se aplica la noción de neutralidad, lo que en realidad se está haciendo es mantener la ideología patriarcal que presentan los textos originales y, por tanto, se sigue perpetuando y reproduciendo la misma ideología patriarcal que, precisamente por ser la mayoritaria, es considerada como la "normal e incuestionable" (Castro 2008).

Esta última cuestión es uno de los mayores escollos para una introducción eficaz de la perspectiva de género en el aula de traducción ya que, al tratarse de un sistema de creencias mayoritario, el patriarcado no se percibe como ideológico y, por tanto, no se cuestiona, ni se contempla como contenido u objetivo a tratar en el aula. Sin embargo, problematizar el concepto de neutralidad en relación con el patriarcado es uno de los aspectos fundamentales para que el alumnado empiece a tomar conciencia de las implicaciones éticas que conlleva la profesión, más allá de la fidelidad a la autoría o al texto original porque, tal y como señala Reimóndez (2020, p. 171), "las teorías de la neutralidad lo único que hacen es desactivar la capacidad consciente de tomar decisiones de las traductoras e intérpretes desde el punto de vista de la ética".

## *2.2. Resistencias del alumnado para introducir la perspectiva de género*

La manera en que construimos la noción de género como individuos condiciona también una mayor o menor resistencia a la introducción de la perspectiva de género en el aula; por ello, es fundamental saber cuál es la cultura de género que presenta el grupo-clase en el aula, y de esta manera poder ir modificando y/o validando las actividades que llevemos al aula, en función de las creencias y prejuicios que podamos ir encontrando en nuestro alumnado. Este aspecto condiciona la mayor o menor predisposición hacia aprender, mirar y analizar los textos y sus traducciones aplicando la perspectiva de género.

Siguiendo el modelo de West y Zimmerman (1987) para abordar el estudio del género, existen tres dimensiones interrelacionadas a partir de las cuales las personas construimos nuestra idea sobre lo que es el género (*doing gender*): la dimensión sociocultural, la dimensión relacional y la dimensión personal. Podemos ver los factores relacionados con estas tres dimensiones en la siguiente figura adaptada por Rebollo *et al.* (2011):


Figura 1
¿Cómo se hace el género? (Rebollo *et al*. 2011, p. 528).

Como puede verse en la figura anterior, las tres dimensiones comprenden diversos factores: en el plano sociocultural, factores como los valores, tradiciones, leyes, etc., son los que determinan un modelo desigual de acceso al poder y a los recursos; en el plano relacional, factores como los discursos y las prácticas en las interacciones cotidianas determinan una representación diferenciada de lo que significa ser mujer u hombre e información sobre cómo nos relacionamos; en el plano personal, encontramos el ámbito individual y subjetivo que tiene que ver con el género como un aspecto de la identidad y de las actitudes personales.

Cabe señalar que, aunque este último nivel es donde se observan creencias, estereotipos, fantasías, etc., de carácter individual sobre el género, no se puede obviar que están vinculadas a un imaginario colectivo y responden a los modelos de masculinidad y feminidad de una cultura concreta. De hecho, esta representación subjetiva del género no suele ser una decisión deliberada de la que somos conscientes, sino una respuesta inconsciente con mayor o menor automatismo, que se debe a la presión social de lo que, en una cultura determinada, se espera de ser mujer u hombre (Rebollo *et al*. 2011).

Dicha representación del género está adscrita inevitablemente a la cultura patriarcal que señalábamos en el apartado anterior y, por ello, conviene observar las reacciones y respuestas del alumnado ante la introducción de la perspectiva de género en el aula ya que, en función de sus vivencias y conocimientos previos sobre el tema, se pueden encontrar resistencias, bien sea por el espejismo de igualdad mencionado en el apartado anterior o incluso, como señala Velázquez Martínez (2016), por la negación de la propia experiencia y reproducción de estereotipos, al creer que la

desigualdad por género solo ocurre en otras culturas o entornos desfavorecidos y que, si en algún momento una persona se encuentra en alguna situación discriminatoria, puede ser capaz de detectarla y revertirla de inmediato. Esta actitud negacionista del patriarcado como sistema implica un negacionismo del efecto y de su reflejo en la lengua y en los textos y, por tanto, un rechazo a aplicar un análisis de los textos originales y de sus traducciones en clave sexo-genérica.

Además de esta construcción individual del género por parte del alumnado, hay que señalar también que la disposición que presente el profesorado sobre la importancia de introducir la perspectiva de género en los estudios de traducción e interpretación condicionará la percepción del alumnado sobre este tema y su predisposición a aprenderlo.

Si el alumnado asiste a clases donde el profesorado rechaza abiertamente aplicar la perspectiva de género en su asignatura porque considera que no es necesaria, o, cuando se introduce, se trata como un aspecto secundario en la asignatura, sin ni siquiera ser evaluado porque estima que hay contenidos más importantes que evaluar, es obvio que la toma de conciencia y la adquisición de la perspectiva de género por parte del alumnado resulta una labor complicada, ya que no se advierte como una práctica necesaria en el desempeño de su futura profesión, a diferencia de otros conocimientos relacionados con aspectos lingüísticos y culturales de las lenguas de trabajo, o las competencias instrumental, terminológica y documental, que sí advierten como fundamentales para su formación.

Ante tales resistencias, y con el ánimo de conseguir una introducción efectiva de la PG en el aula, es necesario trabajar de manera simultánea con objetivos cognitivos – para introducir conocimientos y habilidades relacionados con un enfoque feminista de la traducción y la interpretación – y con objetivos afectivos – para abordar las resistencias y apuntar a un desarrollo de la conciencia y del crecimiento en la actitud hacia la PG.

En el próximo apartado, veremos la descripción de la asignatura en la que hemos introducido la perspectiva de género, atendiendo a los objetivos de aprendizaje para la formación en traducción, en el marco de la competencia de género y los resultados de aprendizaje propuestos por Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

## 3. La asignatura con perspectiva de género en la formación para la traducción

La asignatura en la que se introduce esta primera experiencia docente con perspectiva de género es la clase de traducción directa italiano-español, que se cursa en tercer año. Se trata de la primera asignatura de traducción que cursa el alumnado de esta combinación lingüística, por lo que es fundamental

que adquiera los principios básicos y comprenda las dificultades principales en la traducción entre estas dos lenguas. En el grado, el italiano es una segunda lengua extranjera a la que el alumnado accede sin conocimientos previos; por ello, los textos con los que se va a trabajar en esta asignatura son de carácter general, no especializados, y pertenecientes a diversas tipologías textuales.

En relación con la experiencia docente con perspectiva de género, los objetivos de aprendizaje relacionados con ambas actividades han sido los siguientes:[2]

| | |
|---|---|
| O1 | Identificar las formas lingüísticas, los discursos e imágenes que mantienen una visión sexista y/o estigmatizada de la mujer en el texto original. |
| O2 | Conocer alternativas lingüísticas para evitar un uso sexista de la lengua en la L1. |
| O3 | Aplicar los conocimientos lingüísticos para traducir con formas y expresiones lingüísticas inclusivas y no sexistas en la L1. |
| O4 | Evaluar la idoneidad de las soluciones traductoras no sexistas. |
| O5 | Reconocer y/o justificar éticamente la importancia de la categoría de género para la comprensión y reexpresión de los textos. |

Figura 2
Objetivos de aprendizaje con perspectiva de género en el aula de traducción.

De los objetivos anteriores, puede observarse que los cuatro primeros son de tipo cognitivo: identificar (O1), conocer (O2), aplicar (O3) y evaluar (O4), pero también hemos incluido un objetivo afectivo (O5) para trabajar en el aspecto de desarrollo de conciencia del aprendizaje, relacionado con la mayor o menor disposición y actitud del alumnado a justificar la importancia de la categoría de género en la comprensión y traducción de los textos.

Al tratarse de la primera experiencia con perspectiva de género que se realiza en esta asignatura, nos interesaba comprobar si el alumnado era capaz de traducir correctamente con lenguaje inclusivo y no sexista, e si luego incorporaba esta perspectiva de manera sistemática en las traducciones posteriores a esta actividad.

Para ello se propusieron dos tareas de traducción. La primera consistía en realizar una traducción con un encargo en el que se pedía específicamente que se tradujera con lenguaje inclusivo y no sexista; tras la traducción se elaboró un cuestionario para saber qué opinaban sobre la experiencia.

La segunda tarea era una traducción con un encargo en el que no se pedía aplicar el lenguaje inclusivo; tras la traducción, se proponía un

[2] Los objetivos de aprendizaje de esta asignatura son una concreción de los resultados de aprendizaje de traducción e interpretación propuestos para la competencia de genero de la UAB. Estos pueden adaptarse en función de su aplicación a las diferentes materias y asignaturas del plan de estudios (Romero 2021).

cuestionario en el que el alumnado tenía que señalar mínimo tres problemas de traducción que hubiera identificado.

Con esta segunda actividad pretendíamos ver si el alumnado había incorporado la perspectiva de género a su traducción, aunque no se le hubiera indicado explícitamente y/o si había considerado que esta sería un problema a la hora de traducir el texto. La finalidad última era averiguar el grado de adquisición de la competencia de género en el grupo-clase, para saber si era necesario modificar y/o programar más actividades con perspectiva de género, en función del tipo de cultura de género dominante que hubiéramos encontrado y las resistencias a incorporar el enfoque feminista en la traducción.

En relación con el perfil del alumnado, se trataba de un grupo de 18 jóvenes, mayoritariamente mujeres (16 chicas y 2 chicos), cuya edad oscilaba entre los 21 y 25 años. Casi la mitad del alumnado era italiano (8 jóvenes italianas y 10 españolas/es con español y catalán como primeras lenguas).

En los siguientes apartados se describen las dos tareas de traducción que conforman la experiencia docente con perspectiva de género y los resultados obtenidos.

## 4. Actividad I: traducción del poema *Podries* al italiano

En esta primera actividad planteamos un encargo de traducción con perspectiva de género. Al tratarse de un grupo lingüístico mixto, pensamos en un encargo del catalán al italiano, dividiendo la clase en cuatro grupos mixtos, y aplicando la metodología del aprendizaje cooperativo ya que, para parte del alumnado, se trataba de una traducción directa y, para la otra parte, de una traducción inversa. Desde este punto de vista, el trabajo en grupo podía favorecer una mejor aproximación a la comprensión del texto original y también una menor dificultad en la toma de decisiones al traducir. Asimismo, el trabajo en grupo favorecía el debate y la búsqueda de consensos a la hora de adoptar soluciones traductoras inclusivas no sexistas. En los siguientes subapartados, describimos las características de la actividad y los resultados obtenidos.

### *4.1. Características de la actividad I*

La actividad I consistía en un encargo de traducción con diversas indicaciones y un cuestionario final sobre la actividad:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Características del encargo:** Con motivo de la Fiesta Mayor de la UAB, que este año tiene el lema "UABrefugio, la Autónoma acoge", la Facultad nos ha encargado traducir el poema *Podries* de Joana Raspall, con perspectiva de género, a todas las lenguas que se imparten en el grado de Traducción e Interpretación.<br>**Pautas para el trabajo en grupo:**<br>-Traducir al italiano intentando mantener la rima (al menos asonante).<br>-Aplicar un uso no sexista del lenguaje<br>-Cuando hayáis consensuado las soluciones traductoras no sexistas, traducid y subid vuestra parte al documento compartido, para ponerla en común con las partes del poema traducidas por los otros grupos.<br>-En la próxima clase presentáreis vuestra parte y comentaréis las dificultades en la traducción y las expresiones que habéis adoptado para aplicar un enfoque no sexista. |  <br>**Pautas para el trabajo individual:** cuando hayáis finalizado el trabajo en grupo, responded **individualmente** a las cuatro preguntas que se encuentran al final del documento y enviadlas a mi correo electrónico.<br><br>**Materiales a disposición:** 1) poema original en catalán; 2) traducción del poema al castellano; 3) documento "Pistes us no sexista llenguatge UAB". |

Figura 3
Características de la actividad de traducción I.

Como puede observarse en la figura anterior, la actividad consistía en una tarea grupal y un cuestionario individual sobre la tarea. En la puesta en común de la traducción en clase, se pusieron de manifiesto las dificultades halladas en el proceso, relacionadas con el poema y con la aplicación de la perspectiva de género. En la siguiente figura, podemos ver el texto original en catalán y la traducción al italiano. La parte subrayada y en negrita corresponde a las expresiones con masculino genérico del original y a las soluciones traductoras equivalentes no sexistas propuestas por el alumnado.

| Versión original en catalán | Traducción al italiano |
|---|---|
| **Si haguessis nascut** en una altra terra,<br>**podries ser blanc, podries ser negre...**<br>Un altre país fora casa teva,<br>i diries "sí" en una altra llengua.<br>T'hauries criat d'una altra manera<br>més bona, potser, potser més dolenta.<br>Tindries més sort o potser més pega...<br>**Tindries amics** i jocs d'una altra mena;<br>duries vestits de sac o de seda,<br>sabates de pell o tosca espardenya<br>o **aniries nu perdut per la selva.**<br><br>Podries llegir contes i poemes,<br>o no tenir llibres ni saber de lletra.<br>Podries menjar coses llamineres<br>o només crostons eixuts de pa negre.<br>Podries..., podries...<br>Per tot això pensa que importa tenir<br>LES MANS BEN OBERTES<br>i ajudar qui ve fugint de la guerra,<br>fugint del dolor i de la pobresa.<br>**Si tu fossis nat a la seva terra**<br>**la tristesa d'ell podria ser teva.** | **Come persona nata** in un'altra terra,<br>**potresti essere bianca, potresti essere nera...**<br>Se la tua casa fosse in un altro posto,<br>in un'altra lingua daresti risposta.<br>T'avrebbero dato un'altra educazione,<br>forse migliore; forse peggiore.<br>Avresti più fortuna o forse più avversità,<br>**Avresti amicizie** e giochi di un'altra varietà;<br>potresti vestirti di seta o di stracci<br>con scarpe in pelle o senza neanche i lacci<br>o **per la foresta, senza indossar nulla,**<br>**vagheresti con aria sperduta.**<br><br>Potresti leggere poesie e racconti<br>non saper scrivere o non avere libri e orizzonti.<br>Potresti mangiare cibo succulento<br>o solo pezzi secchi di pane nero.<br>Potresti… potresti…<br>Per tutto questo ricorda tenere<br>LE BRACCIA BEN APERTE<br>è ciò che importa per aiutare chi arriva fuggendo<br>dalle atrocità,<br>fuggendo dal dolore e dalla povertà.<br>**Se la tua culla fosse la terra sua**<br>**la sua tristezza potrebbe essere la tua.** |

Figura 4
Texto original y traducción con perspectiva de género.

Como puede apreciarse en la figura anterior, la aplicación de la perspectiva de género en este texto no revestía gran dificultad, a excepción de algunos pasajes en los que, para usar un lenguaje no sexista, el alumnado tuvo que recurrir a reformulaciones que iban más allá del uso de un sustantivo colectivo o un desdoblamiento y afectaban a la traducción a un nivel textual (como, por ejemplo, "aniries nu perdut per la selva" o "Si tu fossis nat a la seva terra"). En estos casos, se observó que varias de estas soluciones traductoras respondían a la aplicación de las técnicas de traducción (Molina, Hurtado 2002) ya conocidas y utilizadas por el alumnado a lo largo de su formación, por lo que, desde este punto de vista, la realización de un encargo de traducción con perspectiva de género no suponía una tarea complicada, sino un aprendizaje y puesta en práctica de las técnicas para una finalidad diversa de la habitual.

## *4.2. Resultados de la actividad I*

En el cuestionario nos interesaba recoger la opinión del alumnado sobre la cultura de género a partir de las cuestiones que señalábamos en el apartado dos y a partir de la experiencia de traducción con perspectiva de género que habíamos realizado en clase.

Los datos que queríamos obtener eran: 1) la formación en traducción con perspectiva feminista que habían recibido durante sus estudios; 2) cuáles eran sus conocimientos y creencias sobre la objetividad y la neutralidad en la traducción respecto a la aplicación de la perspectiva feminista; 3) cuáles eran

sus creencias sobre la necesidad de visibilizar o no a la mujer en sus traducciones; 4) cuáles eran sus conocimientos, creencias y prejuicios sobre la traducción feminista como ámbito reducido de actuación y/o como conflicto.

Para ello formulamos las siguientes cuatro preguntas que daban respuesta a las cuestiones planteadas en el párrafo anterior, respectivamente: 1) ¿Habías traducido alguna vez siguiendo un enfoque no sexista?; 2) ¿Piensas que adoptar este enfoque hace que el TM 'traicione' lo que dice el TO? ¿Por qué?; 3) ¿Crees que ha mejorado/empeorado el TM respecto al TO? ¿En qué?; 4) ¿En tu opinión, un enfoque no sexista de la traducción se puede aplicar a todos los tipos de textos? Razona tu respuesta.

A continuación, presentamos los resultados obtenidos del cuestionario:

### *4.2.1. ¿Habías traducido alguna vez siguiendo un enfoque no sexista?*

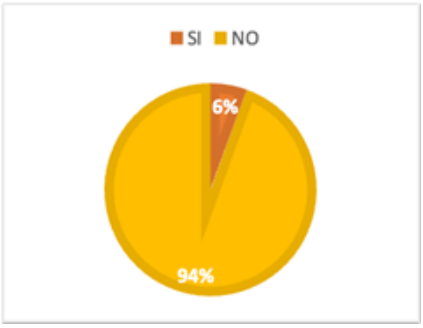


Figura 5
Experiencia previa en traducir con perspectiva de género.

De las 18 personas que formaban el grupo clase, 17 de ellas afirmaron que no habían traducido nunca con un enfoque no sexista, que usaban siempre el masculino genérico "por costumbre" o por inercia porque era lo que "habían aprendido", y que en ninguna clase de traducción "les habían dicho" que podrían traducir con este enfoque. Llama poderosamente la atención la respuesta de la única persona que sí afirmaba haber traducido alguna vez aplicando la perspectiva de género, ya que, en su respuesta, señalaba que lo había hecho "por diversión"; es decir, la única persona que sí había aplicado este enfoque no lo consideraba una práctica profesional.

### *4.2.2. ¿Piensas que adoptar este enfoque hace que el TM 'traicione' lo que dice el TO? ¿Por qué?*

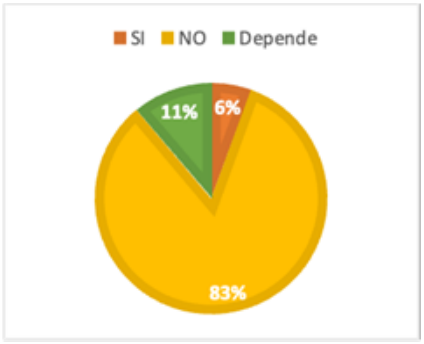


Figura 6
Validez de la traducción con perspectiva de género I.

En esta pregunta, dividimos las respuestas en tres grupos. La respuesta mayoritaria (83%) afirmaba que la aplicación de un enfoque no sexista en la traducción es objetiva y da como resultado un texto equivalente al del original porque "el sentido queda claro e inequívoco" o porque se mantiene el mismo "sentido" o "significado". Tan solo dos personas consideraron que a veces una traducción no sexista puede traicionar al texto original si no se ajusta a la "intención" del mismo, y una única persona consideró que sí se traiciona al texto original porque, si el original usa masculino genérico, "traducir basándose en el enfoque no sexista sería traicionarlo".

### *4.2.3. ¿Crees que ha mejorado/empeorado el TM respecto al TO? ¿En qué?*

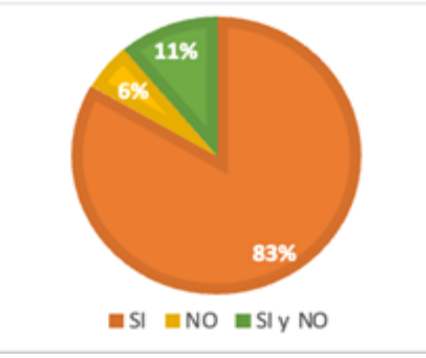


Figura 7
Validez de la traducción con perspectiva de género II.

También en este caso, la respuesta mayoritaria (83%) corresponde a quienes consideraban que la aplicación del enfoque no sexista en la traducción del original había mejorado el texto traducido porque transmitía un "mensaje más plural", "visibiliza a las mujeres", "reivindica su presencia en el mundo" y,

en definitiva, hacía que el mensaje fuera más "universal e inclusivo". La única persona que consideraba que el texto resultante había empeorado hacía referencia a que había tenido que cambiar la métrica y el poema había "perdido agilidad"; este mismo argumento había sido esgrimido por las dos personas que pensaban que había empeorado, aunque también señalaron que había mejorado en cuanto a la representatividad de las mujeres en el poema.

### *4.2.4. ¿ En tu opinión, un enfoque no sexista de la traducción se puede aplicar a todos los tipos de textos? Razona tu respuesta.*

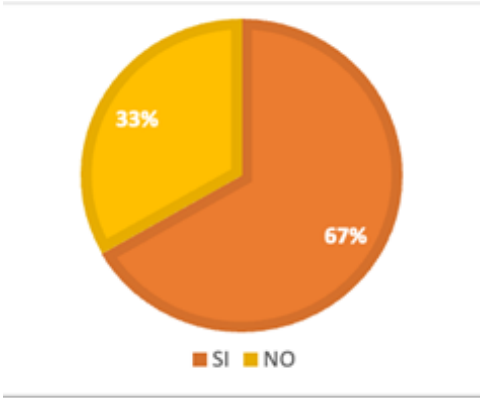


Figura 8
Validez de la traducción con perspectiva de género III.

A diferencia de las cuestiones anteriores, en las que había una mayoría abrumadora a favor de la aplicación de la perspectiva de género y sus aspectos positivos en las traducciones, en esta cuestión se observó una mayor discrepancia en el alumnado.

La mayoría de alumnas/os se mostraba a favor de aplicar el enfoque no sexista en todo tipo de textos, esgrimiendo argumentos como la necesidad de que "la sociedad vea que es posible el uso de formas inclusivas en el día a día", para que, a través de dicho uso, se "replanteen las normas o reglas del idioma" y hacer que el lenguaje sea más "amplio, inclusivo y solidario". Desde este punto de vista, para la mayoría del alumnado (67%), la traducción es vista como un instrumento de "cambio en la sociedad". Sin embargo, para una tercera parte de la clase (33%), el enfoque no sexista no puede aplicarse en todos los tipos de textos.

Cabe destacar que, en este último grupo de respuestas, se observó una gran reflexión del alumnado por el nivel de detalle y descripción en la división de tipos de textos a los que hacen referencia; admitían un uso posible del enfoque no sexista en los textos "de la administración pública, manuales e instrucciones" mientras que en los ámbitos y textos artísticos como "la literatura, la poesía, las canciones y películas" consideraron que la aplicación del enfoque no sexista no era posible por el alto componente "subjetivo, descriptivo y simbólico" de estos textos, y tampoco en textos jurídicos por el

alto nivel de literalidad que comporta su traducción.

A tenor de estos datos, podemos concluir que la gran mayoría del alumnado, tras haber realizado esta experiencia docente y, a pesar de no haber recibido ninguna formación previa sobre el enfoque no sexista y feminista de la traducción (94%), muestra una actitud positiva en cuanto a su aplicación, considerando que el enfoque no sexista transmite el mismo sentido y mensaje del texto original, y que, al visibilizar a las mujeres, contribuye a construir un mensaje más universal e inclusivo (83%).

Asimismo, en relación con la aplicación de esta perspectiva en la traducción de todos los textos, la mayoría también considera que puede llevarse a cabo (67%) y un tercio del alumnado (33%) opina que también puede aplicarse en textos de carácter administrativo e instructivo.

A tenor de estos resultados, podíamos esperar que el alumnado incorporara esta habilidad en sus futuras traducciones, al igual que incorpora otras habilidades tecnológicas, instrumentales o bilingüísticas en su formación pero, en el caso de una competencia transversal como la de género que cuenta con las resistencias señaladas anteriormente, teníamos dudas sobre si la actividad realizada y la reflexión posterior sobre la experiencia habían sido suficientemente significativas como para cambiar inercias patriarcales e incorporar la mirada de género en sus traducciones.

Para comprobar hasta qué punto la adquisición de esta habilidad se había concretado, llevamos a cabo otra tarea de traducción sin indicar de manera explícita que se aplicara la perspectiva de género.

## 5. *Actividad 2: traducción del video* Situazioni di emergenza *al español*

En esta segunda actividad planteamos un encargo de traducción sin indicar que se aplicara la perspectiva de género. Elegimos un video en el que, a través de las palabras y la imagen, haya un sesgo de género evidente y fácilmente reconocible por todo el mundo. Se trata del video *Situazioni di emergenza: espressioni e vocabolario per problemi di salute!* del canal de youtube LearnAmo, dedicado a la enseñanza del italiano para extranjeras/os. En el video en cuestión, se enseñan las expresiones más frecuentes en italiano para utilizar en el caso de que se necesite asistencia médica visitando Italia. En el video se usa el masculino genérico de manera sistemática y, en uno de los momentos, se indica en qué casos es conveniente dirigirse al personal sanitario, y aparece en pantalla la siguiente imagen:


Figura 9
Estereotipos sexistas del video.

Como puede observarse, en la imagen se halla una representación estereotipada de los roles de género en medicina, lingüísticamente (*medico* e *infermiera*, en masculino y femenino respectivamente) y a través de la imagen sobreimpresa en el video, reforzada, además, por los colores rosa y azul asignados a lo femenino y masculino.

## *5.1. Características de la actividad 2*

A diferencia de la actividad anterior, en este caso se trabajaba la traducción de manera individual. La actividad consistía en el siguiente encargo de traducción:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Características del encargo:** un blog español quiere realizar un video de información para turistas y te encarga traducir los contenidos de este video para adaptarlos al contexto español, ya que les ha gustado mucho la infomación que contiene.<br><br>**Pautas para la traducción:**<br>-Traducir al español teniendo en cuenta el encargo, es decir, transcripción del audio y de los títulos en pantalla (estos últimos en cursiva para diferenciarlos del audio) sin tener en cuenta las restricciones de la modalidad audiovisual (doblaje o subtitulación) ya que se trata de priorizar el contenido. | **Indica los problemas de traducción más importantes que hayas tenido (mínimo tres problemas) respondiendo a las preguntas siguientes:**<br>1.Indica el problema<br>2.Describe por qué es un problema (no se entiende, no existe en la cultura meta, es difícil de reexpresar, es algo muy cultural, es un registro poco natural, etc.) puede haber más de un motivo).<br>3.Indica la solución traductora que has propuesto y justifícala.<br>4.¿Estás satisfecho/-a con dicha solución? ¿Por qué?<br><br>**Materiales a disposición:** 1) link al video 2) subtítulos en italiano. |

Figura 10
Características de la actividad de traducción II.

Aunque en el encargo de traducción no se indicaba que se aplicara la

perspectiva de género, al traducir este video esperamos que, ante esta imagen tan claramente sesgada por el género, el alumnado reaccionara de algún modo, bien sea proponiendo una traducción con el sustantivo colectivo (personal sanitario/médico/de enfermería) o mediante el desdoblamiento (explicitando la versión masculina y femenina de las dos profesiones), o bien señalando esta expresión como un problema de traducción en el texto original.

Asimismo, teniendo en cuenta que el video no es un texto artístico, sino una especie de manual, y que en la actividad anterior el alumnado se había mostrado mayoritariamente predispuesto a aplicar el enfoque no sexista en la traducción, esperamos que el alumnado no usara el masculino genérico en el texto traducido.

En el apartado siguiente mostramos los resultados de esta actividad, relacionados con la perspectiva de género.

## *5.2. Resultados de la actividad 2*

Los resultados de la actividad que presentamos son los que están relacionados con la perspectiva de género. Dividimos los datos en tres partes: 1) traducciones con enfoque no sexista del video (eliminación del masculino genérico); 2) traducciones del título con la imagen sexista y estereotipada; 3) el lenguaje sexista como problema de traducción.

A continuación, presentamos los resultados obtenidos:

### *5.2.1. Traducciones con enfoque no sexista (eliminación del masculino genérico)*

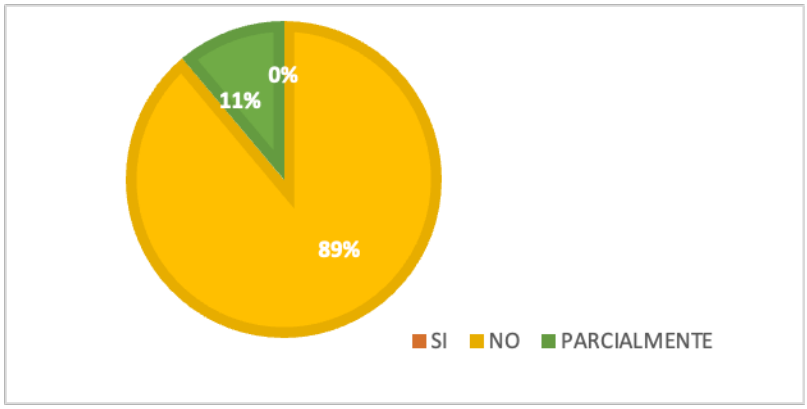


Figura 11
Traducciones con enfoque no sexista.

De las 18 personas que formaban el grupo clase, únicamente dos aplican un enfoque no sexista en la traducción. No obstante, hay que señalar que dicho enfoque no es sistemático sino parcial, ya que lo aplican solo en la fórmula

inicial de saludo a la audiencia del video ("Benvenuti a tutti"), que las alumnas traducen por las siguientes soluciones traductoras no sexistas: "Bienvenido a todo el mundo" y "Bienvenidas y bienvenidos a todas y a todos". En el resto del texto, en cambio, continúan la traducción usando el masculino genérico, tanto para referirse a la audiencia (para *aquellos/los* que no lo sepan en lugar de *quienes*) como a otras personas que se mencionan y describen en el video (*farmacéutico, médico, nuestros estudiantes*) por lo que el uso del lenguaje inclusivo en estas traducciones es algo anecdótico.

### *5.2.2. Traducciones del título con la imagen sexista y estereotipada*

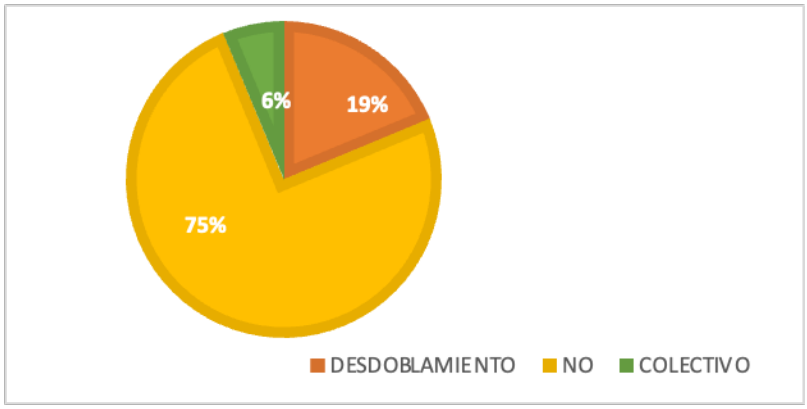


Figura 12
Traducciones del título de la imagen sexista y estereotipada.

También en este caso, la mayoría del alumnado opta por traducir literalmente el texto, reproduciendo el carácter sexista y estereotipado de la expresión. No obstante, se observa un incremento de las personas que adoptan soluciones no sexistas en la traducción; cuatro alumnas/os optan por soluciones no sexistas, tres de ellas por un desdoblamiento "el/la médico/a — el/la enfermero/a" y una persona mediante el uso del sustantivo colectivo "el personal médico y de enfermería".

### *5.2.3. El lenguaje sexista como problema de traducción*

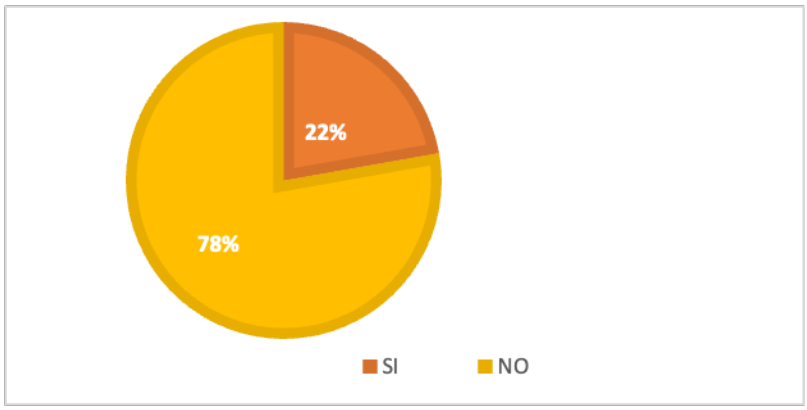


Figura 13
Traducciones con perspectiva de género.

En este apartado queremos observar si el alumnado ha considerado que el masculino genérico del texto original y/o el título sexista han representado un problema de traducción y, en caso afirmativo, si se muestran satisfechas/os de la solución traductora adoptada. La finalidad última es saber si el alumnado, independientemente de las soluciones traductoras que ha adoptado, se ha 'dado cuenta' de que el texto presentaba un lenguaje no inclusivo y un título sexista y estereotipado y que, ante estas características, ha considerado que se podía (o no) adoptar un enfoque no sexista de la traducción que visibilizara a la mujer, eliminara el sesgo machista, manteniendo, al mismo tiempo, un sentido y mensaje equivalentes a los del texto original.

En las respuestas se observa que únicamente las personas que han optado por soluciones traductoras no sexistas han identificado el uso del masculino genérico y/o el título sexista como un problema de traducción y ha reflexionado sobre ello ("me parecía bastante sexista"; "me doy cuenta de que en la mentalidad común aún los médicos suelen ser hombres y las enfermeras solo mujeres, pero no refleja la realidad"; "esta categorización (sexista) me molesta"; "el original es sexista y el texto traducido es más englobador"; etc.) y se muestran satisfechas/os de cómo lo han resuelto. Sin embargo, la mayoría del grupo-clase (14 personas) ni siquiera ha pensado que, con su traducción sexista, estaba invisibilizando a las mujeres y reproduciendo el mismo sesgo del original y, si lo ha pensado, no lo ha considerado un problema de traducción.

## 6. Conclusiones

A tenor de estos datos, podemos concluir que, tras haber introducido el enfoque de género en una primera actividad en el aula, la gran mayoría del alumnado (83%) se muestra favorable a aplicar esta perspectiva en la

traducción porque consideran que transmite el mismo sentido y mensaje del texto original, visibiliza a las mujeres en el texto traducido y contribuye a construir un mensaje más universal e inclusivo. Además, tras la reflexión sobre la actividad, el 100% del alumnado considera que el enfoque sexista podría aplicarse en todos los textos de carácter administrativo e instructivo. Es decir, tras esta primera actividad, el alumnado parece haber tomado conciencia de la pertinencia de aplicar la perspectiva de género en la traducción a partir de criterios y conceptos traductológicos como la equivalencia respecto al texto original y la aceptabilidad en el texto de llegada, y criterios éticos relacionados con la igualdad.

Esta primera toma de conciencia, sin embargo, no es suficiente para integrar el enfoque de género como habilidad necesaria al traducir, a no ser que dicha perspectiva forme parte del encargo de traducción; de hecho, los resultados obtenidos en la segunda actividad, indican que cuando este mismo alumnado se enfrenta a la traducción de un video (de tipología instructiva) que emplea el uso del masculino genérico y presenta, además, una expresión sexista y estereotipada muy reconocible, al no habérsele indicado explícitamente que aplicara el enfoque no sexista de la traducción, la mayoría de alumnas/os (89%) no realizan ninguna intervención en términos de género y, quienes sí la realizan (11%) lo hacen de manera anecdótica y no en todo el texto; asimismo, la mayoría del alumnado no considera que el uso del masculino genérico y/o la imagen sexista y estereotipada del texto original sean un problema de traducción. Es decir, no se adopta ningún criterio traductológico o ético para problematizar la cuestión de la representación lingüística sexo-genérica y la reproducción de estereotipos sexistas en la traducción.

Obviamente, estos resultados derivan de una única experiencia docente con un grupo reducido de alumnado. Necesitaríamos una muestra mayor para obtener resultados más fiables acerca de las resistencias del alumnado en la introducción y aplicación de la perspectiva de género en sus traducciones; no obstante, los resultados obtenidos nos indican que, aunque las experiencias docentes aisladas pueden despertar conciencias en el aula, y se pueden observar avances en su aplicación, estas actividades son insuficientes para que el alumnado incorpore la perspectiva de género como un enfoque necesario en su futuro desempeño profesional.

Desde este punto de vista, y en el caso concreto de la competencia de género en los estudios de traducción, se hace necesaria una intervención combinada que integre, por una parte, una aplicación transversal de la misma en el plan de estudios, con diferentes objetivos de aprendizaje en varias asignaturas y materias para garantizar resultados de aprendizaje más sólidos y, por otra parte, la creación de espacios de reflexión y formación del profesorado para llevar a cabo una acción coordinada de docencia con perspectiva de género, y hacer realidad en las aulas lo que ya es un hecho en

el ámbito profesional de la traducción.

**Bionote:** Lupe Romero holds a PhD in Translation Theory from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) and is a professor in the Department of Translation, Interpretating and East Asian Studies at the same university. Her research interests focus on the didactics of the Italian language and Italian-Spanish translation, the acquisition of translation competence, audiovisual translation and its application in the language learning classroom, and teaching with a gender perspective. She is a member of the *FemInTra* research group (Feminism, Intersectionality and Translation) and has participated in several national and European projects on Translation Competences and in projects for mainstreaming gender in university teaching of Translation and Interpretation Studies. She is gender coordinator in the Faculty of Translation and Interpretating (UAB), director of SIFT (Seminar on Intersectionality, Feminism and Translation) and she has recently been awarded the *Jaume Vicens Vives distinction, M. Encarna Sanahuja Yll 2025* by the Government of Catalonia in recognition for her outstanding trajectory in including a gender perspective in university teaching practice.

**Author's address**: lupe.romero@uab.cat

# Bibliografía

Baker M. 2006, *Translation and Conflict. A Narrative Account*, Routledge, London.

Bassnett S. 2007, *Culture and Translation*, en Kuhiwczak P. and Littau K. (eds.), *A Companion to Translation Studies*, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon/Buffalo/Toronto, pp. 13-23.

Bloom B., Englehart M., Furst E., Hill W. y Krathwohl D. 1956, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*, David McKay, New York.

Castro O. 2008, *Género y traducción: elementos discursivos para una reescritura feminista*, en "Lectora: revista de dones i textualitat" 14, pp. 285-301.

Comisión Europea 1996, *Integrar la igualdad de oportunidades entre hombres y mujeres en el conjunto de las políticas y acciones comunitarias*, 21.02.1996. COM (96) 67 final. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:51996DC0067&from=ET (07.04.2023).

Molina L. y Hurtado A. 2002, *Translation Techniques Revisited. A Dynamic and Functionalist Approach*, en "Meta: Journal des traducteurs" 47 [4], pp. 498-512.

Rebollo Catalán M.Á., García-Pérez R., Piedra de la Cuadra J. y Vega Caro L. 2011, *Diagnóstico de la cultura de género en educación: actitudes del profesorado hacia la igualdad*, en "Revista de Educación" 355, pp. 521-546.

Reimóndez M. 2020, *El enfoque feminista de la traducción e interpretación: una ventaja competitiva*, en "Transfer" 15 [1-2], pp. 168-190.

Reverter-Bañón S. 2022, *La perspectiva de género en la educación universitaria de grado*, en Reverter-Bañón S. (ed.), *Experiencias docentes de la introducción de la perspectiva de género*, Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I, Castelló de la Plana, pp. 9-25.

Rodríguez Jaume M.J. y Gil González D. 2021, *La perspectiva de gènere en docència a les universitats de la Xarxa Vives. Situació actual i reptes futurs*, Xarxa Vives d'Universitats, Castelló de la Plana.

Romero L. 2021, *Cómo introducir la perspectiva de género en la enseñanza de la L2 para la traducción: primeros resultados de una experiencia docente*, en Schmidhofer A. y Cerezo E. (eds.), *Foreign Language Teaching in Translation and Interpreting Programmes*, Peter Lang Publishers, Frankfurt, pp. 114-138.

Velasco Martínez A. 2016, *"No soy feminista, pero…": Mitos y creencias de la juventud universitaria sobre el feminismo*, Tesis Doctoral, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona. https://diposit.ub.edu/dspace/bitstream/2445/106736/1/AVM_TESIS.pdf (09.04.2023).

Vidal Claramonte M.C.Á. 2009, *A vueltas con la traducción en el siglo XXI*, en "MonTI: monografías de Traducción e Interpretación" 1, pp. 49-58.

West C. y Zimmerman D.H. 1987, *Doing Gender*, en "Gender & Society" 1 [2], pp. 125-151.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 89-115
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p89
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# CONSTRUCTING ACTIVIST TRANSLATION IN HISTORY
## Women translators' activist engagement in Austria and Germany, 1871-1918

JULIA KÖLBL
KARL-FRANZENS-UNIVERSITÄT GRAZ

**Abstract** – Although translators have been involved in a wide range of political actions and movements throughout history, much of the relevant research – particularly with regard to activism – has focused on contemporary contexts so far (exceptions include Cheung 2010; Gould, Tahmasebian 2020; Simon 1996). Using the examples of several women who were translating into German and also publicly advocating for feminist causes between 1871 and 1918 in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire and the German Empire, this article aims to stimulate a debate on why a historical perspective is needed to enhance our understanding of the intertwining of translation and activism. In elaborating my argument, I will draw on a broad range of primary sources, (auto-)biographical data and paratextual material and follow the gender studies scholars Elisabeth Klaus and Ulla Wischermann (2008) in their understanding of society as constituted of a single, medium and complex public sphere. By applying a broad understanding of the 'public' and the 'political', the activist potential of women's translation work becomes visible in realms that have traditionally been understood as 'private' and therefore rather 'apolitical' spheres in society. Finally, the insights gained from this approach will not only reveal a more complex image of translation as an activist tool in the past (for women), but should also set a precedent for current theoretical debates on translation-related activism as well as for its real-life practice.

**Keywords**: women translators; activism; translation history; public/private dichotomy.

## 1. Translation activism: a not-so-recent phenomenon?

Translation work has always formed an integral part of a broad range of political actions and movements. Since the onset of the sociological turn in Translation Studies in the early 2000s, the numerous historical links between translation and political engagement have attracted substantial research attention within the discipline. For instance, studies have found that bible translations were often a religiously and also an ideologically motivated practice that was aimed at both undermining and/or reproducing repressive social and political conditions in history (see Delisle, Woodsworth [1995] 2012, pp. 160-172 for an overview of the topic, or Fischer *et al*. 2020; Fischer

2021 and Flotow 2000 for more specific case studies on bible translations). Apart from these, translations were also identified as key components of various social and political movements in (Western) history[1] – e.g. the anti-slavery movement (Kadish, Massardier-Kenney 2009) and the first women's movements (Anderson 2000; Misiou 2023; Simon 1996) in Europe and the US – or found to have served as relevant means of communication and networking throughout revolutionary processes such as the French Revolution of 1789 (see D'hulst, Schreiber 2014 and the research project *Radical Translations*),[2] the American Revolution of the 1770s (Tymoczko 2000, p. 40), and the Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) (Cronin 1996).

All of these examples – to which many more could be added – attest to the fact that translating to serve ideological and political agendas has had a long-lasting and varied tradition. Many of the instances referred to above could certainly also be associated with activist engagement, i.e. political activities that emanate from civil society contexts and are aimed at effecting social or political change (see Brownlie 2010, p. 46; Yang 2016, p. 1). So far, however, the notion of 'activism' seems to be primarily associated with translators' (and interpreters') involvement in present-day struggles of power and politics (important exceptions include Brownlie 2010; Cheung 2010; Gould, Tahmasebian 2020).

Against this background, this article will first explore potential explanations for the lack of historical references in contemporary research on translation activism (Section 2). This is followed by a wide range of examples of women who were both translating into German and publicly advocating for activist causes –mainly within the radical wing of the bourgeois women's movement or its proletarian counterpart – between 1871 and 1918 in Austria[3] and/or Germany[4] (Section 3).

[1] Since this article focuses on the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire and the German Empire, it inevitably adopts a Western European perspective, which is also reflected in the literature cited and the historical developments described. Nevertheless, I believe that this article can still provide useful points of departure for further research on the relationship between (women's) translation work and activism in both other European and non-European contexts.

[2] The project (conducted at King's College London) looks into the dissemination of the political demands and visions of the French Revolution through translations in Great Britain, France and Italy. Its vast database is also an invaluable source for the study of early women translators' contribution to the circulation of the radical ideas of the French Revolution. (https://radicaltranslations.org [7.9.2023]).

[3] 'Austria' in this article, refers to the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918), which was brought into being by the so-called Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867. Following this Compromise, each half of the empire was assigned its own constitution, government, parliament and capital. While Vienna represented the states located within the Northern and Western part of the empire (also known as *Cisleithania*), among them the German-speaking ones, Budapest represented the Hungarian crownlands and territories east of the Leitha River (*Transleithania*). Despite being formally equal in terms of power (e.g. the two states conducted common foreign, defense and financial policies), it was the Austrian monarch who

The article's focus on this particular historical and geographical context results from my PhD project, which looks both systematically and over an extended period of time (1848-1918) into the interconnection between translation, politics and women's activism in German-speaking history. The women included in this article form part of a larger dataset of 33 female translator-activists, who were all particularly engaged within the first women's rights or working-class movements at the turn of the last century. While several of these women are already widely known as political figures within the historical context under investigation, their work has – apart from very few exceptions – not yet been linked to translation as a central element of their politically informed actions.

To establish this link, I draw on a broad range of primary sources, (auto-)biographical data and paratextual material gathered from existing research or relevant databases (e.g. *ANNO–Historische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften*; *biografiA – biografische Datenbank und Lexikon österreichischer Frauen*; *Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv*; *Frauen in Bewegung*; *Germersheimer Übersetzerlexikon*; *META* catalogue[5]) as well as through archival research in Austria and Germany.[6] The material studied includes women's private and professional correspondence, diary entries or work-related notes, relevant historical women's journals and the translations published therein, as well as prefaces or comments by the women in their translated texts.

In my analysis, I follow the Austrian and German gender studies scholars Elisabeth Klaus and Ulla Wischermann[7] in their conceptualization of

acted as head of state. This also had a decisive effect on the language policies within the multicultural Empire, with German being the main language of communication and administration (for an extensive history of the Habsburg Monarchy see Beller 2018; for an in-depth study of translation and interpreting activities in the Habsburg Monarchy see Wolf 2012).

[4] When speaking of 'Germany', I am referring to the German Empire (1871-1918), which was established in the aftermath of the Franco-German War of 1870/71. The proclamation of the German Empire in January 1871 initiated the process of building the modern German nation-state (which had already begun with the establishment of the North German Confederation in 1867) to a symbolic end. The German Empire was a constitutional monarchy that comprised 25 federally organized member states. The largest member state in terms of area and population was the Kingdom of Prussia, which also held most of the power in the Empire, as the King of Prussia was also the head of state (German Emperor) and in charge of appointing the head of the federal government (Chancellor) (for further reading see e.g. Blackbourn 2005).

[5] Umbrella organization of more than 30 lesbian and women's archives and libraries in Germany.

[6] For the present study, I have conducted research at the following archives: *Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Kassel); *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek* (Vienna); *Verein für Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung* (Vienna). Not all of the material collected was included in this article.

[7] I have already applied Klaus and Wischermann elsewhere (Kölbl 2025). That particular study, however, only focused on the context of the Habsburg Empire and approached the topic of translation as a means of political action from a more general perspective, while the present

the public sphere as a multi-level process "by which society negotiates its values and rules" (Klaus, Wischermann 2008, p. 103). Used particularly in the context of social movement studies, this theoretical model has repeatedly demonstrated that political activists must act on different levels of the public sphere to be able to reach political institutions and influence public opinion (see especially the contributions in Klaus, Drüeke 2017).

In the context of the present study, the insights gained from this approach will not only reveal a wide range of women's translation practices at the time, but also shed light on the numerous, yet largely unnoticed opportunities for public participation that women deliberately created for themselves and others through their translation work.

## 2. On blank spaces, frustrations and future directions in historical research on translation activism

In her 2010 paper *Rethinking Activism: The Power and Dynamics of Translation in China during the Late Qing Period (1840-1911)*, Martha Cheung notes that "the urgent and compelling problems of the day" (2010, p. 254) continue to be given priority in translation-related studies of activism. She mainly attributes this to the perception of activism as "a distinctly twentieth-century phenomenon" (2010, p. 254). In fact, it was not until the last decades of the 20th century that the term activism became used more consistently in public discourse.[8] This process was to a large extent fuelled by the popular protests and movements of the late 1960s, whose global reach had a decisive effect on how activism would come to be understood among a broad international public. Since then, the term has been largely associated with citizens' political activities, ranging from high-risk protests to moderate civil action (see Nolas *et al*. 2017; Yang 2016). While activism will, to some extent, always remain an ambiguous and contested term with regard to the forms of political action to which it refers (e.g. radical, revolutionary action, or nonrevolutionary, community action), the intended purpose of these actions (e.g. action in the service of the prevailing system of power and

article explores the interrelationship of gender, activism and translation explicitly from a Translation Studies point of view.

[8] Throughout its history, activism adopted a wide variety of meanings, which were in turn influenced by different social and political developments. For instance, during the early 20th century alone, 'activism' could refer to a philosophical orientation in life (see Eisler 1912, pp. 160-161), to a pacifist-socialist literature movement (see Rothe 1969), to the advocates of the burgeoning European nationalisms, to pro-German activities during the First World War, or could simply mean a vigorous political activity (Yang 2016, pp. 1-2). Although its range of meanings has been significantly reduced, the way people think about activism and those who engage in it still varies widely across different countries and their respective cultural, linguistic, and political histories.

values, or in opposition to it), and the means deployed to achieve them (e.g. demonstrations, protests, online campaigning, and so on), its range of meanings have decreased steadily. In this article, 'activism' or 'activist practice' means a form of political participation that (1) has a non-binding character on a formal political level, (2) is mainly based on 'everyday' practices, and (3) aims to challenge the status quo through a participatory or emancipatory political agenda.

The heightened awareness of social, cultural, and political injustices that characterized the global public climate in the second half of the 20th century also eventually led to the emergence of a series of openly activist networks of translators and interpreters that were mainly aimed at challenging global capitalism and its related hegemonic language politics (e.g. ECOS, Babels, Tlaxcala). Up until today, various relevant studies give the impression that translation-related activism primarily emerged from these networks and the ways in which they used the practice of translation (and interpreting) to further activist causes (see e.g. Baker 2013; Boéri, Maier 2010; Boéri 2020). This results in an idealization of "activism as a novel, unprecedented phenomenon" (Cheung 2010, p. 240), and also leads to an overshadowing of lines of tradition that reach back further in time.

A case in point would be the conventional origin story of activist feminist translation that presents the so-called Canadian School of the early 1980s as its birthplace and representing universal paradigm of the practice (Castro, Ergun 2018, p. 126), although feminist interventions in translation actually date back centuries and are therefore not an exclusively recent trend (see e.g. Agorni 2005; Gibbels 2004; Misiou 2023).[9] It certainly needs to be acknowledged that the Canadian School played a decisive role in the "theoretical formulation and institutional recognition of feminist translation" (Castro, Ergun 2018, p. 130), and that the emergence of politicized translation and interpreting networks has led to extensive theoretical discussions of activist translation practices (e.g. Anderlič 2009; Baker 2006; Lampropoulou 2010; Manuel Jerez *et al.* 2004). However, the fact that activism only started to be used as a self-proclaimed label more broadly at the turn of the 20th century does not mean it cannot also be applied to earlier periods and political practices.

That "our sight is so firmly trained on the present" (Cheung 2010, p. 255) can perhaps also be attributed to practical research considerations: with the option of conducting surveys, interviews, or fieldwork, the study of present-day issues allows for more direct – though by no means necessarily easier – access to relevant data. Historical research, on the other hand,

[9] While some TS scholars argue for the existence of a longer line of feminist translation practices (Castro, Ergun 2018), others question this narrative (Brown 2018, 2022).

requires scholars to dig deeper to find relevant sources and lay bare past activist practices, i.e. while contemporary research makes it possible to directly contact the individuals under study and conduct imminent research on their movements and activities, historians can only engage indirectly with their research subjects.

This frustrating truth has sometimes led to strong reservations about historical research. A telling example of this is a statement made by Mona Baker, in which she equates historical analyses of issues of power, resistance and translation with a quest for security and safety:

> Where translation scholars have adopted the perspective of marginalised or resistant groups in society, this has almost exclusively been in the context of historical studies, with temporal distance ensuring that no "spillage" of risk or serious political controversy can contaminate the orderly world of scholarly research. (Baker 2009, p. 222)

Baker's argument fails to address three aspects in particular. Firstly, it overlooks how the present is, in every respect, a product of the past and that more often than not, "the road to the future is through the past" (Solnit [2004] 2016, p. 38). By disconnecting the past from the present, Baker denies that the former has any relevance for the formation and further development of activist practices today. However, to help present-day activists to understand the features and possibilities for the activist use of translations, but also "the necessary conditions required for the success of [translational activism] and its limitations" (Tymoczko 2006, p. 456), we actually need to acquire much more knowledge about the different functions that translations have played in the complex power struggles of history. This is when "temporal distance", to borrow Baker's term, becomes an essential tool of analysis.

The potential that "temporal distance" carries for both historical and contemporary research is the second aspect that is being missed. While it is certainly true that we will never be able to fully understand historical figures' thoughts and actions, nor the exact ways in which certain historical events unfolded (Elias 1999, p. 83), distance in time does not necessarily have to make you feel more detached from your research subject, but can still evoke proximity. By excluding this possibility from the outset, we waste the opportunity to learn whose shoulders we stand on and to create a sense of connectedness to previous generations that is grounded in "shared values and aspirations" (Cheung 2010, p. 255). Dealing with the history of activist struggles and practices does therefore not imply a way of past shelter-seeking, but rather reflects both a necessary and consistent approach. In fact, the study of one's own history has always been of particular importance in the context of political movements, especially with regard to shaping present political awareness and practices. Walter Benjamin also speaks of a "secret agreement between past generations and the present one" (1980, p. 694),

whereby the past does not only exist to teach us lessons, rather, it carries with it the potential for "bringing to fruition in the present what past generations failed to achieve" (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020, p. 4). In doing so, it situates our own political (and scholarly) engagement in history (Bühner, Möhring 2019).

The third and final misbelief concerns Baker's claim that those conducting historical research do so to avoid any "'spillage' of risk or serious political controversy" (Baker 2009, p. 222). To some degree, it is of course true that those who dedicate their research to the pressing events and developments of the day, and who may even form part of these developments, are more likely to face immediate reaction and criticism. However, this does not mean that the choice of a historical research subject and the way it is approached cannot also cause controversy. This is particularly true when it comes to dealing with the topic of women in history, as is the case in this article. Exploring one's own history, re-interpreting and taking inspiration from it has been crucial in transforming women's self-understanding and self-image in the past, and eventually proved to be one of the key prerequisites for their sustainable social and political emancipation (see Lerner 1993).

The idea of using knowledge about the past to guide one's own efforts to shape the future will be of dual concern in this article (McLean 2014, p. 37). On the one hand, the following examples of selected women's rights activists and translators in the Austrian half of the Habsburg Empire and the German Empire will reveal specific ways in which these women integrated translations into their political activism, and, it will serve to demonstrate how women at the time used translation work to uncover historical role models, draw parallels with the past, and create historical points of reference on which to base their own political thinking and action. On the other hand, these specific examples will then become precedents for my own reflections about the history of women's activist translations practices and their potential implications for our activist translation practices today.

## 3. Women, translation, and activism in Austria and Germany, 1871-1918

As has become clear so far, there are only a handful of studies that explicitly address the historical dimension of activist translation work. This is even more apparent when the focus is on women, whose translation practice in the past has traditionally been understood as a 'private' and therefore 'apolitical' endeavour (Chamberlain [1988] 2021; for an extensive criticism on this subject matter see also Brown 2018, 2022; Crawford 2010). The discursive separation between private and public spheres and the gendered attributions

associated therewith became particularly pronounced during the (European) 19th century and have had a decisive influence on historical research since then (Hausen 1992, p. 81). For instance, gender historian Claudia Opitz-Belakhal has noted that women's participation in society and politics was oftentimes rendered invisible from a historical point of view, because some historical studies continued to reproduce the narrative of a male-dominated public sphere that was largely associated with political institutions such as parliaments or political parties and associations, to which women (as well as non-white and non-middle-class men) had been denied access (Opitz-Belakhal [2010] 2018, pp. 113-114).

To counteract such limitations, feminist scholars have long been concerned with establishing a broader understanding of the 'public sphere' that does not view political action exclusively in terms of the state and party politics, but rather as a type of behaviour "that can basically be found anywhere [in society]" (Sutor 1994, p. 45; see also the early works of Nancy Fraser 1990).

In line with such feminist thinking about politics, I draw on Klaus and Wischermann (2008)[10] and their understanding of society as being constituted of multiple public spheres. More specifically, Klaus and Wischermann identify three levels of the public sphere – namely *simple*, *medium* and *complex public spheres* –, which distinguish each other according to their respective structural characteristics, their numbers of communication channels and forums, and their social impact (Klaus, Wischermann 2008, p. 103).[11] By applying the three-tiered model of the public sphere to the study of the functions of translation in the context of women's activism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, I aim to demonstrate how women used the practice of translation to widen or exploit their opportunities for political agency and to raise awareness of feminist issues among various 'public' audiences. In doing so, I ultimately intend to generate a more differentiated understanding of the activist dimension of women's translation practices at the time, one that goes beyond the actual act of translating.

[10] The *three-tiered model of the public sphere* was originally suggested by Elisabeth Klaus (2001) and inspired by the so-called arena-model developed by Jürgen Gerhards and Friedhelm Neidhart (1990). Klaus's model was applied and extended further, especially in the context of both historical and contemporary feminist media and communication studies (see also Wischermann 2003; Drüeke 2013).

[11] While Klaus's and Wischermann's model, like any attempt at classification, is arguably too simplistic to be able to fully take into account the complexities that distinguish the different levels of public sphere and the (political) functions of translations therein, their suggested categories are useful, "as long as they are not taken as 'pure types', but as categories with fuzzy boundaries" that overlap and influence each other, as Martha Cheung has taught us (2010, p. 242).

### *3.1. From individual politicization to collective feminist consciousness: translation activism within the simple public sphere*

*Simple public spheres* establish themselves through spontaneous encounters and are characterized by direct and egalitarian forms of communication (Klaus 2001, p. 22). As far as the present study is concerned, women engaged in such informal exchanges in the context of private social gatherings or joint activities, through letter-writing, or within specifically 'female' spaces, such as women's clubs, women's associations, or women's libraries. These contexts offered space for personal and sometimes intimate communication, fostering relationships and networks as well as creating a sense of belonging and joint concern (Wischermann 2017, pp. 65-67). This, in turn, formed the basis for a *movement culture* (Wischermann 2003), i.e. a specific form of collective identity, which is crucial for any sustainable political alliance between individuals.

In the context of the Austrian and German women's movements at the turn of the 20th century,[12] the processes of shaping and strengthening such a collective identity was not only based on a frequent exchange and a tightly woven network of relationships among contemporary women's rights activists, but was also influenced by historical and fictional references. One such reference was the trailblazing work of British philosopher and feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797). In 1899, her most famous text *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792) was published in a German re-translation by the Austrian-Jewish feminist Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936). Pappenheim, who then lived in Frankfurt, undertook the translation project when Wollstonecraft's radical and emancipatory demands were being rediscovered in the context of female suffrage campaigns in Austria and Germany (Hecht 2012, pp. 311-

[12] Around 1900, the scope of the Austrian and German women's movements was highly differentiated. Despite numerous legal restrictions, women-specific associations and organizations had formed in both countries from the 1860s onwards. These included local associations for educational, professional or trade-union activities, women's suffrage or women workers' associations as well as national federations, such as the *General German Women's Association* (*Allgemeiner Deutscher Frauenverein*) (1865) or the *Federation of German Women's Associations* (*Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine*) (1894) in Germany, and the *General Austrian Women's Association* (*Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein*) (1893) as well as the *Austrian National Council of Women* (*Bund Österreichischer Frauenvereine*) (1902), in Austria. Between 1899 and 1916, both countries also saw the establishment of a number of religious women's associations, among them the *League of Jewish Women* (*Jüdischer Frauenbund*) (1904). Since the turn of the century, some Austrian and German women's associations were also represented in different international alliances, depending on their overall political stances and feminist orientations (socialist-oriented women's rights activists vs. the radical and more moderate wings within the liberal bourgeois women's movements) (see Gerhard 2008a, p. 197; Wischermann 2003, p. 261).

312). While working on the re-translation of the *Vindication*, Pappenheim's own political thinking also became increasingly influenced by the British feminist's ideas. For instance, her criticism of women's oppression in bourgeois societies and their subordinate role in Jewish culture, which Pappenheim published in the liberal German Jewish magazine *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* in 1897,[13] strongly resembles the line of argumentation pursued by Mary Wollstonecraft in the preface of her feminist manifesto. Like Wollstonecraft, Pappenheim had argued that the disadvantaged position of women in society resulted from the systematic neglect of their education, that women had to be raised to fulfil their duties (including their maternal duties), and that they should actively strive for developing their intellectual skills so as to be worthy of having equal rights (to men) (Pappenheim 1897, in Hecht 2012, pp. 309-310).

The appropriation of Wollstonecraft's text and its use for the dissemination of Pappenheim's own ideas on women and female emancipation is also reflected in the way she tackled the translation. Apart from extensive omissions and cuts to the original text, Pappenheim also added new information and simplified Wollstonecraft's style of writing. Various references to women's current situation at the time and other content-related updates also support the conclusion that Pappenheim aimed to facilitate contemporary women's identification with the text and to further her own feminist-activist agenda through the translation (Hecht 2012, pp. 310, 314; for an extensive analysis of Pappenheim's translation see also Gibbels 2004).

Using the idea of building on one's own translations to further political causes, the Austrian socialist, journalist and writer Emma Adler (1858-1935) serves as another key example. For instance, her major work *Die berühmten Frauen der Französischen Revolution 1789-1795* (*The Famous Women of the French Revolution 1789-1795*), published in 1906, is almost exclusively based on previously unpublished French-language sources (see Adler 1906, pp. 279-280). The translation process underlying the creation of the text involved, on the one hand, the translation of the source material into German, and, on the other hand, the further processing and adaptation of this material to a specifically female audience. The book portrays nine women on both sides of the French Revolution, whose roles, commitments, and sacrifices had until then not been mentioned in German historiography (Geber 2014, pp. 183-184). In her recounts of these women's political lives, Adler takes a clear stance against the popular image that politically active women are "sentimental", "unfeminine", or "crazy" (Geber, Schuberth 2021, p. 29) – a

[13] Despite her pronounced social and feminist engagement, Pappenheim preferably used the gender-neutral pseudonym "P. Berthold" for her publications (Hecht 2012, p. 309).

reality that she and other female political activists were also facing at the beginning of the 20th century.[14]

In another sense, Emma Adler's work can also be read as a contribution to the creation of a "feminist consciousness" as understood by Gerda Lerner:

> Human beings have always used history in order to find their direction toward the future: to repeat the past or to depart from it. Lacking knowledge of their own history, women thinkers did not have the self-knowledge from which to project a desired future. (Lerner 1993, p. 281)

Even more so than in the case of Pappenheim, the activist potential of Adler's translation work lies not so much in specific translation strategies or within the translated text alone, but in a further processing of translated material that was aimed at encouraging other women in their emancipatory efforts through knowledge of their own pasts.[15]

A final example shall be linked to these considerations. When Jenny Adler-Herzmark (1877-1950), a Riga-born doctor and journalist, moved to Vienna in 1904 and became actively involved in the Austrian working-class movement, she also started to translate revolutionary Russian literature into German (Hasleder 2016, pp. 48-49).[16] Drawing on her language skills and her knowledge of Russian literature, she also went on to publicly share some of the observations she made while translating and reading works of Russian authors. For instance, in 1911, she gave a talk on the topic of "The Woman in Tolstoy's work" at the *New Vienna Women's Club*[17] (*Neues Wiener Tagblatt,* 23 January 1911, p. 12). Although she had not translated any of Tolstoy's

[14] In fact, Adler's work was most harshly criticized by her own husband, Victor Adler (1852-1918), physician and founder of the *Austrian Social Democratic Workers' Party*. He called his wife's work "utterly reactionary" and even considered publicly distancing himself from her (see Geber, Schuberth 2021, p. 29).

[15] Whether Pappenheim's or Adler's translations actually had such an immediate effect at the time is hard to verify. However, the fact that both the German translation of *A Vindication of The Rights of Woman* and the biographical portraits of revolutionary women in Adler's *Die berühmten Frauen der französischen Revolution 1789-1795* were not only being promoted and discussed within the political (women's) press at the time (e.g. Frost 1902, pp. 299-301; A.P. 1906, pp. 4-5), but continue to be the topic of analysis and critical reflection to the present day (see e.g. Geber 2014; Gibbels 2004; Hecht 2012), certainly gives us reason to believe that their aim of forging alliances between past and present generations of women was eventually met.

[16] Jenny Adler-Herzmark mainly translated texts on the first Russian Revolution, including authors such as A. P. Berezovskij, Aleksandr Kuprin, or Fedor Rešetnikov.

[17] The *New Vienna Women's Club* (*Neue Wiener Frauenklub*) was founded in 1903 as successor to the *First Vienna Women's Club* (*Erster Wiener Frauenklub*) by twelve liberal women's rights activists. Its premises were open for use by all representatives of the women's rights movement at the time, regardless of their political affiliations. In March 1938, however, the *Women's Club* expelled all of its numerous Jewish members. Yet, it was dissolved by the National Socialists at the end of November 1938.

works herself, the preparation for her lecture still required a twofold translation process: firstly, Adler-Herzmark needed to translate the relevant passages she wanted to discuss for herself and, in a further step, transfer her observations for a non-Russian speaking audience. The analysis of Tolstoy's female characters, who embody strong and self-determined personalities, but also represent conventional, patriarchal ideas of 'womanhood', illustrates yet another way of how translation work – both in a narrow and broader sense of the term – was used to convey female role models and alternative ways of living. Moreover, the fact that Jenny Adler-Herzmark chose to acquaint her contemporaries with a variety of female role models – even if they were fictional – in the form of a lecture, can be considered a particularly low-threshold way of encouraging other women in their individual and collective emancipatory aspirations and visions.

The various translation-related phenomena that emerged at the *simple level of public sphere*, and the ways in which women's translation work was linked to the processes of politicization and feminist consciousness-raising, are already indicative of how women would continue to use translations to further promote and disseminate their political visions and demands within the *medium* and *complex public spheres*. Translations were not 'simply' published and made available to a specific target audience, but the information and contents included therein had oftentimes already been processed further within the context of the women's respective activist agendas.

### *3.2. Translation as central element of women's political activism: inside the medium public spheres of the bourgeoisie and proletarian women's movements*

The examples so far have shown that, at the *simple level of the public sphere*, translated texts and their further uses were primarily directed at a (politicized) female target audience, thus helping to establish and shape a specific *movement culture*. By familiarizing contemporary women with their predecessors' political demands, visions, and emancipatory ways of living, translations were an important instrument in the formation of a new self-understanding and sense of shared identity among women who were politically active and/or interested in politics. The ideas, visions, and themes that emerged in this process – first and foremost in individual women's imagination and work, then in mostly informal and spontaneous encounters – were developed further within the *medium public sphere*.

*Medium public spheres* manifest themselves in political alliances that are already more organized and hierarchical in structure, such as social movements. What is being said by whom and at what time is already subject to more regulation (Klaus, Wischermann 2008, pp. 107-108).

Following Ulla Wischermann's concept of *movement public*, the historical bourgeois and proletarian women's movements in Austria and Germany all constituted a public sphere in their own right. Within these spheres, women's rights activists were mainly concerned with substantiating their arguments and demands, with strengthening their oppositional stances and with forming a more or less common opinion on specific matters to promote both the internal and external mobilization of their respective movements (Klaus, Wischermann 2008, pp. 109-110; Wischermann 2003, p. 264).

In these processes of opinion-forming and consensus-building, women's journals constituted an important means of communication and platform for discussion – both on national and international levels. In Austria and Germany, journals edited by women and dedicated to feminist concerns became increasingly widespread from the 1890s onwards. The central organs of the bourgeois-radical women's movements included *Die Frauenbewegung* (1895-1919), edited by Minna Cauer (1841-1922) in Germany and *Dokumente der Frauen* (1899-1902) and its successor *Neues Frauenleben* (1902-1917) in Austria. On the side of the proletarian women's movement, Adelheid Popp's (1869-1939) *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung: Sozialdemokratisches Organ für Frauen und Mädchen* (1892-1924) and *Die Gleichheit* (1892-1923), edited (until 1917) by German communist and women's rights activist Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) constituted the most important media outlets.

The widely ramified international networks of these journals' editors, the close transnational collaboration between different women's journals and the variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the women (and men) who contributed to these journals made translation work essential for providing the intended contents. For instance, reports on international developments and events with regard to women's rights were a thematic priority in all of the magazines. Various Austrian women's rights activists, such as Leopoldine Kulka (1872-1920), Else Migerka (n.d.), or Therese Schlesinger-Eckstein (1863-1940), regularly translated foreign press reports that were related to the 'woman question', reported on international women's congresses as well as other relevant political events, or provided translations of women's personal accounts from all over the world.[18] For example, Else Migerka translated an article on *Free Marriage and Types of Marriages in*

[18] It was primarily feminist and emancipatory texts from Finland, France, Great Britain, Italy, Russia and Sweden that were translated into German. Some political contributions and reports, but even more so literary texts, were also translated into German from Czechoslovakian, Dutch, Hungarian, Polish, and Slovenian. Occasionally, translations by Australian, South African or US-American authors can also be found. An additional aspect that cannot be addressed in detail here, but should be mentioned nonetheless, is how some of the male partners or political companions of Austrian or German feminists also translated for the political women's press at the time (e.g. Friedrich Jodl or Karl Kautsky).

*Sweden* in 1905 (Bugge Wicksell-Lund 1905, pp. 6-7), reported from the 1908 Women's Congress in Rome (Migerka 1908, pp. 127-131), and regularly published on international feminist developments (e.g. Migerka 1906, pp. 13-15). Similar practices can be found in the German women's journal *Die Frauenbewegung*, where different pieces on women's rights movements around the world were based on translations of foreign press reports (e.g. Lüders 1902, pp. 59-60).

By reporting on the progress and setbacks of women's movements around the world and by providing information about women's achievements in political, economic and daily life, the readers of these magazines learned that different groups of women were facing similar problems and injustices in other countries and thus sharing their own fights. Against this background, the need for and practice of translation did not only foster collaboration between women's rights activists around the world, but also helped strengthen the ties between the German-speaking movements. For instance, certain pieces that had been published in some translated form in one journal were often re-printed in another woman's journal (e.g. N.N. 1894, pp. 2-3; N.N. 1896, pp. 1-2; N.N. 1897, pp. 116-118 or Beer 1907, pp. 6-7).

Apart from the permanent sections dedicated to contemporary international developments, the women's journals in question also published German translations of literary texts or poems that dealt with specifically female realities of life or socio-critical matters in other European countries, such as Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, or Scandinavia. These translations were either included in full length or published in parts over the course of several issues. What is more, the relevant magazines did not only prominently list translated books, but also had them discussed and criticized in more or less detailed reviews and commentaries.

A case in point would be the German translations of various books and articles by the Swedish reformist educator and writer Ellen Key (1849-1926). Her views on motherhood and the social 'role' of women were generally met with rejection both within proletarian women's circles and the radical wing of the bourgeois women's movement. For instance, *Neues Frauenleben* and *Die Frauenbewegung* regularly published excerpts from Key's texts – which were primarily translated into German by well-known Scandinavian literature translator Marie Franzos (1870-1941) – and critical commentaries of them, which helped to sharpen Austrian feminists' points of view on the subject matter (see, for example O. N. 1904, pp. 19-20; O. N. 1905, pp. 16-19 or Welzcek 1902, pp. 75-76).

A similar example can be found in Adele Gerber's (1863-1937) analysis of *Women and Economics* (1898), written by the US-American writer and women's rights advocate Charlotte Gilman-Perkins (1860-1935) and translated into German in 1901 by the president of the *Federation of German Women's Associations* (*Bund deutscher Frauenvereine*) (1894),

Marie Stritt (1855-1928). In Gerber's piece *Women and Economics in seiner Bedeutung für die Frauenbewegung*,[19] which appeared as an editorial in *Neues Frauenleben* in 1902, Gerber discusses the connection between the 'woman question' and other social issues, such as the question of class and the economic dependency of bourgeois women (Gerber 1902, pp. 1-7). Her excerpt is particularly exemplary of how contents or information provided through translation were built upon and linked to local circumstances. In so doing, women resorted to other women's translations, but also used texts they had translated themselves. For example, Austrian writer and co-editor of *Neues Frauenleben,* Leopoldine Kulka, published a first excerpt from her German translation of *Woman and Labour* by the South African writer and feminist Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) in a 1912 issue of the journal. Published at the dawn of the First World War, Kulka's text focused in particular on Schreiner's analysis of women's relationship to war. Their relevance at the time of the German publication was also noted in a footnote by the editors of this journal issue:

> Dieses Fragment [von Leopoldine Kulka] ist dem Werk „Woman and Labour" (ersch. bei Unwin & Fisher London) entnommen. Die bekannte, in Süd-Afrika lebende Autorin hat das Buch während des Burenkrieges unter dem unmittelbaren Eindruck desselben, [sic] geschrieben. Ihre Ausführungen über das Verhältnis der Frau zum Krieg gewinnen im gegenwärtigen Moment besondere Bedeutung. D.R. [Die Redaktion].[20] (Schreiner 1912, p. 285)

What becomes clear from this example, as well as from the others in this section, is that the importance of translation for the political activities of the women's movement members was particularly pronounced at the level of the *medium public sphere*. Translation activities were closely linked to the women's political activities, such as editing women's journals, journalistic work or travel activities. The knowledge transfer and learning processes stimulated by these activities did not only foster solidarity among women, but also helped identify weaknesses in their own arguments and approaches (see Gratzer 2001, pp. 16, 20). More importantly, these processes eventually laid the foundation for women's efforts to mobilize public opinion at the *complex level of the public sphere*, where responses are usually indicative of the success or at least the potential power of any social movement (Gerhard 2008a, p. 197).

[19] "'*Women and Economics*' *and its relevance for the women's movement*" [translation J.K.].

[20] This fragment [from Leopoldine Kulka] is taken from the text *Women and Labour* (published by Unwin & Fisher London). The well-known South African author wrote the book while experiencing the Boer War. Her remarks on women's relationship to war are of particular relevance in the present moment [The editors], [translation J.K.].

### *3.3. Translation work as the driver of direct political action and public opinion-forming in the complex public sphere*

*Complex public spheres* are composed of the political, economic and journalistic elites of a society, who are in the most powerful position to exert influence on public discourse and opinion and thus to maintain and secure their social power. The more complex the level of the public sphere, the fewer opportunities citizens have to participate in processes of public communication and opinion-forming and to be noticed by their contemporary social elites (Klaus 2017, pp. 21-23, 26).

The women who were able to take part in these processes through their translation work were either already well known as political activists or translated the kind of political texts that caused major international controversy or political debate at the time. For instance, Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), one of the most prominent revolutionary socialist theorists and political activists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, regularly translated foreign press reports from French, Polish and Russian into German to document and critically analyse the developments within the international working-class movement (Tashinskiy 2019, pp. 85-86). In addition, she also translated the first volume of the autobiography of Ukrainian-born writer, journalist and human rights activist Vladimir Korolenko (1853-1921) while in prison for three years and four months during the First World War (Kelletat 2017). Other examples of influential translations by women include the German (re-)translations of various English-written key texts and letters of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels by Social Democrat Luise Kautsky (1864-1944) and her husband Karl, a prominent Marxist theorist, which were published between 1900 and 1925 – a time during which the international and German working-class movements were undergoing profound changes on political and organizational levels. Finally, a couple of years earlier, the German translation of John Stuart Mill's and Harriett Taylor Mill's essay *The Subjection of Women* (1872) by Jewish-German publisher, translator and co-founder of the *General German Women's Association* (1865) Jenny Hirsch (1829-1902) had triggered widespread political debate on the so-called woman question in Germany (and Austria) (see Gerhard 2008b, p. 105, or N.N. 1902, p. 53). The fact that major public reaction to women's translation work was mainly reserved for a specific type of woman, however, does not mean that other women's translations could not influence and exert pressure on the political-administrative system in the historical period under study. Two examples are worth looking at in more detail here.

When Russia experienced its first series of unrest and strike movements on behalf of the working class between 1905 and 1907, the women's journals *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung, Die Gleichheit* and *Neues Frauenleben* issued several reports on the revolutionary events in Russia (e.g.

Krille 1905, p. 138; Luxemburg 1905, p. 139).[21] They also included translations of eyewitness accounts, political analyses, and literary texts on the revolution, as well as several portraits of Russian revolutionaries, most of which were also based on some type of translation work (N.N. 1905a, p. 60; 1905b, pp. 1-8; N.N. 1906, pp. 6-7).[22] Following these contributions, debates about the role of women in the revolutionary uprisings and about the extent to which Russian women's emancipation efforts were ahead of those in Western Europe arose (see N.N. 1905c, p. 8 or Kulka 1905, pp. 6-8). The strategies deployed by the revolutionary forces were analysed and discussed closely, especially within the women's press that represented the female working class. Soon afterwards, mass strikes, which had proven an effective 'weapon' in the emancipation efforts of the Russian working class, would become a powerful means of agitation among Austrian socialists as well (see, for example Popp-Dworak 1906, pp. 1-3 and Roland-Volk 1906, pp. 3-4).

The interconnectedness of the *simple, medium* and *complex public spheres* also becomes particularly eminent with regard to the May Day demonstrations, which were organized by socialist groups around the world from 1890 onwards, or the events on International Women's Day that was held for the first time in 1911 in a number of European countries and in the United States. Ideas and guidance for these events and the way that Austrian and German women (and men) involved chose to present themselves publicly were not only inspired by (translated) information in the women's magazines, but also by personal contacts and relationships on an international level.

This can also be observed within radical bourgeois women's circles. For instance, in 1910, London-based suffragist Isabel Seymour (1862-1963) was invited by the *Austrian Women's Suffrage Committee* (*Österreichisches Frauenstimmrechtskomitee)* to Vienna to give a talk about the organizational structure and agitation strategies of the English suffragettes, which included boycotts, strikes and various other forms of civil disobedience. Following Seymour's talk, the editor of *Neues Frauenleben*, Auguste Fickert (1855-1910), issued a report from the event, within which they also reflected upon the legal and cultural conditions necessary for the success of certain political actions (N.N. 1903, pp. 93-94). A year before Seymour's visit to Vienna, the *Zeitschrift für Frauenstimmrecht*, a supplement of the magazine *Die Frauenbewegung*, reported on several public and private lectures (given both in German and English) by suffragettes in Munich and on their political

[21] *Die Frauenbewegung* did not cover the Russian Revolution as extensively as the other women's magazines.

[22] In some of these cases, the authors and/or translators of the respective texts were not mentioned. At times, hints at the author's identity can be deduced from footnotes, e.g. ("Aus dem Brief eines russischen Heldenmädchens" ("From the letter of a Russian heroine", N.N. 1906, pp. 6-7) or "Ein russischer Revolutionär" ("A Russian revolutionary", N.N. 1905b, p. 1-8).

demands and tactics of civil disobedience (Goldberg 1909, p. 10; Pethwick-Lawrence 1908, pp. 16-17).

Although it is arguably harder to locate these more implicit translation processes within the *complex public sphere* and to precisely trace their effects on the dominant political and social institutions at the time, some of the examples analysed in this section provide some indication of how translations were able to spark public interest or controversy and trigger notable reactions among the Austrian and German social and political elites of the early 20th century. For instance, to return to the example of the Russian Revolution, the fact that the confiscation of individual articles or entire issues of women's magazines – at least with regard to the *Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung* and *Neues Frauenleben* – intensified with the success of the Second Russian Revolution in February 1917, clearly suggests that the reports and debates on the topic in the women's movement press were perceived and, above all, taken seriously by the state authorities. Finally, the authorities' reaction cannot be interpreted solely as a way of counteracting the spread of communist or socialist ideas. The actual success of the Russian revolutionaries also revived the fear of the revolutionary force of working-class people that had prevailed since the 'great' European revolutions of 1789 and 1848/49 and of the potential realization of revolutionary demands, such as the eventual introduction of women's suffrage in Russia between February 1917 and July 1918.

The role of translation in these developments might have been implicit, but still wielded the powerful potential to influence public opinion and undermine discriminatory cultural norms and values. Rather than fearing the publication of a translation, those in power were afraid of the direct and collective actions that women could potentially undertake on the basis of the arguments, images, and political ideas they learned about through translations and transnational relationships.

## 4. Discussion: Contemporary implications of women translators' activism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

The aim of this article was to outline how a historical perspective can broaden our understanding of the relationship between translation and activism. What do the examples of selected women translators and activists of the first Austrian and German women's rights movements tell us about this relationship now?

Firstly, they remind us that "even things that seem to happen suddenly [mostly] arise from deep roots in the past […]" (Solnit [2004] 2016, p. xxii). Thus, while some major research in Translation and Interpreting Studies seems to suggest that activist translation is rather a recent phenomenon (see

Sections 1 and 2), the examples analysed in this article attest to how those practices associated with activism and activist translation today actually do have a long-standing history.

Secondly, it has become clear that most histories of political activism or social movements usually take the moment the 'real' action begins as their starting point, thereby obscuring the variety of work leading up to those actions (see also Solnit [2004] 2016, p. 26 or Wischermann 2003, p. 12). By illustrating how translations often provided the basis for further political actions, including journalistic or editorial work, demonstrations, (mass)strikes, or public campaigns, this article shows that it is worthwhile to take several backward steps before engaging more closely with those activities that – in retrospect – were much more likely to attract attention and support for the demands and goals of the women's movements among the political and social elites of the time.

What allowed me to take such retrospective steps, to pick up *before* the action began, was Klaus's and Wischermann's concept of the public sphere, manifest on three different levels. The distinction between the *simple*, *medium* and *complex public spheres* that overlap and influence each other has made it particularly clear that the political potential and impact of translations cannot be understood through a one-dimensional view of the public sphere. Rather than having a direct effect within the dominant, or *complex public sphere*, where formal political institutions and media outlets shape 'public opinion', translations first and foremost enable the shifts in thought and the knowledge transfer necessary for undertaking more direct activist actions.

If, as Rebecca Solnit writes, it is true that "politics [or political action] arises out of the spread of ideas and the shaping of imaginations" ([2004] 2016, p. 26), then the women's translation work might have done exactly that within the activist contexts under study. In fact, what has emerged from distinguishing between three different public spheres is that in many cases, translations were rather the starting point of women's political actions and not the end point or 'peak' of their political engagement. At the *simple level of the public sphere*, translations mostly served as the basis for a first political exchange among women, enriching their imagination and expanding their political consciousness (Section 3.1.). Within the *medium public sphere*, where the various wings of the German-speaking women's movements consolidated their own political standpoints and prepared themselves to influence the dominant political and media landscape, translation work already formed a central element of women's activism (Section 3.2.). Finally, the *complex level of the public sphere* was usually where specific arguments, information or activist tools the women had learned about through translations were put into practice, directly and politically (Section 3.3).

Moreover, what has become evident at all levels of public spheres is that a translation process seldomly ended with the publication of a translated

text, but continued to inspire and inform women's political actions over and over again (i.e. women 'worked' with translated texts and used the arguments and ideas they identified therein for their own political agendas, publications, and direct political actions). Studies on translation and activism, therefore, should not focus so much on the questions of who, what and how a text was being translated, but more on the ways in which translations were – repeatedly – used to create political impact and meaning well beyond that text's publication period. Even when translations were directly declared as politically motivated, their social and political impact cannot be understood by analysing the translated texts alone or the practice of translation in general, but can only become apparent when examining how translation work interacts with the other political activities in which the women were engaged.

Thirdly, the intricate relationship between translation work and political activism became particularly manifest (1) in various translation phenomena that can only be grasped through a broader understanding of the term translation, including a mixture of direct translation and authorship (e.g. Bertha Pappenheim), 'political authorship' based on translation (e.g. Leopoldine Kulka), or translation work in a less explicit and more metaphorical sense (e.g. Emma Adler, Jenny Adler-Herzmark) and (2) where the various public spheres intersected, i.e. in those moments, where women were building upon the knowledge, information, or role models that they had oftentimes learned through translated content so that they could take their political activism a step further (see especially the examples in Section 3.3.).

That it was *always* translations which triggered the most foundational changes in the women's imagination and concrete activist practices would certainly be too great a claim. However, even though explicit connections are not always easy to track retrospectively, this article has, in various ways, illustrated that translation work often played an undeniable role in bringing about those changes.

Finally, what we can mostly learn from these findings to inform and encourage our own activist translation practices today is the certainty that what are usually just regarded as 'symbolic' actions, i.e. "actions carried out with words, images, [or] with communications" (Solnit [2004] 2016, p. 41), have, at various periods in history, proven as powerful as physical acts of resistance and opposition.

**Bionote:** Julia Kölbl is currently pursuing her PhD at the Department of Translation Studies, University of Graz, where she also serves as the main researcher in the Austrian Science Fund project 'Women, Translation, Activism, 1848–1933'. Her work explores the intersections of translation and gender history, focusing on women's movements, the political women's press, activist translation, and feminist Translation Studies. Her most extensive engagement with the political role of translation can be found in her monograph

on English-speaking volunteers who served as translators and interpreters for the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

**Author's address:** julia.koelbl@uni-graz.at

## Archival materials consulted

ANNO – Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften. https://anno.onb.ac.at.
Arbeiterinnenzeitung. Sozialdemokratisches Organ für Frauen und Mädchen. 1892-1902 and 1910-1918, ANNO – Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften. https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=abg.
Arbeiterinnenzeitung. Sozialdemokratisches Organ für Frauen und Mädchen. 1903-1909, Verein für Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung (VGA), Wien.
biografiA – biografische Datenbank und Lexikon österreichischer Frauen. http://www.biografia.at.
Die Frauenbewegung. 1895-1918, Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung, Kassel.
Die Gleichheit. Zeitschrift für die Interessen der Arbeiterinnen. 1892-1918, Historische Presse der deutschen Sozialdemokratie. https://collections.fes.de/historische-presse/periodical/titleinfo/238487.
Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv. https://www.digitales-deutsches-frauenarchiv.de.
Dokumente der Frauen. 1899-1903, ANNO – Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften. https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=ddf.
Frauen in Bewegung 1848-1938. https://fraueninbewegung.onb.ac.at.
Germersheimer Übersetzerlexikon. https://uelex.de.
Meta-Katalog. https://www.meta-katalog.eu.
Neues Frauenleben. Organ der freiheitlichen Frauen in Österreich. 1902-1918, ANNO – Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften. https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno-plus?aid=frl.
Neues Wiener Tagblatt. 23 January 1911, p. 12. ANNO – Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften. https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=nwg&datum=19110123&seite=12&zoom=33.
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien.
Zeitschrift für Frauenstimmrecht. 1902-1911, Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung, Kassel.

## References

Adler E. 1906, *Die berühmten Frauen der französischen Revolution 1789-1795. Mit 9 Porträts*, C.W. Stern, Wien.
Agorni M. 2005, *A Marginal(ized) Perspective on Translation History: Women and Translation in the Eighteenth Century*, in "Meta" 50 [3], pp. 817-830.
Anderlič B. 2009, *Tlaxcala: Übersetzen und Aktivismus oder die (Ohn)Macht der Translation*, Diploma Thesis, Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz.
Anderson B. 2000, *Joyous Greetings. The First International Women's Movement, 1830-1860*, Oxford University Press, New York.
A.P. 1906, *Die berühmten Frauen der französischen Revolution*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 15 [1], pp. 4-5.
Baker M. 2006, *Translation and Activism*, in "The Massachusetts Review" 47 [3], pp. 462-484.
Baker M. 2009, *Resisting State Terror: Theorizing Communities of Activist Translators and Interpreters*, in Bielsa E. and Hughes C.W. (eds.), *Globalization, Political Violence and Translation*, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmill, UK, pp. 222-242.
Baker M. 2013, *Translation as Alternative Space for Political Action*, in "Social Movement Studies" 12 [1], pp. 23-47.

Beer M. 1907, *Das englische Parlament und das Frauenwahlrecht*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 16 [7], pp. 6-7.
Beller S. 2018, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1815-1918*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Benjamin W. 1980, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte*, in Tiedemann R. (Hrsg.), *Walter Benjamin. Gesammelte Schriften*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, pp. 691-704.
Blackbourn D. 2005, *History of Germany 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century*, Blackwell, Malden, Massachusetts.
Boéri J. and Maier C. (eds.) 2010, *Compromiso Social y Traducción/Interpretación – Translation/Interpreting and Social Activism*, ECOS, Granada.
Boéri J. 2020, *Activism*, in Baker M. and Saldanha G. (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, Routledge, London, pp. 1-5.
Brown H. 2018, *Women Translators in History: Towards a 'Woman-Interrogated' Approach*, in Sanmann A., Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère M. and Cossy V. (eds.) *Fémin|in|visible. Women Authors of the Enlightenment. Übersetzen, schreiben, vermitteln*, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, pp. 27-52.
Brown H. 2022, *Women and Early Modern Cultures of Translation: Beyond the Female Tradition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
Brownlie S. 2010, *Committed Approaches and Activism*, in Gambier Y. and van Doorslaer L. (eds.), *Handbook of Translation Studies*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 45-48.
Bugge Wicksell-Lund A. 1905, *Die freie Ehe und Eheformen in Schweden. Deutsch von Else Migerka*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 8, pp. 3-7.
Bühner M. and Möhring M. 2019, *Einleitung. Europäische Geschlechtergeschichten*, in "Themenportal Europäische Geschichte". https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1727 (7.9.2023).
Castro O. and Ergun E. 2018, *Translation and Feminism*, in Evans J. and Fernández F. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, Routledge, London, pp. 125-143.
Chamberlain L. [1988] 2021, *Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation*, in Venuti L. (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, pp. 261-276.
Cheung M. 2010, *Rethinking Activism. The Power and Dynamics of Translation in China during the Late Qing Period (1840-1911)*, in Baker M., Olohan M. and Calzada Pérez M. (eds.), *Text and Context: Essays on Translation and Interpreting in Honour of Ian Mason*, St. Jerome, Manchester, pp. 237-258.
Crawford J. 2010, *Literary Circles and Communities*, in Bicks C. and Summit J. (eds.), *The History of British Women's Writing, Vol. 2, 1500-1610*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, UK, pp. 34-59.
Cronin M. 1996, *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Culture*, Cork University Press, Cork.
Delisle J. and Woodsworth J. [1995] 2012, *Translators Throughout History*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.
D'hulst L. and Schreiber M. 2014, *Vers une historiographie des politiques des traductions en Belgique durant la période française*, in "Target. International Journal of Translation Studies" 26 [1], pp. 3-31.
Drüeke R. 2013, *Politische Kommunikationsräume im Internet. Zum Verhältnis von Raum und Öffentlichkeit*, transcript, Bielefeld.
Eisler R. 1912, *Philosophen-Lexikon. Leben, Werke und Lehren der Denke*, Mittler, Berlin.

Elias N. 1999, *Wir sind eure Ahnen, die späten Barbaren*, in Homering W. (Hrsg.), *Norbert Elias. Im Gespräch mit Hans Christian Huf*, Ullstein, Berlin, pp. 82-93.

Fischer I., Petschnigg E., Navratil N., Berlis A. and de Groot C. (Hrsg.) 2020, *Die Bibel war für sie ein politisches Buch. Bibelinterpretationen der Frauenemanzipationsbewegungen im langen 19. Jahrhundert*, LIT, Wien.

Fischer I. 2021, *Anthropologische Konzepte: Sexualität als conditio humana in den Schöpfungserzählungen*, in Fischer I., *Liebe, Laster, Lust und Leiden. Sexualität im Alten Testament*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, pp. 45-53.

Flotow L. 2000, *Women, Bibles, Ideologies*, in "Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction (TTR)" 13 [1], pp. 9-20.

Fraser N. 1990, *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*, in "Social Text" 25 [26], pp. 56-80.

Frost L. 1902, *Mary Wollstonecraft: Eine Vertheidigung der Rechte der Frau. Uebersetzt von P. Berthold (Fräulein Bertha Pappenheim, Frankfurt a.M.)*, in "Dokumente der Frauen" 7 [11], pp. 299-301.

Geber E. 2014, *Frauengeschichtsschreibung als Pionierarbeit*, in Adler E., *Die berühmten Frauen der Französischen Revolution*, Geber E. (Hrsg.), Mandelbaum, Vienna, pp. 174-200.

Geber E. and Schuberth R. 2021, *Kämpfende Frauen. Aphorismen*, Theodor Kramer Gesellschaft, Wien.

Gerber A. 1902, '*Women and Economics' in seiner Bedeutung für die Frauenbewegung*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 4, pp. 1-7.

Gerhard U. 2008a, *Frauenbewegung*, in Roland R. and Rucht D. (Hrsg.), *Die Sozialen Bewegungen in Deutschland seit 1945. Ein Handbuch*, Campus, Frankfurt, pp. 187-217.

Gerhard U. 2008b, *John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) und Harriett Taylor Mill (1807-1858). Englischer Philosoph, Nationalökonom und Sozialreformer und englische Sozialphilosophin*, in Gerhard U., Pommerenke P. and Wischermann U. (Hrsg.), *Klassikerinnen feministischer Theorie. Band I (1789-1919)*, Ulrike Helmer, Königsstein, pp. 102-106.

Gerhards J. and Neidhart F. 1990, *Strukturen und Funktionen moderner Öffentlichkeit. Fragestellungen und Ansätze*, in "Discussion Papers. Research Unit: The Public and the Social Movement FS III", Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, Berlin, pp. 90-101.

Gibbels E. 2004, *Mary Wollstonecraft zwischen Feminismus und Opportunismus: die diskursiven Strategien in den deutschen Übersetzungen von 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman'*, Narr, Tübingen.

Gilman-Perkins C. 1898, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, Small, Maynard, Boston; translated by Stritt M. 1901, *Mann und Frau: Die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen der Geschlechter als Hauptfaktor der socialen Entwicklung*, Minden, Dresden.

Goldberg H. v. 1909, *Die Suffragettes in München*, in "Zeitschrift für Frauenstimmrecht", 1 March 1909 [3], pp. 9-10.

Gould R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.) 2020, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London.

Gratzer P. 2001, *Radikal und elitär – Die 'Dokumente der Frauen' unter dem Blickpunkt des Internationalismus*, unpublished seminar paper, Universität Wien.

Hasleder M. 2016, *Adler-Herzmark, Jenny*, in Korotin I. (Hrsg.), *biografiA. Lexikon österreichischer Frauen. Band 1: A-H*, Böhlau, Wien, pp. 48-49.

Hausen K. 1992, *Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit. Gesellschaftspolitische Konstruktionen und die Geschichte der Geschlechterbeziehungen*, in Hausen K. and Wunder H. (Hrsg.), *Frauengeschichte–Geschlechtergeschichte*, Campus, Frankfurt, pp. 81-88.

Hecht L. 2012, *Übersetzungen jüdischer Tradition. Bertha Pappenheims religiös-feministische Schriften*, in "Hofmannsthal-Jahrbuch. Zur europäischen Moderne" 20, pp. 288-344.

Kadish D.Y. and Massardier-Kenney F. 2009, *Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Abolitionist Writing, 1780-1830*, Kent State University Press, Kent, USA.

Kelletat A.F. 2017, *Rosa Luxemburg, 1871–1919*, in "Germersheimer Übersetzerlexikon". https://uelex.de/uebersetzer/luxemburg-rosa/ (7.9.2023).

Klaus E. 2001, *Das Öffentliche im Privaten – Das Private im Öffentlichen. Ein kommunikationstheoretischer Ansatz*, in Herrmann F. and Lünenborg M. (Hrsg.), *Tabubruch als Programm. Privates und Intimes in den Medien*, Leske & Budrich, Opladen, pp. 15-35.

Klaus E. and Wischermann U. 2008, *Öffentlichkeit als Mehr-Ebenen-Prozess*, in "Zeitschrift für Frauenforschung und Geschlechterstudien" 26, pp. 103-116.

Klaus E. 2017, *Öffentlichkeit als gesellschaftlicher Selbstverständigungsprozess und das Drei-Ebenen-Modell von Öffentlichkeit. Rückblick und Ausblick*, in Klaus E. and Drüeke R. (Hrsg.), transcript, Bielefeld, pp. 17-38.

Klaus E. and Drüeke R. (Hrsg.) 2017, *Öffentlichkeiten und gesellschaftliche Aushandlungsprozesse. Theoretische Perspektiven und empirische Befunde*, transcript, Bielefeld.

Kölbl J. 2025, *Übersetzen als politische Praxis von Frauen. Deutschsprachige Übersetzerinnen in der Habsburgermonarchie (1890-1918)*, in Haider-Wilson B. and Schütz W. (Hrsg.), *Frauen als politisch Handelnde. Beiträge zur Agency in der Habsburgermonarchie 1780–1918*, transcript, Bielefeld, pp. 217-236.

Krille O. 1905, *Revolution in Russland*, in "Die Gleichheit" 29 November 1905 [24], p. 139.

Kulka L. 1905, *Russlands Frauen*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 2, pp. 6-8.

Lampropoulou A. 2010, *Babels' Interpreting Policy in the Athens European Social Forum: A Socio-Political Approach to Interpreting*, in Boéri J. and Maier C. (eds.), *Compromiso Social y Traducción/Interpretación Translation/Interpreting and Social Activism*, ECOS, Granada, pp. 28-37.

Lerner G. 1993, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-seventy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Lüders E. 1902, *Die erste internationale Frauenstimmrechtskonferenz in Washington. Nach den Berichten im* Women's Journal *bearbeitet von Else Lüders*, in "Die Frauenbewegung" 15 April 1902 [8], pp. 59-60.

Luxemburg R. 1905, *Die Lösung der Frage*, in "Die Gleichheit" 15 November 1905 [23], p. 138.

Manuel Jerez J. de, López Cortés J. and Brander de la Iglesia M. 2004, *Traducción e interpretación, voluntariado y compromiso social*, in "Puentes" 4, pp. 65-72.

McLean N. 2014, *Women's History for the Future: Gerda Lerner's Last Agenda-Setting*, in "Journal of Women's History" 26 [1], pp. 37-43.

Migerka E. 1906, *Frauentage in Russland*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 1, pp. 13-15.

Migerka E. 1908, *Der Frauenkongress in Rom*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 5, pp. 127-131.

Mill J.S. and Taylor Mill H. 1869, *The Subjection of Women*, Longmans, London; translated by Hirsch J. 1869, *Die Hörigkeit der Frau,* Berggold, Berlin.

Misiou V. 2023, *The Renaissance of Women Translators in 19th-Century Greece*, Routledge, London.

N.N. 1894, *Amerikanische Fabrikinspektorinnen über die Kinderarbeit im Staate Illinois*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 3 [17], pp. 2-3.
N.N. 1896, *Ansichten einer englischen Agitatorin über die gewerkschaftliche Organisation der Arbeiterinnen*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 5 [17], pp. 1-2.
N.N. 1897, *Beatrice Webb*, in "Die Gleichheit" 21 July 1897 [15], pp. 116-118.
N.N. 1902, *Im Andenken an Jenny Hirsch*, in "Die Frauenbewegung" 1 April 1902 [7], p. 53.
N.N. 1903, *Rundschau*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 3, pp. 93-94.
N.N. 1905a, *Ein Traum im Wachen. Eine Phantasie. Aus dem russischen "Sozialdemokrat" übersetzt von T. H. Den Gefallenen der Januartage gewidmet*, in "Die Gleichheit" 17 May 1905, p. 60.
N.N. 1905b, *Die Revolution in Russland*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 2, pp. 1-8.
N.N. 1905c, *Die volle politische Gleichberechtigung der Frau in Russland*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 14 [1], p. 8.
N.N. 1906, *Aus dem Briefe eines russischen Heldenmädchens*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 15 [7], pp. 6-7.
Nolas S., Varvantakis C. and Aruldoss V. 2017, *Political Activism Across the Life Course*, in "Contemporary Social Science" 12 [1-2], pp. 1-12.
O. N. 1904, *Ueber Liebe und Ehe. Essays von Ellen Key. Autorisirte Uebertragung von Francis Maro*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 7, pp. 19-20.
O. N. 1905, *Ellen Key*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 3, pp. 16-19.
Opitz-Belakhal C. [2010] 2018, *Geschlechtergeschichte*, Campus, Frankfurt.
Pethwick-Lawrence E. 1908, *Die Angriffstaktik der englischen Frauen und ihre Bedeutung*, in "Zeitschrift für Frauenstimmrecht" 1 April 1908 [4], pp. 16-17.
Popp-Dworak A. 1906, *Frauen, rüstet zum Massenstreik!*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 15 [13], pp. 1-3.
Roland-Volk H. 1906, *Die Frauen und der Massenstreik*, in "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" 15 [13], pp. 3-4.
Rothe W. 1969, *Der Aktivismus 1915-1920*, dtv, München.
Schreiner O. 1912, *Die Frau und der Krieg, Autor. Uebersetzung von L. Kulka*, in "Neues Frauenleben" 11, pp. 285-288.
Simon S. 1996, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, Routledge, London.
Solnit R. [2004] 2016, *Hope in the Dark. Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, Canongate, Edinburgh.
Sutor B. 1994, *Politik. Ein Studienbuch zur politischen Bildung*, Schoeningh, Paderborn.
Tashinskiy A. 2019, *Das souveräne Übersetzen von Rosa Luxemburg*, in Tashinskiy A. and Boguna J. (Hrsg.), *Das WIE des Übersetzens*, Frank and Timme, Berlin, pp. 85-112.
Tymoczko M. 2000, *Translation and Political Engagement. Activism, Social Change and the Role of Translation in Geopolitical Shifts*, in "The Translator" 6 [1], pp. 23-47.
Tymoczko M. 2006, *Translation: Ethics, Ideology, Action*, in "The Massachusetts Review" 47 [3], pp. 442-461.
Welzcek A. v. 1902, *Ellen Key als Dichterin und als Frauenrechtlerin*, in "Die Frauenbewegung" 15 May 1902 [10], pp. 75-76.
Wischermann U. 2003, *Frauenbewegungen und Öffentlichkeiten um 1900. Netzwerke. Gegenöffentlichkeiten. Protestinszenierungen*, Ulrike Helmer, Frankfurt.
Wischermann U. 2017, *Zur öffentlichen Wirksamkeit der deutschen historischen Frauenbewegungen um 1900 – Die Interaktion von Öffentlichkeiten*, in Klaus E. and Drüeke R. (Hrsg.), *Öffentlichkeiten und gesellschaftliche*

*Aushandlungsprozesse. Theoretische Perspektiven und empirische Befunde*, transcript, Bielefeld, pp. 63-78.

Wolf M. 2012, *Die vielsprachige Seele Kakaniens. Übersetzen und Dolmetschen in der Habsburgermonarchie 1848 bis 1918*, Böhlau, Wien; translated by Sturge K. 2015, *The Habsburg Monarchy's Many-Languaged Soul: Translating and Interpreting, 1848-1918*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Wollstonecraft M. 1792, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, J. Johnson, London; translated by Berthold P. 1899, *Eine Verteidigung der Rechte der Frauen mit kritischen Bemerkungen über politische und moralische Gegenstände*, Pierson, Dresden.

Yang G. 2016, *Activism*, in Peters B. (ed.), *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, pp. 1-17.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 117-134
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p117
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# LOOKING FOR FEMINIST TRANSLATORS
# Texts, Translators and the Creation of a Feminist Genealogy of Theories and Practices

ELEONORA FEDERICI
UNIVERSITÀ DI FERRARA

**Abstract** – Translation has been a central tool for widening the reception of feminist theories and practices around the world from one historical/social/political context to another. Local feminisms, along with feminist theories and practices originated in one context, have been re-contextualized and reshaped in totally different situations, acquiring new nuances through translations and translators' choices and agency. My article starts from the premise that it is through translations that feminist ideas born in the United States have been shared, because of a collaborative network among feminists, with Italian collectives, intellectuals and scholars. From these exchanges 'translated' feminist practices have arisen within the Italian collectives in the '70s and '80s. My intention is to offer a diachronic perspective on the translation of feminist texts into the Italian context from the '70s to 2020s, focusing on a number of examples of 'canonical' feminist theory. This article is a first result of a research on Italian feminist translators' archives intended to retrace the translators' names and their role in the transmission of feminist theories and practices in the Italian context. This implies considering translators as active agents of cultural change. Looking at materials preserved in different libraries and archives in Italy, my aim is to delineate a genealogy of feminist translators and to outline a corpus of texts that have been translated from English into Italian and that have had a crucial role in the transmission of feminist ideas and politics. This article presents a preliminary result of analysis.

**Keywords**: feminist translation; translators' archives; feminist translators; collaborative translation; feminist activism.

## 1. Mapping waves of feminist theories and practices

Translation has always been a central tool for expanding the reception of feminist theories and practices worldwide. Local feminisms, feminist theories and practices born in one context have been re-contextualized and reshaped in entirely different settings, acquiring new nuances through translations. It is through translations that feminist ideas born in the US or other Anglophone contexts have been shared and that feminist practices have arisen within the Italian collectives in the '70s, '80s, '90s and 2000s. The aim of this article is to offer a map of the existing feminist archives, to retrace the names of

translators and their role in the transmission of feminist theories and practices starting from the '70s. This involves in-depth research on keystone feminist texts that have been translated from English into Italian and on the publishing houses which have chosen to introduce feminist theories into the Italian context. My research is divided into two phases: the first focused on the mapping of feminist archives, retrieving materials and identifying feminist translators; the second phase involved a detailed analysis of translated keystone texts aimed at underlining feminist translators' activism and the strategies used to make feminist agency visible. This article presents examples of translations of feminist theories since the '70s to the present with the aim of outlining a map of choices, strategies and collaboration among feminist scholars, writers, editors, translators and publishers.

Since translators play a central role in spreading feminist ideas, I believe it is essential to understand the entire process of translation, to see which texts have been translated into Italian, by whom and when, and to investigate translation and editorial choices in order to map out a development of feminist thoughts in the Italian context and the new shapes these theories acquire in feminist practice and agency.

The corpus of this study is made of a selection of feminist texts that have been translated from English into Italian in the '70s, '80s, '90s and 2000s, based on three main aspects: 1) the spreading and reception of the translated book for the transmission of feminist idea; 2) the visibility of the translator and of her/their agency; and 3) the collaboration among various intellectual figures, scholars, translators and publishers, aimed at the publication of the translation.

The research followed a specific step by step process: 1) identification of keystone feminist theoretical texts; 2) identification of publishing houses and date of publication; 3) name of the translator/editor; 4) identification of editing changes in the translated volume and the use of paratextual elements; 5) adaptations and translation strategies that can be recognized as feminist actions.

The identification of translated keystone feminist texts was conducted through an online search in major library and publishers' catalogues. Information about translators and their work was gathered through online research in prominent feminist archives and secondary sources. The primary archives consulted in the Italian context are the following: 1) Biblioteca Nazionale delle donne (The Women's National library) in Bologna; 2) the Milan Women's bookstore Archive; 3) Fondazione Elvira Baldaracco (the Women's Studies Centre in Milan which contains many historical studies on women's liberation movement in Italy); 4) Carla Lonzi Archive in Rome; 5) Archivio Politico delle donne di Via Dogana (the Women's Political Archive via Dogana) in Milan; 5) Feltrinelli Archive in Milan; 6) Fondazione Mondadori in Milan; 7) Fondo Angela Miglietti at the Piemonte Women's

Archive; 8) UDI (Unione Donne Italiane) Digital Library; 9) the historical archive of the feminist journal *Noi Donne* (www.noidonnearchiviostorico.org) and 10) the digital archive of the journal *effe*).[1]

## 2. A feminist political agenda through time

A diachronic perspective of feminist ideas and practices between North America and Italy, looking at the translation of feminist texts starting from the 1970s to the 2000s can take various directions. My approach is based on a selection of touchstone texts which in my view make clear how major feminist ideas, theories and practices overlapped national borders and spread in a different cultural, social and political context. As I have underlined elsewhere (Federici 2021, 2023), it is through translations that feminist ideas originating in the US context spread to Italy and that feminist practices emerged within Italian collectives in the 1970s, where the exchange of ideas, practices and an active collaboration were at the core of the political feminist agenda. As a matter of fact, the 1970s were a period of feminist turmoil and ideas scattered around the world through women's political and engaged voices, their collective actions and their battle for civil rights. Luisa Passerini called translations of US radical feminist texts "movement translations" done by feminists, read by feminists and adapted for the Italian reader because Italian feminists "turned foreign texts and events into tools that might speak to their own immediate situation" (Bracke 2014, p.18). It is important to highlight how the role of translators has been considered in the spreading and publication of feminist ideas. If the legacy of American feminism in the Italian context can be retraced looking at the translations of core texts done through the collaborative efforts of translators, scholars and feminist intellectuals, it is important to shed some light on translators themselves and their own work, fundamental for an understanding of feminist practices.

At a first glance it was clear that translators' names were difficult to retrace in archives and Italian feminist collectives focused more on disseminating ideas and practices than on highlighting individual translators. Moreover, the idea itself of collectives was to carry out a collaborative effort not an individual one. However, it was possible to find out translators' names in volumes published in the same decade. In the '80s, while the circulation of texts remained key, translators' names gained little emphasis, but activism

[1]Láadan Women's Cultural Centre, https://www.memora.piemonte.it/beni/regpie_cabe/615841 (24.09.2025); UDI Digital Library, https://archiviodigitale.udinazionale.org/ (24.09.2025); *Donne*, www.noidonnearchiviostorico.org (01.07.2025); *effe*, https://efferivistafemminista.it/ (01.07.2025).

and agency were often attributed to intellectuals and scholars editing feminist works. In the '90s it was possible to recognize a slight change in the translation and spreading of feminist ideas, as in many cases journals and publishing houses focused on specific theorists who were thought to be central in the development of feminist theories and practices in various disciplines. In this decade translations were adaptations for the Italian context with major changes in the contents of volumes. The paratextual element became more and more important to make the translators' work visible. Starting from 2000s, collectives and collaborative translations – because of a change in the political and social context and the re-emergence of feminist activism – are back with a clear and active aim.

## 3. The '70s: A decade of collective translations

In the '70s, women collaborated in their activism, by sharing texts that gave birth to the international spread of feminist movements. In so doing, they interacted across geographical and cultural distances. Collaboration arose from reading texts that led to consciousness-raising experiences, trips between Italy and the US and moments of exchange. In 1972 a seminal collection of texts from English and French was published by the Milanese collective *Anabasi* under the title *Donne è bello* (Women is beautiful), while a second translation by the same collective, *Noi e il nostro corpo*, based on the Boston Women's Health manual *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1969), a text full of testimonies and women's experiences, was published and had a profound echo in the Italian context. The first volume is divided into seven sections which present common topics at the time like, for example, women's psychological oppression, women's work and housework, sexuality, the women's liberation movement, consciousness-raising practices and politics. The texts were written by major American feminist intellectuals such as Shulamith Firestone, Pat Mainardi and Monique Wittig, and the translator of the volume is Serena Luce Castaldi, one of the founders of the collective *Anabasi*. The major contributions in the books are due to Serena Castaldi's trip to New York and the involvement in the Women's Liberation Movement. Castaldi was deeply involved in the American and the French women's movements, and this collaboration brought an awareness about feminist practices and a need to introduce these ideas to the Italian context. Castaldi collected and chose the texts that were to be translated and included in the issue *Donne è bello.* The volume is presented as a space for discussing women's issues where the keywords are collaboration and activism. The focus on activism is evident in the Preface – signed by *Anabasi*, not Castaldi – where the collective presents the publication as a tool to create a new form of solidarity among women. The Preface directly addresses women readers,

inviting them to collaborate with impressions, testimonies, poems, drawings and songs to be included in the publication, which is defined as the "first overground publication by radical feminists rather than about them". Paratextual elements played a significant role, as the verbal text was strictly correlated to the visual one to enhance clarity. Images, drawings and funny comic strips were added by the members of the *Anabasi* in order to make all the material more 'Italian', that is to say, adapted to their own context and goals. This is the reason why the volume also includes Italian feminists' texts such as excerpts from Italian feminists such as Carla Lonzi and her famous text *Sputiamo su Hegel* (1970), translated in English as *Let's Spit on Hegel*. Feminist groups prioritized the translation of ideas and practices through translation, the primary aim was to disseminate theories and practice, adapting the source texts to the target audience, reshaping the contents for the new readers. These translations were carriers of ideas and practices for an Italian feminist activism and part of this activism was the collective work and 'signature'. If the translator was certainly an agent of change, it was translation itself that was the key to agency.

The connection with the US was in the words of Luisa Passerini "the first founding relationship of Italian feminism" (Passerini 2005, p. 184) and the translation of the Boston Women's Health manual *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1969) into Italian *Noi e il nostro corpo* is another example of the strong bond between Italian and American radical feminism. The volume presents the name of a translator, Angela Miglietti, who was part of the CR Revolutionary Communications Collective in Turin (Collettivo Cr). Tommaso Rebora (2021) has underlined the strong link between the collective and American radical feminist groups. Connected to the Left-wing Party, they organized visits to the US and to the United Kingdom with the idea of creating "transnational networks" (Rebora 2021). In September 1970, the women from Collettivo Cr began translating articles and reflections by the American feminist movement, gathered by Maria Teresa Fenoglio (better known as M.T.) during her stay in Boston. This collective had a subgroup the Collettivo delle compagne (Women's Left-Wing Collective) fighting for a more democratic balance in the collective among men and women. Their goal was to translate major ideas from the Women's Lib movement in Boston and spread them in a historical period where 'consultori autogestiti' (self-run feminist clinics) were born in the Italian context. Miglietti asked for help to a group of feminist doctors who could help her in her translation of medical issues and appear in the Italian edition as editors with her. As she said in an interview with Stefania Voli (2007), the pamphlet (so she defines the Boston volume) was brought to Turin by Maria Teresa Fenoglio, who thought Angela knew English and could translate it. When the volume was published by Simon & Schuster in the US, the American feminists wanted Angela

Miglietti to be the Italian translator. The book was published by the major publisher Feltrinelli, that in the 1970s was at the forefront for revolutionary ideas and keen on publishing texts about feminism (Piazzoni 2021). The Italian translation, like translations of the volume into other languages (Federici 2023), is a revision and reshaping of the original text. The volume has been revised and adapted to the Italian context with the agreement of the American authors, who understood the importance of an adaptation outside the US. The result is a selection and adaptation of texts tailored for Italian women through a re-arrangement of chapters, a different ordering of topics, and the omission or addition of some sections, demonstrating a strong and collaborative approach to translation. This publication highlights the importance of translation for the spreading of feminist ideas together with an awareness of a growing transnational feminist network based on egalitarian principles.

The result of a precise conjunction between radical American feminism and Italian feminism connected to the Communist Party was the publication of *Per un movimento politico di liberazione della donna* (For a political movement about women's liberation), edited and introduced by Lidia Menapace, a major figure in the Italian context of the '70s. The volume includes 19 essays by American, British, French, Chinese and Cuban authors and a dialogue between Menapace and other feminists of the Demau group (the acronym stands for Demistificazione Autoritarsimo and was against patriarchal values) on women's rights that was originally published by the Italian Left newspaper *Il Manifesto* in 1971. The editor collected various documents and essays that were already familiar within the feminist circles of those years, shaping the volume as a touchstone publication on feminism and capitalism and illustrating the political connection between feminists around the world. The volume reported the authors' names, but not the translators' names; the material was translated by feminist collectives which firstly could better understand the contents, and secondly, could disseminate feminist ideas as part of their political agenda.

Collaboration between American, British and Italian feminists was evident in the issues of the journal *Sottosopra*, published between 1973 and 1976 in Milan with the idea of reaching as many Italian collectives as possible and to share ideas from feminist groups outside Italy. The first issue released in 1973 included translations of documents from the Notting Hill Women's Liberation Workshop and at the National Women's conference in Manchester in 1972 (March 25-26). The issue was primarily dedicated to the issue of women, work and the role of Trade Unions in the advancement of the feminist cause. Translators' names were omitted since collective action was the priority, and translation was seen as part of the feminist struggle for rights. It is not a chance that the same number also includes and extract from the translation of Juliet Mitchell's *La condizione della donna* (*Woman's*

*Estate*) published in 1972 by Feltrinelli.

The '70s saw a bloom in feminist journals, some of which have been digitalized and are accessible, for example, the first numbers of *effe*, a magazine published between 1976 and 1983 which shared its premises with the feminist "Teatro della Maddalena", in Rome, and dealt at large with women's cultural production, including the performing arts — from theatre to dance, from happenings to community art. The magazine introduced women's liberation issues achieved elsewhere, creating an echo of international women's rights. The theatre also operated as feminist publishing house with the name Edizioni delle donne (Women's editions) between 1974 and 1982. The name referred to the French *Éditions des femmes* and the aim was to publish as part of a feminist practice and action. Among their publications, the first translation of Monique Wittig's *Il corpo lesbico* (*The Lesbian body*) with an Introduction by Elisabetta Rasy (the volume has recently been re-translated and edited by Deborah Ardilli by the feminist publishing house VandA Edizioni 2023). These the years saw the birth of feminist publishing houses, in Italy La Salamandra (publishing from 1974 to 1987) defined itself as a publisher offering "libri scritti da donne per le donne" (books written by women for women) and the most famous feminist publisher, La Tartaruga (1975-1998), whose editorial director Laura Lepetit introduced many international feminist writers to the Italian publishing market.

During the '70s major publishers also released feminist texts sometimes with a very short distance from the publication of the original text. However, in most of the cases these texts were thought for a wider audience of readers and were not translated through a feminist lens. For example, one of the most well-known text, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was translated into Italian and published by Edizioni di comunità in 1964, just one year after its publication. The translator was Loretta Valtz Mannucci, Professor of American history at the University of Milan, married to the sociologist Cesare Mannucci. The publishing house funded by Adriano Olivetti in 1946 was an innovative enterprise willing to present to Italian readers contemporary criticism about sociology, psychology and American culture. As Scarpino (2024) points out, the reception of text was not particularly positive in Italy, likely because it was ahead of its time in that context. It is no coincidence that the book has been retranslated and republished in 2021 by Castelvecchi, showing a recent wave within Italian feminism of a rebirth and rediscovery of keystone texts of feminism which are re-translated and re-presented to the Italian reader. The new edition has been edited by Chiara Turozzi, affiliated to the Diotima group and connected to Adriana Cavarero and the Italian politics of sexual difference. Why is there this necessity to rediscover a text from the mid-60s at the beginning of this

decade? Reading Friedan's work is a way to rediscover the roots of American feminism, and its political and social context, but which is its role today in our context? Is it still important to talk about a feminine mystique? In the US *The Feminine Mystique* is regularly listed among the most influential non-fiction books of the 20th century. Notwithstanding Friedan's controversial figure, the books is part of a feminist legacy worldwide because it encouraged readers to think about women's role and expectations (Horowitz 1996). Sixty years is a long-time span, in these decades the Italian context has changed, and women's role has changed but the question at the core of the book, that is 'what makes a woman accomplished?' is still to be answered, even if from another perspective. The ethics of care still is at the centre of a woman's life. Chiara Turozzi's decision to revive the interest in Friedan's book aligns with her activism in editorial contexts: she has served as editor in chief of a feminist publishing house L'Iguana editrice, and part of the feminist journal *DWF*.

In the '70s, not surprisingly, many voices of radical American feminism were translated into Italian, for example, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, published in 1971 with the equivalent title in Italian *La politica del sesso* by a major publisher, Rizzoli. The translator was Bruno Oddera, a major figure within the Italian editorial context who has translated many American novels. In this case the presence of the translator's name was certainly due to his status as a well-known professional figure. Another keystone volume, Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born. Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976) was translated into Italian with the title *Nato di donna* in 1979 by Garzanti. Recently, it has been republished by Mondadori with the translation by Maria Teresa Marenco and a Preface by Nadia Terranova. In this Preface, Terranova underlines the importance of this book for herself and, generally, for all women. According to Terranova, the book is an illuminating book about motherhood. In her words this book talks to women, mothers and daughters across different generations. The paratext is part of the politics of feminist translation, the addition of paratextual elements, such as editorials, prefaces and footnotes, in order to explain the text to its new readership is central for informing the reader that the text is a useful instrument in facilitating the exchange across frontiers, cultures and generations. As in the collectives' publications where Italian feminist groups translated and published materials from abroad inserting paratextual elements to introduce these ideas to Italian readers adapting them for the new context, the recent re-publication of key feminist texts is probably done with the idea that some texts are still key readings for the present and that, in most cases, they were completely forgotten by the Italian editorial market. The paratext is still a central tool to introduce and explain the text in a different context and to a younger generation of readers.

Collaboration was a key factor in the 1970s because women's

liberation movements depended on women coming together to negotiate, share experiences and read texts from other women. Women collaborated in their activism, sharing texts that gave birth to the international spread of feminist movements; they interacted across geographical and cultural distances, seeds of feminisms were grown in other fields giving birth to different feminisms around the world, adapting feminism and activism to the soil where they were brought.

## 4. Collaborative decades: The '80s and '90s

In the 1980s and 1990s, the collaboration between feminist authors, publishers, editors and translators became evident. As I have underlined elsewhere (Federici 2021), publishers and editors tailored texts for the Italian reader, adapting content and incorporating paratextual elements such as Introduction and prefaces. Texts were published as result of a collaborative effort of feminist scholars, activists, translators and publishing houses. It is clear when we look at the Italian translations that texts of North American thinkers were not translated in their wholeness, but publishers or editors make a choice for the Italian reader. A selection of materials was done from different writings and publications. One example of a partially translated book is, for example, bell hooks's choice of essays in *Elogio del margine. Razza, sesso e mercato culturale* (1998), a volume edited by Maria Nadotti with a choice of chapters taken from different books by the author. In her Introduction, Nadotti affirms that this selection wants to offer the author's theories and thought in a wider perspective for the Italian reader. Nadotti points out that the choice was made to make the Italian reader understand the "sofisticato apparato teorico" (sophisticated theoretical apparatus – Nadotti 1998, p. 10). Nadotti does not discuss her work as a translator, nor she underlines the importance of translation for a transmission of feminist ideas. However, the translation of these essays will open in the following a wider debate within the Italian academic and feminist panorama. In the same year, 1998, La Tartaruga publishing house published another volume focused on bell hooks, *Scrivere al buio* (Writing in the dark), that was a dialogue between bell hooks and Maria Nadotti addressing gender and racial issues. This work serves as a political manifesto, a framework through which we can understand our world and deconstruct it through a feminist, anti-racist and decolonial perspective, what today is recognized as intersectional feminism. The dialogue between two different women of distinct backgrounds thoughtfully explores themes of gender, sexuality, race, class and identity. Recently, Tamu publishing house re-published these two works as a single volume. However, in the Preface to the new edition Nadotti makes clear that there has been a choice about the essays translated for this volume. The new

volume has been re-adapted to the present, some of the essays which dealt with judicial cases of the '80s and '90s have not been included. The choice is probably due to the fact that times have changed, and that the editor thought the book would be important to read and be known for other reasons, mainly hooks's theories about race, feminism and the difficult dialogue with other feminists. As a translator, Nadotti highlights some changes done in the text to make it more readable and fluent for the Italian reader.

Another example of collaboration between feminist authors, publishers, editors and translators is the Italian publication of the iconic *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991) by Donna Haraway, which was presented to the Italian reader in 1995 with the title *Manifesto Cyborg. Donne, tecnologie e biopolitiche del corpo* by a major publisher, Feltrinelli. As I have emphasized elsewhere (Federici 2021), the volume, translated by the Italian feminist scholar Liana Borghi, included a very long paratextual element, an Introduction by the feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti who, in her preface to the text not only clarified Haraway's central position in the feminist context of the US but also demonstrated the influence of Haraway's works on American culture and society. The Introduction covers many themes: Braidotti analyses the powerful figuration of the cyborg created by Haraway and how not only it became an icon for a new planetary feminism, but it brought a new perspective into the international debate on women, feminism, science, and technology. In the Italian Introduction, the text is connected both to the North American technophile–technophobe debate of feminist women scientists like Evelyne Fox Keller and to the Italian context and the debate among women of science like Elisabetta Donini. The importance of the Italian translation is thus explained through the connection with the wider international debate on women, science, and technological developments and it is perceived by Italian readers as an important instrument to better understand this controversy through a planetary perspective. Braidotti highlights Haraway's key role in the cyberfeminist wave and provides interpretative guidance for readers. The Italian translation clarifies the content of the volume thanks to its subtitle "women, technologies and body biopolitics". The translator, Liana Borghi, was a well-known feminist Italian figure and she translated many feminist texts introducing them to the Italian reader. Borghi shared the idea of collaboration among feminist thinkers and dedicated her life to the dissemination of feminist ideas in Italy. However, in this volume Borghi's voice is silent, there is no discussion of her translation of Haraway's work. The Introduction of the American scholar is totally in Braidotti's hands and her Introduction. However, her involvement is more direct in the second volume she edited, *Testimone-Modesta@FemaleMan-incontra-OncoTopo:femminismo e tecnoscienza*, published by Feltrinelli in 2000 where Borghi writes the Introduction to the volume and to Haraway's feminism. The translation done

by Maurizio Morganti is revised by Borghi herself, which reveals she acknowledged the importance of translation as a means to introduce the volume to the Italian reader. However, one year before, something changed in the Italian translation of Haraway's *Chthulucene. Sopravvivere su un pianeta infetto* published by Nero in 2019. The translators are Claudia Durastanti and Clara Ciccioni, and a translator's note is inserted at the beginning of the volume. The translators underline how a reflection on words has been important in the translation process, and how they were aware that any choice could make a difference in the reception of the text. Durastanti highlights the responsibility of the translator to maintain the author's aims. She talks about "response-ability" ("responso-abilità") (Haraway 2019, p. 4), and she outlines how Haraway's neologisms have been translated trying to maintain the same meaning and wordplay (like for example, "thinking-with" translated as "con-pensare") following Haraway's "linguistic corridors". One of the main points of the Preface is the connection between Haraway's theory and the Italian debate on inclusive language and the choices translators must make in the translation of the text towards a gender marked language like Italian. Durastanti is an Italian American writer and has been editor for La Tartaruga series since 2021, and a translator deeply aware of her role and choices in disseminating feminist ideas. Haraway was a focal point of the Italian publishing market in 2019 when Angela Balzano edited another of her volumes, *Le promesse dei mostri. Una politica rigeneratrice per l'alterità inappropriata* for the publisher Derive Approdi. Haraway's text, *The Promises of Monsters a Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others* originally published in 1992, almost thirty years earlier than the Italian publication, analyses hybrid subjectivities through technological progress remaining even now a thoughtful reading for the present. The Introduction to the text is academic but at the same time didactic, almost personal. Balzano, who is a translator and a researcher, tells us that as a translator she "got lost looking for science fiction novels" which could help her understand Haraway's theory. She informs the reader that: "E se in me c'era qualcosa di simile a un intento didattico è scomparso a traduzione ultimata. Non c'è bisogno che introduca questo saggio, voi saprete usarlo" (and if there is something in me similar to a pedagogical intent it has vanished once I completed the translation. There is no need to introduce this essay, you will know how to use it – my translation). Balzano thus asks the reader to collaborate in the meaning of the text, and in its interpretation, she plays with words like "translate" and "betray" going back to the old debate about translation as "betrayal" and directly challenging the readers affirming that a translation is always "a falso d'autore" ("an art forgery fake").

The translation of feminist critical texts in the '80s and '90s was the result of collaboration among scholars, editors, translators and publishing

houses who regarded the moment as suitably timed for introducing feminist theories to the Italian reader. It is thanks to this collaboration that today we know that feminism is a method, a movement, and a critique. Today it has become transnational, open to multiple women's voices, thanks to the work of editors and translators who have ensured the exchange of ideas and have enabled feminist theories to travel from one place to another and another and another.

## 5. A new collective activism in the new millenium

In the last ten years a new wave of feminist theories and practices has been rising in Italy and worldwide. An international dialogue is taking place around different feminist issues, among which is translation as an instrument for the transmission of theories and practices. Translations have enabled a dialogue among different women from various social/cultural contexts and it has been conceived as a form of feminist agency and activism. Italian translations of texts from different languages and contexts have made it clear that feminisms are many and different but also that reading voices from other contexts can help to rethink theories and practices, it can help to widen our horizon and to adapt theories and practices to our own activism. The same theories and practices take a different shape according to the new place where they are transplanted through translation. Since the '70s translations have made it possible to envisage new spaces of fruitful debates among feminists. As I have demonstrated elsewhere (Federici 2021), translated texts across the Atlantic Ocean have certainly deepened and widened the debate on feminist thoughts and practices in the Italian context because translation has always been a primary instrument of international dialogues and exchanges of feminist theories and practices among the Atlantic shores.

As Jhumpa Lahiri says, "translation is an act of radical change" (Lahiri 2023); it is a political act, as Laura Fontanella tells us in her recently published volume *Perdere il filo. Esperienze collettive di traduzione transfemminista* (2024). In the last ten years, Fontanella has coordinated the 'Gender in Translation lab', dealing with gender issues in translation with a focus on intersectional feminism and collaborating with different associations and women's bookstores. She defines herself as a transfeminist translator and has emphasized in interviews the importance of exchange and collaboration among women (Giaume 2024). The title of her volume reveals that translation is for her a process of 'losing the thread' where translation itself becomes a collective experience of transfeminism. In her Introduction to the volume, which is the result of many collective experiences of translation done in her lab, Fontanella plays with words and with metaphors connected to 'losing a thread of an argument', of a conversation, and deconstructs the

negative connotation of losing a track; instead, to lose track becomes and active way of reacting to a text, of engaging with it. Fontanella refers to bell hooks' theory and specifically to the idea of losing oneself in a text to find a plurality of voices and gazes. The act of feminist translation becomes for her a collective and political process; she acknowledges the influence of theorists and writers she has read, and of translators with whom she has discussed in her lab. She presents herself as a feminist translator highly aware of feminist theories and practices which she acknowledges in the paratext of the text. From this perspective, translation becomes an act not only of discovering an author but also to discover ourselves as translators, an act of self-discovery in dialogue with others.

Compared to the previous decades, now the translator's presence and agency is declared and well defined. In her study about Onna Pas Collective, Michela Baldo (Baldo 2023) has outlined how transfeminist translation is now an affective practice that brings about joyful and playful encounters, a performative act capable of producing other translations, performances, objects, collectivities and alliances among women. The collective was born in 2019 after a series of workshops centred on the reading and translation of Wittig's and Zeig's work *Brouillon puor un dictionnaire des amantes* (1975). The volume was published with the title *Appunti per un dizionario delle amanti* by Meltemi in 2020, with a Preface by Anne F. Garreta where she underlines the importance of re-reading today this controversial form of dictionary. This reading takes the reader back in time to rethink the use of words in our society in the mid-70s which is still a useful practice today. The authors illustrate how dictionaries can function as containers regarding something that cannot be contained, resulting in the power of language and the inevitable change through time in how words are used. Wittig and Zeig deconstruct the idea of norms, of 'boxes' where everything is classified; they force us to rethink our use of language and our thoughts about the world we live in. Language is still sexist and patriarchal, it is still non inclusive – at least in the Italian context, where media reflect a controversial attitude towards the use of a more inclusive terms –, therefore the translation of this text after fifty years is still useful for us. The collective has signed the translation, and the name they have chosen for themselves which comes from the French expression 'on n'a pas' (we don't own anything – my translation) reveals a lot about their politics of translation.

The emergence of feminist translation collectives is visible in the Italian context. An interesting example is the WiT (Women in Translation) collective made of seven translators born in Bologna in 2014. They translated Audre Lorde's poetry, *D'amore e di lotta*, for the publisher Le Lettere in 2018. The WiT (Women in Translation) collective started working together in 2014, stemming from the desire of the translators (of different

geographical origins and professional experiences), to translate into Italian, for the first time, Audre Lorde's poetry. Audre Lorde was a poet, writer, feminist, and activist for civil rights. After the publication of Lorde's essays in Italy, the collective felt that there was a need to introduce to the Italian context also Lorde's poems (Coppola *et al*. 2018). One of the translators, Loredana Magazzeni, in her Introduction to the volume, explains that establishing a unique experience in Italy, the women of the collective share a deep passion for Audre Lorde's words, for linguistics and cultures as well as for a methodological accuracy in the process of cooperative translation (Magazzeni 2018). Another member of the collective, Anna Zani (Zani 2018), affirms that they shared a methodological rigorous approach in the process of cooperative translation and that the underlying idea was inspired by Audre Lorde's writings and actions. Zani has stressed the power of women's collective creative energy. She explains how the collective works: each translator chooses and translates some poems that will be discussed by the group, a discussion which is part of the translation work, not anymore a solitary enterprise but a collective and engaging one. Zani refers to Angela Davis's model of 'diffused leadership', underlining there is not a coordinator or an editor of the collection, but the result has been made out of collective decisions.

The last example that I want to highlight in the Italian context is one that I believe opens up perspectives on non-Western feminism, is the publication of Sara Ahmed's *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), translated into Italian by Marta D'Epifanio, Bea Gusmano, Serena Naim, and Roberta Granelli with the revision of Liana Borghi and Marco Pustianaz in 2021, with the title *Vivere una vita femminista*. The text is entirely translated in the feminine, – a non-common choice in the Italian publishing market – because, as the translators affirm in the Translators' note, language is a performative tool that can shape reality, and therefore to translate in the feminine can make readers think about language use. The voice of the translators is clearly visible in this volume, not only their names. In the translators' note they explain their willingness to introduce Ahmed's work into the Italian context because they believe it is a central feminist text in the global panorama, and with the willingness to decolonialize feminist practices. They underline the importance of translation as a means to give the work a new life in another social and cultural context, and they emphasize working collaboratively as translators, intellectuals and scholars united by a political objective. The translators' note also makes clear that they are aware of feminist theories about translation and collaboration, as well as that of the practice of translation, which is a process that forces us to weigh any single word, to evaluate some passages, to have doubts and to opt for strategies that allow us to recognize limits and contradictions we have as translators working in a specific context.

## 6. Conclusion

The collaborative work has always been part of the feminist practice. To translate key feminist texts into Italian has always been a way to introduce and share ideas, values and feminist agency from other contexts to the Italian one. Since the '70s, the idea of collaborative translation has changed and has developed into different forms, from the '70s collectives' willingness to share and adapt American and French feminist practices to the Italian context, to the '80s and '90s when the growth of feminist publications in Italy was visible and when foreign texts were adapted and explained to the Italian readers through paratextual elements (mainly Introductions and Prefaces), arriving at the re-emergence in the new millenium of translation collectives. The awareness of the centrality of the translators' work as the way to introduce theories, practice and feminist agency into a different social and cultural context has always been raised. Since the 2000s, the voice of translators has become increasingly visible, and texts include paratextual elements where translators explain their own work and connect the practice of translation to feminist theories and agency.

The idea of translation as life experience and the value of collaboration has been growing in the last decades, and I am referring to one project as an example of this change. The project "Ideas destroying muros" is a collective of artists, writers and translators for whom translation is part of a project to disseminate feminist and lesbian books.[2] Translation is part of the project together with feminist research, performance, video creation, writing and drawing. The collective, created in 2005, defines itself as a trans-cultural artistic group and underlines that "our artistic practice has made possible the analysis, via the interpretation and translation of our individual and collective life experiences, of the geopolitical and social processes that we have lived through".

This first stage of my research has demonstrated that a mapping of translated texts, translations and translators make us understand how feminist ideas cross borders, cultures and languages and how collaboration has always been a key factor for feminists. Considerable work remains to be done in mapping translators and their role in feminist movements, however preliminary research has revealed that they have been and remain crucial agents of feminist activism.

[2] Ideas destroying muros, https://www.ideadestroyingmuros.info/bio/chi-siamo/ (02.07.2025)

**Bionote:** Eleonora Federici is Full Professor of English Language and Translation Studies at the University of Ferrara. Her main research areas are: specialised translation, feminist translation, and LSP (tourism and advertising). She is currently the President of the Equal Opportunities Committee and the Director of the Language Centre at the University of Ferrara where she teaches course on translation, gender issues and inclusion. She coordinated national and European projects on translation and tourism, and she has published books and articles in international journals. Among her publications: *Translating Gender* (Peter Lang, 2011), *Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice in Translation and Gender Studies* (2013 with V. Leonardi, Cambridge Scholars), *Translation Theory and Practice Cultural Differences in Tourism and Advertising* (Loffredo, 2018), *Gender issues. Translating and mediating languages, cultures and societies* (with S. Maci, Peter Lang, 2021), *New Perspectives on Gender and Translation. New Voices for Transnational Dialogues* (with J. Santaemilia, Routledge, 2021).

**Author's address:** eleonora.federici@unife.it

# References

Ahmed S. 2017, *Living a Feminist Life*, Duke University Press, Durham.

Ahmed S. 2021, *Vivere una vita femminista*, translated by D'Epifanio M., Gusmano B., Naim S. and Granelli R., Edizioni ETS, Pisa.

Baldo M. 2023, *The Formation of Translation Collectivities in Italian Queer Feminist Activist Scenarios: The Case of Onna Pas*, in "Translation in Society" 2 [1], pp. 53-70.

Basilio E. 2017, *Donne è bello and the Role of Translation in the Migration of Consciousness-Raising*, in Castro O. and Ergun E. (eds.), *Feminist Translation Studies Local and Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, London, pp. 167-180.

Boston Women's Health Book Collective 1969, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Bracke M.A. 2014, *Women and the Reinvention of the Political. Feminism in Italy 1968-1983*, Routledge, London.

Coppola M., Dicanio G., Giacobino M., Magazzeni L., Pecoraro M., Vezzali M.L. and Zani A. 2018, *DWF in dialogo con le WiT – Women in Translation*, in "DWF" 119 [3], pp. 2-7.

Davis K. 2008, *The Making of Our Bodies, Ourselves. How Feminism Travels across Borders*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

Federici E. 2021, *Feminisms Across the Ocean: Translating Theories and Practices*, in Federici E. and Santaemilia J. (eds.), *Gender and Translation: New Perspectives and New voices for Transnational Dialogues*, Routledge, London, pp. 139-156.

Federici E. 2023, *Collaborative Translation(s) and Feminism(s): a Diachronic Perspective on the Exchange of Feminist Theories between North America and Italy*, in "Cultus: the Journal of Intercultural Mediation and Communication" 16, pp. 159-176.

Fontanella L. 2024, *Perdere il filo. Esperienze collettive di traduzione transfemminista*, Meltemi, Roma.

Friedan B. 1963, *The Feminine Mystique*, W.W. Norton and Company, New York.

Friedan B. 1978, *La mistica della femminilità*, translated by Valtz Mannucci L., Edizioni di Comunità, Milano.

Giaume G. 2024, *Come sta cambiando il mestiere della traduzione dei libri? L'intervista*. https://www.artribune.com/editoria/2024/10/mreferencesestiere-traduttore-libri/ (01.10.2025)

Hajek A. 2018, *A Room of One's Own. Feminist Intersections between Space, Women's Writing and Radical Bookselling in Milan (1968-1986)*, in "Italian Studies" 73 [1], pp. 81-97.

Haraway D. 1991, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge, New York.

Haraway D. 1995, *Manifesto Cyborg. Donne, tecnologie e biopolitiche del corpo*, translated by Borghi L., Introduction by Braidotti R., Feltrinelli, Milano.

Haraway D. 2000, *Testimone-Modesta@FemaleMan-incontra-OncoTopo:femminismo e tecnoscienza*, edited by Borghi L., Feltrinelli, Milano.

Haraway D. 1992, *The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others*, Routledge, New York.

Haraway D. 2019, *Chthulucene. Sopravvivere su un pianeta infetto*, translated by Durastanti C. and Ciccioni C., Nero, Roma.

Haraway D. 2019, *Le promesse dei mostri. Una politica rigeneratrice per l'alterità inappropriata*, edited by Balzano A., Derive Approdi, Bologna.
hooks b. 1998, *Elogio del margine. Razza, sesso e mercato culturale*, edited by Nadotti M., Feltrinelli, Milano.
hooks b. 1998, *Scrivere al buio*. *Maria Nadotti intervista bell hooks*, La Tartaruga, Milano.
hooks b. and Nadotti M. 2018, *Elogio del margine/ Scrivere al buio*, Tamu edizioni, Napoli.
Horowitz D. 1996, *Rethinking Betty Friedan and The Feminine Mystique: Labor Union Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America*, in "American Quarterly" 48 [1], pp. 1-42.
Lahiri J. (2023), *Translation is an Act of Radical Change* in *The Guardian*, 30 September. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/sep/30/jhumpa-lahiri-translation-is-an-act-of-radical-change-roman-stories-interview (12.08.2025)
Lonzi C. 1974, *Sputiamo su Hegel. La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale*, Scritti di Rivolta femminile, Milano.
Lonzi C. 2023, *Sputiamo su Hegel. E altri scritti*, edited by Buttarelli A., Baldini and Castoldi, Milano.
Lorde A. 2018, *D'amore e di lotta*, translated by WiT, Le Lettere, Firenze.
Menapace L. 1972, *Per un movimento politico di liberazione della donna*, Bertani, Miglietti A. 2007, *Noi e il nostro corpo. Storia di una traduzione*, in "Zapruder" 13, pp. 108-115. http://storieinmovimento.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Zap13_12-Voci.pdf
Millett K. 1970, *Sexual Politics*, Doubleday, New York.
Millett K. 1971, *La politica del sesso*, Rizzoli, Milano.
Mitchell J. 1971, *La condizione della donna*, translated by Stefancich G., Feltrinelli, Milano.
Mitchell J. 1972, *Woman's Estate*, Pantheon books, New York.
Piazzoni I. 2021, *Il Novecento dei libri. Una storia dell'editoria in Italia*, Carocci, Roma.
Rebora T. 2021, *From Turin to Boston (and back): A Transatlantic Feminist Network USAbroad*, in "Journal of American History and Politics" 4. https://usabroad.unibo.it/article/view/12159/12359
Rich A. 1976, *Of Woman Born. Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, W.W. Norton, New York.
Rich A. 1979, *Nato di donna*, Garzanti, Milano.
Rich A. 2024, *Nato di donna*, Preface by Terranova N., translated by Marenco M. T. Mondadori, Milano.
Scarpino C. 2024, *Il femminismo second-wave in Italia: Due casi di studio* La mistica della femminilità *e* Noi e il nostro corpo, in Cesana R. and Piazzoni I. (eds.), *Libri e rose: le donne nell'editoria italiana degli anni Settanta*, Milano University Press, Milano, pp. 79-99.
Zani A. 2018, *Le poesie di Audre Lorde: il progetto WiT*, in *Postfilosofie* 11. https://ojs.cimedoc.uniba.it/index.php/postfil/article/view/1108 (20.11.2025).
Wittig M. 2023, *Il corpo lesbico*, edited by Ardilli D., VandA Edizioni, Milan.
Wittig M. and Zeig S. 2000, *Appunti per un dizionario delle amanti*, Meltemi, Roma.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 135-166
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p135
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# ECOTRANSLATION, ARTVOCACY AND CARE
## A creative response to climate change communication

ELIANA MAESTRI
UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

**Abstract** – Climate change is a planetary crisis, which – among many other societal aspects – involves communication and, in particular, environmental communication. Despite the multiple efforts made to improve its quality and dynamics, environmental communication is defective, highlighting the need to tackle its flaws ethically and, specifically, 'care-fully'. Drawing on my 2022-2023 Arts Council England project, '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27', the article reflects on the value of translation – or ecotranslation – as a communicative practice grounded in material and care-full work. The potential of art to facilitate communication between climate change experts, educators, health professionals, creative writers and lay publics and foster climate action and possibly activism among the latter was demonstrated through workshops with artists who translated the stories into prints. The aim of this article is to gain insight into the interconnections between translation and artmaking and the role that these interconnections play in effective ethical communication and advocacy or ARTvocacy (Hunter-Doniger 2020). Reflections on my care-full organization of the project, embedded within a wider international project run by the University of Exeter, are followed by the analysis of creative responses to fictional stories and, more broadly, climate change communication. The article makes use of a combination of approaches from Environmental Communication, Translation Studies and Ecofeminism to unveil not only the value of the project as advocacy but also the need to care and foster care-full work to respond to the climate crisis.

**Keywords**: ecotranslation; ethics; care; communication; advocacy; action; arts; printmaking; creativity; visual translation; art exhibition.

## 1. Introduction. Climate change communication: impasses and ways forward

Climate change has reached unprecedented and alarming levels. Gas emissions, including carbon dioxide and methane, have exponentially increased, contributing, among many other factors, to greenhouse effect and global warming (IPCC 2023, p. 4). Following the work carried out by various scientific bodies and institutions, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change created by the World Meteorological Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme, news about the climate crisis has

multiplied in length and number, also encouraging the growth of "environmentalist movements […] from something quite marginal to marches and initiatives" (Caimotto 2023, p. 124). The media deliver alarming information and data, adding to the concerns shared by scientific institutions and research centres alike (Armstrong *et al.* 2018, p. 19).

Despite the increasing amount of information around the considerable risks and damages caused by environmental disasters and the call for action, the message is not getting across. Researchers claim that the climate crisis is first of all a crisis of "language, communication, and translation" (Roberts *et al.* 2023, p. 646): there is a broken link between interlocutors, namely those who deliver messages and those who receive messages. Furthermore, the language used to translate what fuels environmental degradation is defective and flawed, failing to capture the complexity of the problem (Armstrong *et al.* 2018, pp. 70-71) or eliciting predominantly negative emotions such as uncertainty or fear (Huang, Guo 2024, p. 1; Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 38; Otieno *et al.* 2014, p. 616). Individuals are more occupied with shielding themselves from the sense of fear generated by the sensationalized news broadcast by the media than with looking for opportunities to access information, engage in meaningful communication and take action (Moser, Dilling 2011, pp. 164-165; Otieno *et al.* 2014, p. 634). This lack of engagement on the part of individuals is often construed as lack of interest or care for the health of the planet (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 161). In fact, it is sometimes a defensive response to the negative way climate change communication is framed (Bilfinger *et al.* 2024, p. 2; Davidson 2024, p. 2, Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 165). Exposed to limited opportunities to interact with scientists and co-interpret statistics, facts and figures – another form of language – individuals are left with partial or inadequate understanding as to how to act for the good of the planet (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 166). This lack of insight is sometimes coupled with ineffectual narratives about climate activism, which create a further sense of disconnection from information and climate action (Bashir *et al.* 2013, p. 614; Castro, Rosa 2023, p. 755; Kutlaca *et al.* 2020, p. 1; Parsons 2016, p. 3). For example, the often-cited study by Nadia Y. Bashir *et al.* maintains that there is a clear link between resistance to social change and negative stories about "people who strive to achieve this change, the activists themselves" (2013, p. 614). Even those who care about the environment and feel motivated to create change report the presence of rhetorical barriers which hinder collaboration with organizations involved in climate activism (Latkin *et al.* 2023, pp. 389-390). They also appear to want to disassociate themselves from the negative language attached to environmental activism (Bitschnau 2024, p. 84). As a result, the care they feel for the planet is not fully capitalized on or brought to fruition. Accessing actionable knowledge and information related to the threats posed by climate change is challenging: communication around the environmental crisis is not

effective. It is either unclear or disorganized, patchy or uncoordinated, skewed or too scientific and, as a result, inaccessible (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 165; Yusuf, St. John III 2022, p. 3).

Scholars are unanimous in their evaluation: climate change communication needs to be improved. Some call for clarity and accessibility as non-negotiable stipulations (Yusuf, St. John III 2022); some focus on storytelling, as an inclusive and creative form of community engagement (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 49; Roberts *et al.* 2023); others propose the collectivization of language, as a co-productive effort, and the pluralization of messages into different cultures (Roberts *et al.* 2023). Because of the urgency to engage audiences, some scholars show the benefits of communities collaborating with scientists and institutions (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 53; Roberts *et al.* 2023), others stress the need for scientists and institutions to work with those whose activism and advocacy support them (Kibele *et al.* 2023, p. 4; Parsons 2016, p. 4). The quality and dynamics of communication are questioned, appraised and analysed, to reflect either on whether/how environmental information is disseminated or shared (Lejano *et al.* 2013, p. 62; Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 163; Murunga *et al.* 2022, unpaginated) or on whether/how to grapple with the moral complexity arising from climate change (Rushton 2024). Recent studies (Holmes 2020; Markowitz, Guckian 2018) unpack the inadequacies of climate change communication and offer well-defined recommendations about how to deliver effective climate change messages. The goal is to create responsible and ethically attuned communities, ready to act for the good of the planet. But for this goal to be achieved, the information disseminated should also be ethical, namely packaged in a responsible and thoughtful manner. As Comparative Literature scholar Jørgen Bruhn states, "the ecological crisis is not a problem or a condition restricted to investigations in the natural sciences, or […] to technological solutions" (2021, p. 119). The crisis requires responsible commitment from everyone, communities and communicators alike. Whereas enough notice has been taken of the delivery and quality of climate change communication, more work needs to be done on how to ground environmental communication in ethics and, in particular, the ethics of care (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 2). Care is the energy that drives humans to other humans and/or non-humans, nurturing relationships and a spirit of cooperation (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 1; Phillips 2015, p. 58; Phillips 2016, p. 471, p. 475). Phaedra C. Pezzullo focuses on care as an act of "resistance" (2024a, p. 2) against an ideological system that does not assist or respect the vulnerable, *in primis* the environment. However, despite the breadth of case studies included in Pezzullo (2024b), no attention is paid to advocacy and translation in relation to one another. Both advocacy (Lambert 2023, p. 100) and translation (Washbourne 2019, p. 399) are communicative praxes which are designed to support someone's or something else's cause, by *speaking for* or

on behalf of them, namely by acquiring knowledge and translating it to others. The knowledge translation performed by advocates – as a meaning-making activity (see Marais 2022) facilitating the understanding of what is at stake or needed – should therefore be imbued with care. Is the climate crisis also a crisis of translation, as Hugh Gerald Arthur Roberts *et al.* (2023) claim? Before answering this question, I will turn to how translation and the ethics of care can be promoted and performed by environmental advocates as communicators.

This article draws on reflections on ethically responsible communication practices and climate action. These reflections ensued from a creative project on translation and environmental advocacy, which I led between 2022 and 2023 and which was supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. The aim of engaging with these practices was to foster care-full[1] work and promote a shift in the lay publics' views on action and, possibly, activism. Action – which cannot necessarily be conflated with activism – plays an essential role in driving individuals and communities to achieve positive change (Johnston, Gulliver 2022, p. 47). An exploration of the capacity to act and help in an ethical manner, through active engagement and/in translation, is at the core of this article. In other words, this article wants to advance knowledge in Environmental Communication by demonstrating the contribution that translation, when rooted in ethical principles (Berkobien 2020, p. x), offers to advocacy as reception and delivery of climate change issues. Environmental scientists and climate change communication scholars invoke a deeper connection with the lay publics rather than simply delivering top-down information (Moser, Dilling 2011; Murunga *et al.* 2022, unpaginated; Parsons 2016, p. 4). In order to respond to their call, I aim to prove that this connection can be provided by translation, namely a communicative endeavour which entails responsiveness, relationality and interpretation as well as multifocal interrogations of meaning. Particular attention will be paid to ecotranslation, a section of Translation Studies that looks at ecological issues and that still lacks case studies from the arts to tackle the climate crisis. By so doing, this article aims to offer a practical example to pave the way for future evidence-based research on translation not only as care-full relationality but also as creative practice. It also aims to be part of a growing body of literature that is now "finding ways to make the issue more salient and pressing to a broader swath of the public" (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 36). Taking up the translation line of inquiry will enable me to demonstrate how the study of translation can contribute to Environmental Communication

[1] The unusual spelling was adopted by Phillips in 2019 to refer to practices and initiatives informed by the ethics of care. I apply the same spelling throughout this article.

as a discipline of care (Pezzullo 2024b) and, more broadly, to an integrated approach that warrants the adoption of translation to address climate change. As a number of scholars maintain (Bruhn 2021, pp. 119-120; Cronin 2017, p. 3; Polezzi 2022, p. 309), the ecological crisis is an enormous issue which requires not only cooperation between different disciplines in the Sciences, but also collaboration between the Sciences and the Arts and Humanities. In this spirit, my project serves as an example of the response that the Arts, the Humanities and, in particular, Translation Studies can offer to Environmental Communication and climate action.

The first Section of the article will briefly illustrate my Arts Council England project. The second Section will review the scholarship which has pioneered a new line of research in translation, communication and climate action. It will also identify a gap in research especially *vis-à-vis* care ethics and care-full approaches to translation. The goal is to situate my project within this scholarship, present the parameters which I used to craft my methodology and fill a research gap. Creating an appropriate and suitable environment is paramount for ethically grounded communication to occur. Therefore, the third Section will focus on how I delivered the project and the care that I, as project and translation lead, applied to it. The fourth, and final, Section will analyse its outcomes and respond to the question raised earlier: is the climate crisis also a crisis of translation?

## 2. '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'

'12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was born out of a wider international project, entitled 'We Still Have a Chance', located within the environmentally impactful University of Exeter Green Futures campaign and directed by public engagement and education expert Cecilia Mañosa Nyblon. The goal of the latter, international, project was twofold (see Roberts *et al.* 2023). First, it aimed to co-produce *We Still Have a Chance*, a collection of twelve stories on climate change. The collection ensued from multilingual storytelling workshops led by creative writer Sally Flint and English-Arabic translation work led by me and literary scholar Hugh Gerald Arthur Roberts. The workshops – and the published collection now (Flint 2022) – raised such issues as human-induced pollution, biodiversity loss, food deprivation and extreme weather conditions via the power of fiction. Second, the project aimed to disseminate these stories widely, including at the November 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference COP27, Egypt, and call for action. The dissemination was carried out by way of artistic productions inspired by the collection. The magnitude of this project was so vast that it acted as a catalyst for further action and research, serving as a springboard for my '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'. In a similar spirit to 'We Still Have a

Chance', '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was set up to produce a series of cross-media translations (and, specifically, translations into visual artworks) to promote the anthology *We Still Have a Chance* – whose twelve stories gave my project its name. '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27', therefore, continued along the same vein as the wider international project which hosted it. However, whereas the initial project pursued mass mobilization, the second one was directed toward local communities. Both adopted approaches which are fundamental in driving change, but, being dissimilar in nature, the projects faced different struggles and scenarios. '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was planned to engage with "transformational struggle[s]", namely leaving the "transactional struggle[s]" (Aron 2023, p. 267) of influencing COP27 policy makers in the hands of 'We Still Have a Chance'.

The "transformational struggle[s]"– to use the terminology proposed by climate activist and scholar Adam R. Aron 2023 – aimed at shifting the environmental behaviour of local communities, in particular in the city of Exeter. In order to do so, it was deemed important to recruit communicators that could speak to the lay publics and that had the health of the planet at heart. To encourage behavioural change for environmental impact mitigation, the project favoured the arts and translated principles, centred around advocacy and creativity, into what Tracey Hunter-Doniger (2020) termed – as we shall see later – ARTvocacy. Art has enormous power. It advances a range of interpretations and viewpoints; overthrows stereotypes and clichés; encourages openness to the depicted subjects; heightens appreciation of controversial themes; and offers a better understanding of specific topics related to local and/or global phenomena (Brownlie 2022, p. 8).[2] Three creative workshops (over four days) were delivered in November 2022, in collaboration with the Double Elephant Print Workshop and Screenprint Studio, Exeter.[3] Art specialists Simon Ripley, George Barron and Rosie Stiling led the workshops, each focusing on such specific printmaking techniques as letterpress, screenprinting and collagraphy respectively.[4] A pool of local artists, in particular twenty-one printmakers, attended the workshops and produced visual translations, namely artistic prints inspired by *We Still Have a Chance.* November 2022 introductory sessions, preceding the creative workshops, were delivered by me, as project and translation lead, together with a team of experts consisting of climate scientists, medical researchers, health professionals, educators and creative writers. Embedding these sessions into the project responded to Susanne C. Moser and Lisa Dilling's (2011) and Michael Murunga *et al.*'s (2022) call to bridge the

[2] Art installations, for examples, are often used as part of climate change communication which, as Markowitz, Guckian (2018, p. 36) say, has adopted many forms of expression.
[3] See https://www.doubleelephant.org.uk/ (30.09.2025).
[4] George Barron also acted as Double Elephant project manager.

science-action gap via meetings with experts. Drawing on multiple strengths and expertise, the introductory sessions shed light on the project and the need for advocacy and climate action. They illuminated the genesis of the Source Text and the value of translation as a creative frame.[5] Thanks to these events, the artists involved were shown the care applied by my team to the work done in support of the project and, more broadly, the planet. To complete the workshops, the artists were tasked with selecting a story from *We Still Have a Chance* according to their preference, reflecting on the knowledge acquired and translating that knowledge visually into artworks. In other words, translation was leveraged as a multipurpose item: a communicative tool to acquire knowledge and make meaning; a resource for advocacy to spread the word; and care work to express concerns about the environment.

The artworks were produced in November 2022 to echo the international events at COP27, Sharm El-Sheikh. Once completed, the artistic prints – now digitally displayed on the University of Exeter Green Futures website –[6] were exhibited for a year at multi-artform venue Exeter Phoenix, Exeter. Their photographs (taken by professional photographer Theo Moye) were also showcased around the city of Exeter in popular cultural institutions, including the Devon and Exeter Institution, Exeter, which now stores them alongside Met Office resources and Exeter-based schoolwork.[7] The exhibitions demonstrated the commitment of everyone involved and their desire to partake in transformational struggles and climate advocacy. The transformations that *We Still Have a Chance* underwent – artistically speaking – aimed at shifting the landscape of climate change communication, placing emphasis on the engagement with the materiality of translation.[8] The next Section will discuss the latter concept and its links with care.

[5] The introductions were also in line with Bruce and McKee, who suggest offering the lay publics "real-world" (2020, p. 152) scenarios as well as "access to peers and […] experts" (p. 153).

[6] See https://greenfutures.exeter.ac.uk/we-still-have-a-chance/ (01.10.2025).

[7] Another part of my '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' involved Exeter-based schools, which were supported by local artists (recruited in collaboration with Daisi Arts Inspired Learning) and which produced visual translations (prints and installations) of *We Still Have a Chance*.

[8] The reader might wonder whether the artworks inspired by the climate stories included in *We Still Have Chance* (also referred to here as Source Text) should really be considered translations. The current literature on translation is less and less divided in this respect. As stated above, translation is a key player in interpretative and sense-making practices, both across and within languages and cultures. Susan Bassnett (2011, p. 42) maintains that any form of adaptation can be equated to translation or, in other words, that translation encompasses adaptation, in that the latter is inescapable (and welcome) in translation. It should be added that, despite welcoming adaptation as a strategy in translation, some scholars still differentiate adaptation from translation, on the ground that the latter only/predominantly pertains to the linguistic realm. Others (Boria *et al.* 2020; Kohn, Weissbrod 2023; Vidal Claramonte 2022; Weissbrod, Kohn 2019), on the other hand, have enlarged the semantics of translation to embrace a plethora of instances encompassing not only adaptation (a term which has often been used to define cinematic adaptations [see Hutcheon 2006]) but all sorts of cross-media actions. My view is in

## 3. Ecotranslation in/and climate change communication

Translation Studies scholars are increasingly engaging with the contribution that translation can offer towards the environmental crisis. In order to illustrate how translation can facilitate environmental advocacy grounded in care-full work, it is useful to turn our attention to a number of studies elicited by Michael Cronin's (2017) seminal work on ecotranslation.

Ecotranslation is a term that was first coined by Translation Studies scholar Clive Scott during a 2015 lecture at the University of Exeter (Cronin 2017, p. 2; 2019a, p. 484) to define the translator's exploration of the textuality, or 'environment', of the Source Text and Target Text. The notion was then adopted/adapted by Cronin to call for a radical rethinking of the translation environment so as to encompass many more instances of acts of translation, both human and non-human. The end goal was to enhance the pivotal role that translation can play *vis-à-vis* the ecological crisis. Scholars have responded to Cronin's call in an attempt to engage with the "(in)humanity of translation" (2019b, p. 189), as he posits. Carolyn Shread reminds us that ecotranslation is not "a discrete object with which we interact" (2023, p. 114) or that we "master" (p. 119). To put it differently, it is not merely a linguistic approach applied to render ecological themes across texts. Nor is it merely a hermeneutic tool used to investigate the representation of nature in Target Texts. Even if these approaches can play a role in fostering a critical environment and sharing ideas about the climate, they operate within limited contexts and produce conventional outcomes. As the ecological crisis is the outcome of a series of human-induced transformations, Shread (2023, pp. 113-115) invites us to open ourselves to the world and look at translation as a practice inherently embedded within the ecosystem that defines us: a practice performed by all the elements that populate the Earth. In this light, "ecotranslation is not a task; it's a new form of life" (p. 115). This form of life helps us to shape meaning, partake in the interspecies relationality that mark our togetherness and connect us to the world (see also Marais 2022, p. 2). In short, it helps us to communicate with/in the environment that hosts us (Shread 2023, p. 115). While echoing Cronin, Shread stresses the need to pluralize and diversify acts of translation. We should "translate with" objects and beings (2023, p. 114), "reconfigure translation practices, including translating outdoors" (p. 113) and employ "movement, gesture, and expression as modes of communication more expansive than human linguistics" (p. 119).

line with the latter scholars who see translation as a negotiation of meanings and messages across and within different domains (linguistic, cultural, semiotic, intermedial, intermodal and multimodal).

In a similar vein, Hedwig Fraunhofer (2023) builds on Cronin's theorizations to extend her translational horizons. In an attempt to include the dialogue with the vegetal world into these horizons, Fraunhofer tries to picture what translation could be like if this practice considered the more-than-human. In addition to enlarging the scope of translation, her ecotranslation gives voice to the interrelatedness underpinning the co-presence upon which the ecological system is founded. The answers that she provides are worth mentioning, because she takes a different direction to Cronin (2017; 2019a; 2019b), drawing on the principles of physicist-philosopher and feminist theorist Karen Barad (2007). These principles centre around such complex dynamics as entanglement and complementarity which, in quantum physics, refer to particles being linked (or entangled) and influencing one another in a supportive (or complementary) manner (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 45, p. 50). Fraunhofer notes that these dynamics are also at the heart of the translation process, bringing to light the specificity of its relational nature and, more broadly, humans' positionality. In other words, translation is not just the outcome of a chronological transfer between static entities such as Source Text and Target Text. It is a fluid and malleable experience connecting and shaping the human and the other-than-human, which are enmeshed with one another in multiple, interdependent ways (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 45; see also Barad 2007, p. ix). Accordingly, humans are not at the centre of materiality or thought. They are instead integral to a broad web of co-dependent elements whose presence affects the reciprocity and relationality that bind the world (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 41). Barad also claims: "Humans are neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming" (2007, p. 150). Fraunhofer and Shread have made an important contribution to the advancement of the posthumanist and materialist turn in Translation Studies (see Bennett 2022; Littau 2011, 2023; Marais 2022), within which I situate my own work. Their work has provided the foundations for my own translational practices within the context of environmental advocacy. These practices challenge traditional views of both translation and climate change communication: that the former should be a linear process and the latter should be a unidirectional activity.

According to the posthumanist and materialist phase in the conceptualization of translation, translation is not merely a linguistic activity, just as language is not merely an abstract concept. Both language and translation pertain to the materiality of the world and the body and display a pliable nature (Connelly 2019; Maestri 2024). Shread's notion of plasticity has been particularly formative for me. She posits that translation is a "plastic" mesh that binds the world together as a cohesive and multifaceted whole (Shread 2023, p. 116). And "plasticity is a generative philosophical intervention that describes the material processes of bestowing, taking, destroying, and resisting form – processes that are all, variously, translational

in nature" (2023, p. 116). While Shread does not draw on Barad, her concept of plasticity pushes forward the argument of translation as a form of entanglement. For sure the term plasticity conjures up environmentally unfriendly connotations, yet it secures the embodied nature of translation. It situates translation within the material world that it inherently shapes, enriching its transformative potential. The malleable, pliable and plastic nature of translation turns transformations into continuous expressions of physicality and "life forming" (Shread 2023, p. 116). Experimenting with plasticity and the materiality of translation as a way of playing with the energy that drives all sorts of motions and productions seemed to me a profitable approach, especially when one tries to address climate change communication.

Diversifying the communicative contexts and practices often followed in climate advocacy is not an easy task. It requires hard work, attention, reflection and especially – as I said initially – care, namely "the care that orients ecotranslation and the generosity of attention Cronin invites upon initiating this collective, collaborative, and wholly inclusive, undertaking" (Shread 2023, p. 120). Shread (2023) stresses the value of care as a response to the climate crisis and draws attention to scholars (Berkobien 2020; Cornelio 2017) who have discussed its significance within the context of translation, placing emphasis on Megan Berkobien and her approach to ecotranslation. These studies represent an important milestone especially because care, despite being a key ethical principle very often applied by translators to their work, is not discussed in the scholarship on translation ethics (Koskinen, Pokorn 2021; Lambert 2023; Pym 2012; Washbourne 2019). It does not appear in recent studies on translation activism (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020) or Cronin's seminal work on ecotranslation (2017; 2019a; 2019b) either. Rebecca Tipton (2024, pp. 199-200) is the only one that briefly devotes attention to the ethics of care, mentioning its first feminist theorizations and especially the importance placed on relationality and the emotional connections that care establishes with others. Being devoted to ethics in translation and interpreting education, Tipton's work (2024) does not venture into the application of the ethics of care to ecotranslation or environmental communication. This is done, as stated earlier, by Berkobien (2020) and Pezzullo (2024b) respectively, namely scholars whose disciplines have not cross-pollinated to date, despite common grounds. Berkobien, a literary scholar and translator, explores care through forms of collaboration and camaraderie in literary translation. These collaborations create shelters or refuges needed to fight climate change. Pezzullo, an environmental communication scholar, invokes the application of care-full approaches to the communicative praxis of environmental issues. These praxes should be imbued with reflection, attention and empathic considerations for the other. However, despite mentioning imagination as a fundamental component in

care work (Berkobien 2020) or as a mental space overwhelmed by anti-environmental and capitalist ideologies (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 2), neither of them elaborates on it. Imagination and care – as a combination – are only cited quickly in some contributions (Doyle 2024, p. 28; Raja 2024, p. 77) to the Special Issue on *Environmental Communication as Care* edited by Pezzullo. Because of the creative nature of ecotranslation, it is important to provide a definition that draws together imagination and care, by relying on ecofeminist scholars particularly interested in the ethics of care and ecology. I will avail myself of these definitions in the following Sections.

Care is an ethical inclination to love the other 'agentially', with facts, *doing* things, ecofeminist Mary Phillips claims (2016, p. 475). It is a relational disposition which puts into practice – with actions and imagination – love and respect for others and objects (2016, pp. 476-477). Put another way, the caring imagination "create[s] points of departure for developing responsive interconnections that inform action" (p. 477). It is a strength that helps us to transcend our bodily limitations and reach out to the other (p. 478). It is also a proactive stance that nurtures and, at the same time, is nurtured by ethical creativity. Ethical creativity refers to a set of tangible practices which employ an ethically sound approach to enact "sustainability transformations", namely "gradual long-lasting processes, with a final aim of making the current systems of production and consumption more sustainable" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 284). Within it, the caring imagination is particularly important because it sparks creativity and facilitates hands-on experiments, by turning practices into "tangible and salient accounts of *how* transformations can be enacted in various realities" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 285, italics in original). According to these authors, transformations are necessary for ecological issues to be attended to. Unfortunately, due to the complexities and the complications built into processes of transformations, transformations do not come about through quick-fix solutions (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, pp. 284-285). Any intervention aimed at activating transformations must be sustained – and indeed will be facilitated – by the ethics of care, which provides the necessary love and attention to detail for the process to succeed.

What if communicators were more translation-sensitive, that is to say attuned to translation as a plastic sense-making activity? And, as a shared activity whose production of things comes into being as entanglement and complementarity? Finally, what if communicators were more ethically oriented, applying an ethics of care to the materiality of translation and therefore communication? Being focused on connections and "a feeling with, rather than a feeling for, others" (Hobart, Kneese quoted in Pezzullo 2024a, p. 3), care strengthens the relational aspect that underpins translation.

## 4. The ARTvocacy model: care, printmaking and transformation

Purposeful and ethical communication does not happen in a vacuum. The appropriate setting and conditions need to be care-fully arranged in order for them to foster meaning-making and knowledge translation. Prioritizing care as a criterion for selecting participants was paramount, because care helped them to step into the role of translators and advocates. Moreover, thanks to artist and workshop leader Barron's knowledge of the local printmaking art scene, we recruited artists whose praxes were already marked by a desire to contribute to meaningful actions for change. Scholars in leadership education Jacklyn A. Bruce and Katherine E. McKee confirm: "There is no reason to take up the mantle of advocacy unless you believe that there is a need for change" (2020, p. 151). Finally, recruiting artists with specific environmentally conscious interests was crucial to fulfil the aims of the project and attain the desired results. As environmental scientist E.C.M. Parsons says, "do not try to ram a square peg into a round hole. For example, if talking to an artist, suggest ways in which they could use [their] artistic skills to interpret and highlight your cause" (2016, p. 5). Working with like-minded participants enabled me to invest my energies and attention to care to the full to unlock potentials and create a forum for collaboration and reflection.

As a first step, I imagined and encouraged a safe and cooperative environment, rooted in care-full work. Berkobien teaches us that safe spaces, or refuges, are key in the co-creation of strategies to care and repair (2020). The model that inspired me the most and that allowed me to design a collaborative and hands-on path to climate advocacy was the ARTvocacy model established by school educator Hunter-Doniger (2020). The term was first coined at a public event in Washington, D.C., and then used by Hunter-Doniger to signify the guiding principles framing her educational practice. These principles, founded upon a philosophy of care for the planet, position the arts as an opportunity to learn (how) to speak for others and practise advocacy. While Hunter-Doniger's aim was to establish a new pedagogical approach which used existing artwork to teach to care for the planet and practise advocacy, my project enlisted artists to translate climate stories into artwork, a process which would inspire them and those who would then 'consume' their artwork to practise climate advocacy. In fact, my participants were all independent thinkers capable of expressing informed views with a unique and personal sense of aesthetics. Hence, I applied a care-full adjustment to Hunter-Doniger's model, paying respect to the artists' wisdom and avoiding a top-down approach to learning. During the workshops, the artists' wisdom was used as a resource, not to fuel art-based activism or artivism (see Scerbo 2021) or to push "direct action to achieve a political or

social goal", but "to make needs heard", in the words of Translation Studies scholar Joseph Lambert (2023, p. 100). My ambition was to offer everyone the opportunity to tune in to the magnitude of climate change and map out – through such relational practices as the arts and ecological care – one's personal path to climate advocacy. As artist and workshop leader Ripley stated, "I think a lot of us don't really have the confidence to know what exactly should I be doing? How can I make those changes that have the greatest impact?' (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:17:31.51-00:17:46.19). Hunter-Doniger's ARTvocacy model with the modifications I applied placed emphasis on how advocacy (and possibly activism) materializes when actionable knowledge is made accessible through translation into an ecological aesthetics.

By promoting a malleable, slow space-time collaboration, ARTvocacy harnessed reflection on how to shape messages under the banner of translation. The reflective engagement embedded within ARTvocacy allows for the making of art to be turned into a care-full making of meaning: a translational exercise carried out "to communicate the urgency of change" (Bruce, McKee 2020, p. 161). Moreover, this reflective engagement is as plastic as the artistic practice put in motion: it transforms, changes, modifies, renovates, mitigates and, finally, translates. The aim is to acknowledge "that the systems in which we live and work must be *dismantled and rebuilt* to serve not just a select few, but all people" (Bruce, McKee 2020, p. 151, my italics). Translations and transformations at every possible level – both material and conceptual – were therefore at the heart of the ARTvocacy ethos I nurtured. Artist David Brampton-Greene, one of the participants in my project, confirms:

> The word advocate is such a great word because for me it suggests that we're … I'm still trying to understand. I'm still in a position of finding out and learning, which is part of the problem, because obviously somebody that takes action, an activist, has made a decision that they, they know this action needs to be taken, it needs to be taken now. (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:16:7.22-00:16:34.20)

According to him, advocacy is a positive attitude situated along a continuum stretching from appropriation of actionable knowledge to active participation. The element that keeps these aspects closely related but not clearly divided is translation, centred on the appreciation of the interrelatedness that binds them. Translation helps to make sense of the knowledge one needs to learn in order to act and champion change. Driven by the impulse encapsulated into "advocāre", the Latin root of advocacy ("to call upon, summon […] to invoke the aid of" [*Oxford English Dictionary Online* 2025]), the ARTvocacy practice which I strived to establish invoked translation as an act of care for

transformation. I envisaged that this act would lead to tangible reflections on how to convey actionable knowledge.

One, final, factor became crucial when ARTvocacy took shape: the choice of the creative practice to be capitalized on. Generally speaking, any form of art can be instrumental in advocating for a cause, because it "engag[es] the attention of audiences, who may be desensitized to statistics" (Brownlie 2022, p. 8). Being rooted in materiality, artmaking can also help us to move away from approaches that frame translation as an abstract concept or "a loosely conceived metaphorical concept" (Desblache 2020, p. 208), enhancing its embodied and physical nature instead (see Blumczynski 2023, p. 11; Vidal Claramonte 2022). In order to implement ARTvocacy, I opted for an artistic practice whose nature is specifically founded on translational entanglements and plasticity, namely printmaking. Printmaking is inherently linked with distribution, dissemination and, by extension, advocacy (Ripley in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 01:0:49.31-01:0:55.11; Weisberg 2018 [1986], p. 59). It is also a "labour-intensive art form" (Reeves 2018 [1999], p. 75) and the dexterity required to produce prints evokes the translational entanglements that Fraunhofer (2023) speaks about. Artist Ruth Weisberg explains the physical entanglements involved in printmaking almost in sexual terms: "The irreducible essence of printmaking is an embrace, one body pressed against the other" (2018 [1986], p. 63). The artist's body presses "the matrix against a receptive surface" (p. 63), leaving on that surface traces of their self whose imprint gets enmeshed within the fabric of the work. "Touch always results in a print" (Reeves 2018 [1999], p. 73), allowing for the personal and the situatedness to take shape. Arguably, the interconnectedness that marks the essence of printmaking is consistent with the mechanism that governs translation. While marking and staining, the materiality of print and printmaker forges relations and causes entanglements. Just like translation, these relational entanglements affect the physicality of all the parties involved in the artmaking process, creating new identities and connections. Finally, the repeated gesture required to produce artistic prints – not only to generate several copies but also to try out a variety of techniques and outcomes – engages both the body and the mind almost ad infinitum, allowing for a pluralization of translational acts ignited by movement and motion. The printmaking gesture elicits embodied thinking and care-full approaches to communication which – just like translation – stem from the materiality of the body. These approaches were captured in the March 2023 focus groups that I led and that are analysed in the next Section to shed light on the outcomes of my project.

## 5. ARTvocacy practices and outcomes: the role of ecotranslation and the ethics of care

This Section analyses the outcomes of ARTvocacy, in the light of the theoretical framework and methods that informed '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'. The analysis focuses on the prints produced by ten of the twenty-one artists who participated in the project, specifically those artists whose prints' artistic quality, precision, care and originality secured them a place in the 2023 Exeter Phoenix exhibition. Translational entanglements, plasticity and caring imagination are used to cast light on the regulatory forces, such as knowledge translation, behind the ethically informed communication – and by extension advocacy – practices put in place by the artists.

Translation turned the artists in my workshops into risk-takers. Undertaking care work requires courage to face challenges and risks, not just a sense of responsibility. Quoting ecofeminist Karen J. Warren, Phillips says that we must "dare to care" (2015, p. 52; 2019, p. 1159). Advocates demonstrate moral courage, often stepping into challenging or high-stakes situations (Bruce, McKee 2020, pp. 158-159). The nature of the risks that they assess before adopting any action strategy is usually greater than the ones that the participants in my project had to face. As stated above, '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27' was embedded within a wider project coordinated by the University of Exeter, a well-established institution with a structured approach to risk assessment and mitigation. Even if situational risks were ruled out, the ARTvocacy practice that the participants embraced exposed them to conceptual risks, confronting them with the challenges that communication entails. The first of such risks was to engage with sign systems – verbal and visual forms of communication – whose make-ups diverge. Linguist and semiotician Gunther Kress claims that "writing and image each enable meanings to be made which cannot, however, easily be 'shifted' from the one mode to the other – nor, actually, made at all in the other mode" (2020, p. 26). And this is because, Kress continues, "meaning is made according to the characteristics of the environment and the affordances of the modes" (2020, p. 32). Moreover, the literature on translating fiction into visual art is still limited, and so are the tools available to practitioners embarking upon such projects. Monica Boria and Marcus Tomalin claim: "Despite its increasing prevalence, minimal attention has so far been paid specifically to the impact that multimodal communication is having, and/or is likely to have, upon the theory and practice of translation" (2020, p. 5). Despite these hurdles, all artists completed successful work, developing a deep-rooted, personal approach to the translation of fiction into printed images.

The artists' personal approaches to translation are the most interesting aspects of this project, because the ensuing prints value emotions, which do

not always take centre stage in ecological matters. Emotions – according to feminist scholars of care ethics – are often "rejected in rationalistic moral theories" (Held quoted in Tipton 2024, p. 199). Phillips expands:

> reason is presented as the only way to achieve the limited changes believed to be required, while the emergence of ecocentric perspectives and values that might arise from a greater *emotional* connectivity with nature must be suppressed. (2015, pp. 57-58, my italics)

Contrary to this, a "careful practice of […] translation doesn't skirt the lived experiences we bring with us to any text" (Berkobien 2020, p. 3). As the lived experience comes with "emotive material", it "can play an important role in changing public attitudes and eliciting public concern" (Parsons 2016, p. 4). Along the same lines, Bruce and McKee hold that "being able to speak from your own experience is also important and can add impact to your advocacy appeals" (2020, p. 157). The importance of the personal – and the emotive – in public activities is also echoed by Linda Flower (2008), a scholar in rhetoric and community literacy, whose work on public engagement devotes attention to the strategies required to mobilize the lay publics towards meaningful actions. In order to explicate these strategies and construct public engagement spaces, as rhetorical sites, Flower affirms the non-negotiable significance of allowing for the personal and the political to (e)merge. It is only then that public engagement spaces become fruitful and transformative loci (2008, p. 2). The materialization of the personal underpins – to various degrees and extents – all the visual translations, the prints, exhibited at the Exeter Phoenix. The prints expose not only intermedial links with the climate stories but also an intimate, emotive and subjective response to them.

Victoria Owen visually translated the short story *A Crack in the Sky*. The print represents a banana tree full of fruit and a child hugging the tree. The embrace is an emotive appeal to act ethically towards nature on behalf of future generations (Owen in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:32:50.24-00:32:54.47). This appeal, often lodged in climate change communication and advocacy (Markowitz, Guckian 2018, p. 50), aims to address the viewer by visualizing and eliciting affects and, in particular, vitality affects. Vitality affects, experienced since birth through "energy" and "a sense of aliveness" (Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 31), are the backbone of our infanthood. Later in life, they can trigger or be triggered by memories (Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 169; Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 31, p. 37). Owen stated that the short story "focus[es] your attention on certain aspects or feelings" (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:24:43.30-00:24:50.12), namely the feeling that the female protagonist remembers experiencing while "running between the rows of tall plants" (*A Crack in the Sky*, p. 23). Vitality affects have a vigorous as well as temporal quality not only because they are produced by embodied energy, but

also because they are solicited by movement, especially repetitive and/or on-going (Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 31; Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 169). For this reason, "they cannot, as such, arise in a single moment or converge at a central point because a successive string of singular elements is needed for a vitality affect to be created" (Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 169). And that is why Developmental Psychologist Daniel Stern, the first scholar who conceptualized them, often conveyed them linguistically with present participles (2008, p. 169), such as "running" in our case. The temporal aspect of vitality affects also corresponds to progressions or processes of "intensity of sensation" that evolve over time (Stern quoted in Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 171). These processes are marked by fluctuations and oscillations, which may also consolidate into a crescendo of feelings following a clear "activation-arousal" pattern (Stern quoted in Køppe *et al.* 2008, p. 171). The emotive response displayed by Owen is the outcome of such a crescendo, which drives the protagonist to embrace the object of her memories, namely a tall tree situated in the "banana farm, verdant and lush with the fresh rich scent the rain-soaked earth offered up" (*A Crack in the Sky*, p. 23). The feelings experienced while running, namely "a welling up within, an excitement and sense of promise" (*A Crack in the Sky*, p. 23) are now projected onto the printed image and, even, extended. The representation of the child hugging a huge tree (personifying Mother Nature) conveys another type of vitality affect, namely the energy flow that dynamically emerges from the caregiver-child interpersonal connection (Køppe *et al.* 2008, pp. 171-172). Transformation, through visual translation, affords, therefore, the opportunity to give voice to the personal and intimate and launch a strong appeal, with the potential of "nurtur[ing] one sense of self", to borrow the words of Angela Moriggi *et al.* (2020, p. 288). The print harnesses the power of memory and affect to exhume the most primitive and nostalgic reminiscence, namely the paradise lost. In the story this reminiscence is represented by "the banana farm, verdant and lush" which is now "withering, hard unyielding fruit that never ripened, […] unable to adapt to the soaring heat" (*A Crack in the Sky*, pp. 23-24); and, in the printed image, by the child hugging the tree that symbolizes the primeval mother-child bond generating "affect attunement […] through […] bodily interaction" (Køppe *et al.* 2008, pp. 171-172). The appeal is clear: what if future generations could no longer connect with the affective depth inscribed in our subjectivity since the origin of our being?

Owen's print can also be read as a quintessential celebration of care as "recognition of our entangled materialities", in the words of Phillips (2016, p. 471). The substantial production of fruit that springs out of the tree branches is an expression of care, as generous as the all-encompassing embrace given by the girl. However, as realistic as this image might be, it is a memory and a dream, which exists only in the female protagonist's caring imagination. The actual state of nature is fairly derelict, struggling to survive, as the short story

says. Being able to access the Source Text, which was also provided at the art exhibition, the viewer knows that the human embrace is loaded with particularly meaningful connotations. It symbolizes a desperate act of caring for Mother Nature, an act which goes beyond the need to feel or retrieve personal, affective vitality or any other "ontological necessity" (Wells, Gradwell quoted in Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 286). It is a keen attempt (even if vain) to prevent Mother Nature from dying. Phillips claims: "Our capacity to care […] extends beyond our personal experiences to an ability to respond to difference, and to visualize what the other, given their specificity, is undergoing" (2016, p. 478). The personal thus extends to embrace difference, the other and a non-atomistic view of humanity, celebrating human-nature interdependence. In our focus group, Owen justified her approach by highlighting that "there isn't one thing without another. None of it can happen in isolation" (*Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:34:1.98-00:34:8.55). The interdependence celebrated by Owen's ARTvocacy practice encapsulates, therefore, the essence of care, defined by feminist philosopher Joan Tronto as: "Everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' […]. That world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web" (quoted in Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 283).

Phillips's view can also be applied to the reading of artist Sarah Furby's print. Her print, a visual translation of the short story *Wait Here*, depicts a young girl curled up in a shrub as if rocking backward and forward, almost in a foetal position. While waiting for her mother to come back to a dry place, she finds refuge in the undergrowth. The print represents the girl lying down among leaves in such a way that she appears to be woven – almost entangled – into the fabric of Oneness with Mother Nature. Whereas the Source Text only says that the little girl "had hidden among the tamarinds" (*Wait Here*, p. 60), the print enhances the sense of protection and the care the girl feels while hiding "under the feathery-dry leaves" (*Wait Here*, p. 60). In so doing, the artwork displays not only human-nature interdependence, but also the materiality of care. And that is why the sensuousness that Furby's print inspires is central. Furby chose to translate visually a specific element of nature, described by the Source Text in a tactile and palpable way as "feathery". Care is in fact both maternal and material, being linked to the body and experienced by every body – not just mothers and children (Phillips 2016, p. 471). Through a visual awakening of the senses, the print encourages the viewer to see nature and humans as part of our caring responsibilities and leave behind individualistic modes of being in the world, "where the needs of the other living beings are disregarded" (Phillips 2016, p. 473). The affective vitality generated by Furby's print – celebrating the body and bodily encounters – also plays a key role. Here affective vitality surfaces from the dyadic relationship with nature and is

actualized by movement and bodily intensities that predate language. There are no words embedded in this print, unlike other artworks produced with letterpress techniques. Yet, the message is clear. The affects that spring out of the image have illocutionary force, which – along with various types of creative activities such as "art, music, and dance" – "begin an inner movement that leads to vitalization" (Holmqvist *et al.* 2019, p. 30). They bring energy (back), soliciting humans to embark upon "processes of inner change" (2019, p. 30). Leading scholars in climate change communication and scientists Moser and Dilling consider affect an effective element in public engagement, claiming that "people […] actively respond by way of changes in climate-relevant behaviour or political action" when they "experience an emotional response" (2011, p. 162). What is interesting to note is that both Furby and Owen applied amplification strategies to translation, enhancing what the Source Texts encapsulate and "affirming the need to reconnect with the biosphere, learning to see human and nature as a whole" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 282).

Amplification proves to be a key strategy applied to the translation of *We Still Have a Chance*. In order to put this strategy into practice, one needs to pay attention to details and, if necessary, expand them. By so doing, the details are magnified and intensified (see Taylor 1998, p. 55). Focusing on the finer points is the thematic subject of artist Brampton-Greene's work inspired by *Survival*. His print represents an eye which visually calls for attention and the need to pay attention, thereby recalling the etymological root of care. The active meaning of care translates into "attentiveness, regard, consideration" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 283), which, in the context of climate change, are a "practical necessity [created] to become responsive to ecosystem health" (2020, p. 286). Cronin also says that "relating to others, whether human or non-human, implies, first and foremost, paying attention to them" (2019a, p. 485). Brampton-Greene's eye amplifies key moments in *Survival*, a story that places emphasis on vision and a series of gazes amplifying vision. It opens with William Blake's lines from *The Tyger* and continues with a story told by a grandfather whose subject is also a tiger. The grandfather's tiger roaming through the forest has "eyes like medallions" (*Survival*, p. 36) which echo the grandchild "listen[ing] wide-eyed" (*Survival*, p. 37) to the grandfather's story of the roaming tiger. Cronin says that paying attention is crucial but not easy within a production economy whose "main income generator" is "getting people to take notice" (2019a, p. 486). Unsurprisingly the eye pictured by the artist resembles a "shield" (Brampton-Greene in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:30:25.88-00:30:36.57) and is situated in an allegorical forest, alluding to the tiger's difficulty of moving around perils and obtaining clear vision. The activity Cronin proposes as a way to steer through this attention-seeking maze or forest is translation. Translation is "the structure and contents of cultural attentionscapes that set up specific

orientations towards the future" (2019a, p. 487). It is therefore the barometer that helps us to navigate through meaning-making and knowledge appropriation. Brampton-Greene's print aligns with Cronin's perspective. The print signposts the viewer, pointing to the attention and care given by the grandchild to the stories of wildlife and, later, the family garden (*Survival*, p. 36). The effectiveness of the print stems from the visualization of attentiveness: the vector setting in motion the circularity of care. In line with Moriggi *et al*., the artwork encourages the viewers to increase their "capacity to 'see with fresh eyes' […] and, as a consequence, to regain a sense of wonder, appreciating Earth's beauty but also its suffering" (2020, p. 290). The value of Brampton-Greene's print also comes from the staging of what translation, as a meaning-making activity, can do: it signposts the way for reader and viewer by directing them to the cornerstone of the story. Moreover, by shedding light on the essence of meaning, the translation applied by the artist enriches both Source and Target Text. It ensures complementarity and circularity, instead of separation or transfer, between one and the other, strengthening the ecotranslational aspects advocated for – as mentioned above – by Fraunhofer (2023). The image of the eye acquires more significance when placed alongside its Source Text and vice versa. While disentangling meaning, the print unveils the mechanism that underpins communication: "Translation as a circular, dynamic motion between source text and translation" (Fraunhofer 2023, p. 45). This motion increases attentiveness which, as shown above, brings contexts into focus, activating the caring imagination, namely the energy that drives those who practise the ethics of care.

Imagination, "one of the ten central capabilities for a good life", also "allows us to deal with uncertainty and take the future in our hands" (Moriggi *et al.* 2020, p. 289). Uncertainty poses enormous risks which challenge climate change impact assessments and designs (Merino-Benítez *et al.* 2024, p. 2) as well as caregivers' plans and prospects. Despite its connotations and challenges, uncertainty offers strong artistic tension, raising questions and creating the opportunity to be imaginative and transformative. Artist Sue Wyllie leveraged uncertainty to produce her print and reflect on responses to climate change. Her print, which depicts objects polluting the water in the short story entitled *Live by the River*, was produced by capitalizing on the unexpected – triggering feelings of uncertainty. In one of our focus groups, she elucidated the potential encapsulated in moments of creative uncertainty by claiming:

> I quite like to work with simple things and just see where it takes […]. I don't really know where I'm going with any of it. It's just so I've got a pile of stuff here and and … how am I going to interpret that and make something out of it? (*Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:11:17.82-00:11:38.69)

By experimenting with the stencil of the shadows of random objects and rubbish (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:17:21.36-00:17:49.65), she generated unexpected circumstances and the imaginative curiosity leading to the creation of a work aesthetically original and new. In this, Wyllie's idea of exploring uncertainty and the unexpected – "this idea of working with not knowing what you're doing" (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:11:52.39-00:12:18.56) – echoes Moriggi *et al.*'s argument, according to which imagination and creativity are key to change and newness (2020, p. 289).

Once she had explained her ARTvocacy methods, Wyllie pushed her argument further by placing emphasis on the plastic aspect of her translational style. This aspect is central to questions not only of the caring imagination but also of agency (Phillips 2016, p. 477). Her layering, colouring and playing with positioning, shadows, inks, shapes and photosensitive screens were part of a mode of printmaking based on a co-agential, collaborative approach to materiality. To explain this mode of production, printmaker and art educator Ken Tyler says: "You don't know whether the suggestion came from the printer on the press or that it was the artist's idea" (quoted in Weisberg 2018 [1986], p. 64). What is important to note here is the following. Wyllie tried to find a "compromise" between her agential input and the one given by matter, as Weisberg (2018 [1986], p. 64) would say. Shread would instead prefer the expression "letting go" (2023, p. 116) to indicate the non-interventionist approach applied by the artist. Both scholars would highlight the co-productive process enacted by matter and artist, a process centred around plasticity. Drawing from French philosopher Catharine Malabou, Shread elucidates that "if plasticity is anything, it is about letting go, and accepting that the human determination to shape and form will itself be exploded" (2023, p. 116). Wyllie's co-agential praxis encapsulated therefore the essence of plasticity and ecotranslation. The artist worked with matter, caring for it and respecting its agency, an agency which is beyond human control. In so doing, Wyllie summons her viewer to be as respectful and imaginative as her, complying with the boundaries drawn by matter. Her plastic capacities do not just result into original artistic techniques. They become a way to sculpt the viewer's awareness of environmental degradation and climate-conscious behaviour (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:20:52.51-00:21:13.18), creating new opportunities for "a reshaping of our mode of existence into sustainable forms" (Shread 2023, p. 116). Moreover, the artist's plastic abilities foster a different kind of imagination to the one stimulated by the media. In line with Phillips (2016, p. 472), Julie Doyle (2024) says that the environmental crisis is also a crisis of imagination. The imagination which envisions possibilities for a healthy and positive future is sacrificed to make way for a sterile one which "renders apocalyptic visions central" (2024, p. 31). Wyllie's representation of water polluted by foreign bodies does not sensationalize degradation, catastrophes,

or disasters. Her print encourages viewers to tap into their caring imagination and visualize possible ways of bringing back agential matter. It also encourages them to ignite remedial action and positive transformation in response to the paralysis of matter and the fossilization, so to say, of pollution.

Imagination is key in artistic production as well as ARTvocacy, as argued above. It can travel far in time and space, but it can also foster reflection on proximity and the present. This is what artist Erika Cann aimed to encourage, by domesticating the story entitled *Mermaids' Tears*. Domestication and proximal frames are not just strategies used in translation to make texts relatable. They are also successful rhetorical strategies implemented in advocacy and climate change communication to reduce the spatial and temporal distance between individuals and the planetary crisis and elicit a stronger psychological response to the latter. Charlotte Jones *et al.* maintain that "strategies that emphasize the proximity of risks may be helpful in promoting behavioural engagement" (2017, p. 332). Wyllie's print is the outcome of an experiential practice that turned uncertainty – one of the "main dimensions of psychological distance" (Jones *et al.* 2017, p. 332) – into a manageable here and now; Cann's print lifts up a mirror to the Exeter viewer by showing the plastic pollution along the Devon shores, so dear to the local community. Both artists' intent was not to represent off-putting images, but to foster mitigation behaviour, by shortening the physical and psychological distance between the viewer and the represented issue. After all, as stated above, printmaking is a form of art that celebrates proximity and, in particular, the contiguity with the artist's body, "invok[ing] the body via the hand in the print" (Reeves 2018 [1999], p. 74). Proximity, as a method (in Wyllie's case) and a concept (in Cann's case), embeds the artists' soul and body within the artwork, while making their plea clear. Whereas Wyllie's print is an invite to emulate the main character's eco-conscious behaviour and "scoop […] floating rubbish" (*Live by the River*, p. 63) out of a fictional river (Wyllie in *Focus Group 4*, 2023, 00:20:52.51-00:21:13.18), Cann's print encourages the viewer to clean the Devon beaches of their "mermaids' tears" (Cann in *Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:18:4.60-00:18:16.27). The print represents a metaphor that, according to *Mermaids' Tears* (p. 13), has gained currency among climate scientists. These scientists use the image of teardrops to symbolize not just the damage caused by mythical creatures from Arabic folklore resembling mermaids and haunting the Nile, but also all microplastics polluting water bodies. However, whereas the eponymous story extends this generalization by including all "rivers, waterways, seas and oceans" (p. 13), Cann's print applies a "'cultural' lens" (Moser, Dilling 2011, p. 166) by zooming in on a section of a Devon beach. The choice of the short story was dictated by a keen interest in helping her viewer to grasp such abstract concepts as deep time, slow violence and microplastics. In our focus

group, Cann wondered: "How do you articulate the scale of the problem to somebody who doesn't immediately know what it is?" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:11:5.46-00:11:11.23). Attracted by the opportunity to raise public awareness of the physical violence inflicted by human hands on the environment, Cann chose to focus on a local geographical space as "a way of making some of those concepts more accessible and kind of as a starting point for people to engage with it" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:19:4.34-00:19:32.96).

Cann's print is emblematic not only in its advocacy for the health of the Devon shores but also in its representation of "slow violence" (Cann in *Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:10:13.40-00:10:30.60). The print unsettles (literally speaking) the artist's depiction of the Devon beach by punctuating the image with dots or, symbolically, teardrops resembling microplastics. The unsettlement is so radical that it visually demonstrates the inability of the dots to blend in or get entangled with the rest of the image, foregrounding an unresolvable and unpleasant asymmetry. Despite their irregular and uneven form, the pebbles – that lie beneath the dots – are organically interwoven, turning their interlacing into a perfectly natural geological fabric. However, because of the dots, the harmony created by the pebbles' shapes, depth and colour – which quintessentially embody the concepts of entanglement and complementarity (Fraunhofer 2023) – ceases to exist. There is no interrelationality or interconnectedness: the dots are superimposed on the pebbles, obscuring their organic shapes and imposing an unnatural substance onto them. The asymmetry created by the imbalance between shapes and forms tells a clear story, that of slow violence. The choice of colours is also telling, especially as they mark the subtlety embedded in the violence perpetrated at the expense of the environment. During the workshops, Cann experimented with different colours, especially to anchor firmly the idea of microplastics in the image. After researching and reflecting with art specialist Barron, she settled for blue and yellow. Cann confirmed that she was drawn to them both because they are the most "present colours of plastic in the ocean" and because they are "very much linked to the seaside and the coast" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:23:45.20-00:24:11.79). Therefore, even if she wanted to juxtapose a natural representation (the pebbles) with an unnatural one (the dots) disrupting the landscape, she decided in favour of these colours. She revealed: "Maybe at a first glance [blue and yellow] feel like [they] would fit in. And that's the kind of scary thing about microplastics: the fact that you don't see them to start off with" (*Focus Group 1*, 2023, 00:24:21.60-00:24:34.92). Their apparent invisibility, marked by such recurrent colours as blue and yellow, translates the insidiousness of human violence. Once more, the colour coding executed by Cann was guided by an ethics of care. Cann did not disregard the human body. Instead, she leveraged experiential knowledge and aspects of our physical existence – blue and

yellow "were kind of more naturally occurring colours" (00:23:45.20-00:24:11.79) – to enhance her caring imagination, aligning therefore with Phillips' invocations. The imaginary and the corporeal need to be intertwined if we want to recognize the vulnerability of nature (Phillips 2016, p. 477). Fruitful entanglements were put in place and enacted not only by Cann but by all the artists analysed here, carrying words of warning and traces of our body and nature.

The exhibition was founded on artistic complementarity and a complex argument, the points of which reverberated in concert with the multiple perspectives foregrounded at the Exeter Phoenix. Whereas Furby and Owen focused on emotions, Cann supported the former artists' goals by implementing proximity. Emotional appeals trigger an active response when they are "paired with a short-term temporal frame" (Huang, Guo 2024, p. 4). The viewers constructed their own stories and engaged with "a whole body of voices" (Dowsett in *Focus Group 2*, 2023, 00:42:50.10-00:42:58.78) arising from the artworks and the Source Texts – provided, as stated earlier, at the exhibition. A number of artists also visualized their own stories by capitalizing on the aesthetic power of words and the techniques learned in the letterpress printmaking workshops. Some incorporated words to unveil the capitalist ideologies operating against a green mindset (Dowsett 2023, inspired by *Déjà vu*), to denounce the mismanagement of water resources (Nash 2023, inspired by *Air Like Water*), to lament the shortage of water (Waterlow 2023, inspired by *Wait Here*) or to alert the viewer to the extinction of birds (Martin 2023 inspired by *The Age of Reason*). Others problematized climate change communication from within, exposing the flaws and the limits of human language.

Despite its material aspect, which could be seen as intrinsically natural and, therefore, positive, language is also responsible for the environmental crisis, as stated in the Introduction. Inspired by *The Fisherman* story, artist Douglas Anderson echoed Roberts *et al.*'s (2023) view, placing emphasis on the physicality of language that, like a net, entangles and strangles nature. His effective depiction of letters superimposed upon dead fish speaks by itself. Ironically, it speaks in silence without recourse to human language, portrayed as an indecipherable mess of tangled and jumbled alphabetical signs. Climate change is a crisis of communication and language which, despite its physicality, does not seem to capture the essence of materiality. In the print, alphabetical letters (standing for human language) lie above aquatic animals lacking oxygen and water, impeding vision and, ultimately, life. Human language cannot really represent aquatic life, translate it or build a genuine and productive rapport with it. It kills nature, by suffocating or misrepresenting it, as the image shows. We now go back to the question raised in the Introduction: is climate change also a crisis of translation? The alphabetical mess displayed by Anderson's print could also suggest this.

However, the type of translation that is displayed in the picture is predominantly linguistic. And that is why the principle that drove the curation of the exhibition was based on complementarity. We should not move away from linguistic translation, but integrate it with other modes and forms, just like what my ARTvocacy project did. In other words, in order to move people to a position of caring about the environment, we need to employ multimodal forms of communication which would capture the complexity of reality and convey various meanings and messages.

## 6. Concluding remarks

As stated in the Introduction, for effective communication to occur we need to make a concerted effort to address the flaws affecting communication. Ecologizing translation offers multiple avenues to tackle the opacity impacting communication, an opacity which – as Roberts *et al.* (2023) maintain – undermines understanding and knowledge transfer, especially when the topic discussed is climate change mitigation. Care is an antidote to the disengagement and negligence found in current neoliberal discourses around climate change (Pezzullo 2024a, p. 2; Phillips 2016, p. 468). The disengagement is apparent when we often hear "Twenty-four thousand years into the future, no one will be meaningfully related to me" (Morton quoted in Cronin 2017, p. 2). So, why should I care? Translators do care and show us the way to be more mindful of the other: they are attentive to details and they put the relatedness of things at the forefront of their ethical choices and actions. They also offer those who care a valuable frame to apply and appreciate.

As demonstrated, ARTvocacy, as translational practice and locus, enabled the artists involved in my project to speak and engage with their audience while advocating for ecological actions. Eminent Translation Studies scholar Maria Tymoczko claims: "The history and usage of the words *engage* and *engagement* imply commitment, involvement, participation, mutual pledges and promises, making guarantees, assuming obligations, exposing oneself to risk, entering into conflict, becoming interlocked or intermeshed" (2010, p. 11, italics in original). The artists/translators that participated in my project were not passive receivers of messages. They embraced the Source Text, moulding and shaping its content into pliable and plastic messages, with a clear public appeal. They assumed obligations in that they accepted the challenge of translating fiction into art in accordance with high standards. They raised uncomfortable questions. Most of all, they became more and more involved, entangled and enmeshed, bringing innovative practices into the completion of the project and enhancing human-nature complicity. The vitality, vivacity and energy released by the

engagement with the artistic processes of translation were a tonic that enthused artists and workshop leaders alike. "What comes out at the other end of the journey, which could have enhanced or embellished or transformed what [I]'ve just done", is "really liberating" (Dowsett in *Focus Group 2*, 2023, 00:13:43.63-00:14:14.00). The liberty to act also shifted some of the artists' view on activism, as they worked to elicit positive action.

As communication about climate change has reached an impasse, translation offers new communicative frames to redress the imbalance caused by broken links and crossed wires. Translation was the frame that enabled artists to approach climate-related topics in a "really powerful" way (Waterlow in *Focus Group 3*, 2023, 00:2:28.24-00:2:33.49) and respond to an array of green-conscious reflections. Translation was the hands-on action taken to transform the stories into artwork, the device used to propagate messages around climate change and, especially, the turbine activated to convert raw materials into energy. Source texts and translations obtained a non-hierarchical, joint first place in the workshops. On the one hand, the Source Texts served as a roadmap to "channel your thinking" (Ripley in *Focus Group 5*, 2023, 00:07:43.70-00:08:6.53) and shape the artists' eco-conscious reflections into their visual language; on the other, the process of translation acted as a platform to bounce ideas back and forth and echo concerns and responses to the climate crisis.

Presenting scientific facts or delivering news about climate change is not enough to elicit a tangible response, not even for those who care. Delivering verbal information entails a one-way transfer, positing the lay publics as a passive receiver of messages, not as interlocutor. The translation imbued with ethical principles and entangled with material practices is not a one-way transfer of information. It is a multi-directional system leading to individualized responses, meaning-making and co-creation of knowledge for a better and healthier future.[9]

**Bionote:** Eliana Maestri holds a PhD from the University of Bath and is now Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies at the University of Exeter. Her research interests centre on translation, gender, mobility and visual culture. Her body of work includes volumes on *Female Filiations* (2022, with C. Horvath) and *Translating the Female Self across Cultures* (2018). Other recent publications comprise: *Embodied and Experiential Immersion into Transculturality* (in a volume edited by A. Regagliolo, 2023); and *Visualizing Spatialization at a Crossroads between Translation and Mobility* (in a volume

[9] **Funding and ethics statement:** this work was supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. All participants gave written informed consent.
**Disclosure Statement:** no potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

edited by L. Polezzi, C. Burdett and B. Spadaro, 2020). Her latest work focuses on ecotranslation, supported by a UoE AHRC-IAA award (2024), an Arts Council England grant (2022-2023) and UoE Open Innovation Platform Translational Fundings (2022; 2023). Maestri is also one of the core faculty members of the VIU Summer School: *Linguistic Landscapes: Using Signs and Symbols to Translate Cities*.

**Author's address:** E.MAESTRI@exeter.ac.uk

**Acknowledgements**: I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Arts Council England for the financial support given towards the realization of my project. My gratitude also goes to all the members of the 'COP' team for showing me what it means to care for the planet and contributing to my project with dedication and collegiality. Cecilia Mañosa Nyblon, Dr Sally Flint, Prof. Rosa Barciela, Prof. Peter Stott, Prof. Ian Fussel, Prof. Reza Zamani, Prof. Justin Dillon, Dom Jinks, Sarah Campbell and Dr Fatma Sabet have been – and continue to be – a source of inspiration and support. They have provided precious input, laying the foundations of 'We Still Have a Chance' and working hard to secure the success of '12 Stories for 12 Days of COP27'. In particular, I am indebted to Prof. Hugh Roberts, 'COP' team member and former Director of Research and Impact (Department of Languages, Cultures and Visual Studies, the University of Exeter), for his generous support, brilliant ideas, continuous care and good humour and, especially, for believing in me. I am grateful to my reviewers and also to my colleague Prof. Maria Scott, for their helpful feedback on the latest versions of this article. Last but not least, thank you from the bottom of my heart to the Devon and Exeter Institution, Exeter Phoenix, Theo Moye, George Barron, Simon Ripley and all the Double Elephant members and artists. I am grateful for their time, creativity and passionate commitment. Without them, this project would not have been possible. It is thanks to them that I think we still have a chance.

# References


### Primary sources
### Focus Groups

Barron G., Anderson D. and Cann E. 2023. *Focus Group 1 with Maestri E.*, 1 March.
Ripley S., Dowsett M. and Nash E. 2023. *Focus Group 2 with Maestri E.*, 2 March.
Barron G., Furby S. and Waterlow K. 2023. *Focus Group 3 with Maestri E.*, 6 March.
Ripley S., Wetten K. and Wyllie S. 2023, *Focus Group 4 with Maestri E.*, 16 March.
Ripley S., Owen V. and Brampton-Greene D. 2023, *Focus Group 5 with Maestri E.*, 5 April.

### Prints

Anderson D. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Brampton-Greene D. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Cann E. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Dowsett M. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Furby S. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Martin B. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Nash E. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Owen V. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Waterlow K. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.
Wyllie S. 2023, Exeter Phoenix, Exeter.

### Collection of short stories

Flint S. (ed.) 2022, *We Still Have a Chance*, University of Exeter Green Futures, Exeter.

### Secondary sources

Armstrong A.K., Krasny M.E. and Schuldt J.P. 2018, *Communicating Climate Change: A Guide for Educators*, Cornell University Press/Comstock Publishing Associates, Ithaca/London.
Aron A.R. 2023, *The Climate Crisis: Science, Impacts, Policy, Psychology, Justice, Social Movements*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Barad K. 2007, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.
Bashir N.Y., Lockwood P., Chasteen A., Nadolny D. and Noyes I. 2013, *The Ironic Impact of Activists: Negative Stereotypes Reduce Social Change Influence*, in "European Journal of Social Psychology" 43 [7], pp. 614-626.
Bassnett S. 2011, *Reflections on Translation*, Multilingual Matters, Bristol/Buffalo/Toronto.
Bennett K. 2022, *The Unsustainable Lightness of Meaning: Reflections on the Material Turn in Translation Studies and Its Intradisciplinary Implications*, in Dionísio da Silva G. and Radicioni M. (eds.), *Recharting Territories: Intradisciplinarity in Translation Studies*, Leuven University Press, Leuven, pp. 49-73.
Berkobien M. 2020, *(E)co-Translation: Toward a Collective Task*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
Bilfinger L., Brummernhenrich B. and Jucks R. 2024, *The Effects of Fear Appeals on Reactance in Climate Change Communication*, in "Journal of Experimental Social Psychology" 115, Article 104666, pp. 1-9.
Bitschnau M. 2024, *Seeking Attention, Provoking Reactance: Radical Climate Activism*

*After COVID-19*, in "European View" 23 [1], pp. 80-86.
Blumczynski P. 2023, *Experiencing Translationality: Material and Metaphorical Journeys*, Routledge, London/New York.
Boria M., Carreres Á., Noriega-Sánchez M. and Tomalin M. (eds.) 2020, *Translation and Multimodality: Beyond Words*, Routledge, London/New York.
Boria M. and Tomalin M. 2020, *Introduction*, in Boria M., Carreres Á., Noriega-Sánchez M. and Tomalin M. (eds.), *Translation and Multimodality: Beyond Words*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 1-23.
Brownlie S. 2022, *The Roles of Literature and the Arts in Representing the Migrant and Migration,* in Brownlie S. and Abouddahab R. (eds.), *Figures of the Migrant: The Roles of Literature and the Arts in Representing Migration*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 3-20.
Bruce J.A. and McKee K.E. 2020, *Pedagogy: Developing Advocate Identities*, in Bruce J.A. and McKee K.E. (eds.), *Transformative Leadership in Action: Allyship, Advocacy & Activism*, Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds, pp. 149-162.
Bruhn J. 2021, *Towards an Intermedial Ecocriticism*, in Elleström L. (ed.), *Beyond Media Borders, Volume 2: Intermedial Relations among Multimodal Media*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp. 117-148.
Caimotto M.C. 2023, *Climate Changes and Sustainability,* in Caimotto M.C. and Raus R. (eds.), *Lifestyle Politics in Translation: The Shaping and Re-Shaping of Ideological Discours*e, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 124-145.
Castro P. and Rosa M. 2023, *Understanding the Paradoxical Effects of (Environmental) Activists and Their Discourses: When and How Are They Penalized for Seeking Change?*, in "Environmental Communication" 17 [7], pp. 740–758.
Connelly H. 2019, *Beyond Representation:* Translation Zone(s) *and Intersemiotic Translation*, in Campbell M. and Vidal R. (eds.), *Translating across Sensory and Linguistic Borders: Intersemiotic Journeys between Media*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, pp. 217-245.
Cornelio D.M. 2017, *New Possibilities for Translation: Care Theory as Criteria for Negotiation*, in "Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts" 3 [3], pp. 291-303.
Cronin M. 2017, *Eco-Translation: Translation and Ecology in the Age of Anthropocene*, Routledge, London/New York.
Cronin M. 2019a, *Eco-translation*, in Washbourne K. and Van Wyke B. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translation*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 482-494.
Cronin M. 2019b, *The (In)Humanity of Translation*, in "The Translator" 25 [3], pp. 189-203.
Davidson D.J. 2024, *The Role of Cynicism in Social Responses to the Climate Emergency*, in "Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World" 10, pp. 1-14.
Desblache L. 2020, *Translation, Natural History and Music: Thinking Communication beyond the Verbal*, in Taivalkoski-Shilov K. and Poncharal B. (eds.), *Translating the Voices of Nature / Traduire les Voix de la Nature*, Éditions québécoises de l'oeuvre, Montreal, pp. 207-229.
Doyle J. 2024, *Practicing Care Through Creative and Collaborative Climate Communication*, in Pezzullo P.C. (ed.), *Environmental Communication as Care*, Special Issue of "Environmental Communication" 18 [1-2], pp. 28-34.
Flower L. 2008, *Community Literacy and the Rhetoric of Public Engagement*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale.
Fraunhofer H. 2023, *Translating Plants: A Starting Point*, in Beattie P., Bertacco S. and

Soldat-Jaffe T. (eds.), *Time, Space, Matter in Translation*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 39–52.
Gould R.R and Tahmasebian K. (eds.) 2020, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London/New York.
Holmes D.C. 2020, *Introduction to the* Research Handbook on Communicating Climate Change, in Holmes D.C. and Richardson L.M. (eds.), *Research Handbook on Communicating Climate Change*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK/Northampton, MA, pp. 1-20.
Holmqvist G., Roxberg Å., Larsson I. and Lundqvist-Persson C. 2019, *Expressions of Vitality Affects and Basic Affects during Art Therapy and their Meaning for Inner Change*, in "International Journal of Art Therapy" 24 [1], pp. 30-39.
Huang J. and Guo H. 2024, *When a Bleak Future Comes Closer: Interaction Effects of Emotion and Temporal Distance Framing in Climate Change Communication*, in "BMC Psychology" 12, Article 677, pp. 2-16.
Hunter-Doniger T. 2020, *The A² Curriculum ARTvocacy and Autonomy: Giving a Voice to the Next Generation*, in "Art Education" 73 [4], pp. 37-43.
Hutcheon L. 2006, *A Theory of Adaptation*, Routledge, New York/London.
IPCC 2023, *Summary for Policymakers*, in Core Writing Team, Lee H. and Romero J. (eds.), *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 1-34.
Johnston J. and Gulliver R. 2022, *Public Interest Communication*, The University of Queensland, St Lucia, Qld.
Jones C., Hine D.W. and Marks A.D.G. 2017, *The Future is Now: Reducing Psychological Distance to Increase Public Engagement with Climate Change*, in "Risk Analysis" 37 [2], pp. 331–341.
Kibele K., Rosa M. and Obaidi M. 2023, *How Different Types of Environmentalists Are Perceived: Changing Perceptions by the Feature*, in "Frontiers in Psychology" 14, Article 1125617**,** pp. 1-18.
Kohn A. and Weissbrod R. 2023, *Multimodal Experiences Across Cultures, Spaces and Identities*, Routledge, London/New York.
Køppe S., Harder S. and Væver M. 2008, *Vitality Affects*, in "International Forum of Psychoanalysis" 17 [3], pp. 169-179.
Koskinen K. and Pokorn N.K. (eds.) 2021, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Ethics*, Routledge, London/New York.
Kress G. 2020, *Transposing Meaning: Translation in a Multimodal Semiotic Landscape*, in Boria M., Carreres Á., Noriega-Sánchez M. and Tomalin M. (eds.), *Translation and Multimodality: Beyond Words*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 24-48.
Kutlaca M., van Zomeren M. and Epstude K. 2020, *Friends or Foes? How Activists and Nonactivists Perceive and Evaluate Each Other*, in "PLoS ONE" 15 [4], Article e0230918, pp. 1-19.
Lambert J. 2023, *Translation Ethics*, Routledge, London/New York.
Latkin C., Dayton L., Bonneau H., Bhaktaram A., Ross J., Pugel J. and Latshaw M. W. 2023, *Perceived Barriers to Climate Change Activism Behaviors in the United States among Individuals Highly Concerned about Climate Change*, in "Journal of Prevention" 44 [4], pp. 389–407.
Lejano R.P., Tavares-Reager J. and Berkes F. 2013, *Climate and Narrative: Environmental Knowledge in Everyday Life*, in "Environmental Science and Policy" 31, pp. 61-70.
Littau K. 2011, *First Steps towards a Media History of Translation*, in "Translation

Studies" 4 [3], pp. 261-281.
Littau K. 2023, "*Just Ask the Stones": Eco-translation, Natural History and Geomedia*, in Alonzi L. (ed.), *History as a Translation of the Past: Case Studies from the West*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, pp. 167-189.
Maestri E. 2024, *Art as Generosity*, in Coppola F. (ed.), *Five Letters* Cinque Lettere: *J, K, W, X, Y*, Mildura Arts Centre, Mildura, pp. 6-13.
Marais K. 2022, *Introduction: What Does It Mean to Translate?*, in Marais K. (ed.), *Translation Beyond Translation Studies*, Bloomsbury Academic, London, pp. 1-14.
Markowitz E.M. and Guckian M.L. 2018, *Climate Change Communication: Challenges, Insights, and Opportunities*, in Clayton S. and Manning C. (eds.), *Psychology and Climate Change: Human Perceptions, Impacts, and Responses*, Elsevier, Cambridge, MA, pp. 35-63.
Merino-Benítez T., Bojórquez-Tapia L.A., Miquelajauregui Y. and Batllori-Sampedro E. 2024, *Navigating Climate Change Complexity and Deep Uncertainty: Approach for Building Socio-Ecological Resilience Using Qualitative Dynamic Simulation*, in "Frontiers in Climate" 6, Article 1331945, pp. 1-21.
Moriggi A., Soini K., Franklin A. and Roep D. 2020, *A Care-Based Approach to Transformative Change: Ethically-Informed Practices, Relational Response-Ability & Emotional Awareness*, in "Ethics, Policy & Environment" 23 [3], pp. 281-298.
Moser S.C. and Dilling L. 2011, *Communicating Climate Change: Closing the Science-Action Gap*, in Dryzek J.S., Norgaard R.B. and Schlosberg D. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 161-174.
Murunga M., Pecl G.T., Ogier E.M., Leith P., Macleod C., Kelly R., Corney S., Van Putten I.E., Mossop D., Cullen-Knox C., Bettiol S., Fox-Hughes P., Sharples C. and Nettlefold J. 2022, *More Than Just Information: What Does the Public Want to Know About Climate Change?*, in "Ecology and Society" 27 [2], Article 14, unpaginated.
Otieno C., Spada H., Liebler K., Ludemann T., Deil U. and Renkl A. 2014, *Informing About Climate Change and Invasive Species: How the Presentation of Information Affects Perception of Risk, Emotions, and Learning*, in "Environmental Education Research" 20 [5], pp. 612-638.
Parsons E.C.M. 2016, *"Advocacy" and "Activism" Are Not Dirty Words – How Activists Can Better Help Conservation Scientists*, in "Frontiers in Marine Science" 3, Article 229, pp. 1-6.
Pezzullo P.C. 2024a, *On Environmental Communication as a Care Discipline*, in Pezzullo P.C. (ed.), *Environmental Communication as Care*, Special Issue of "Environmental Communication" 18 [1-2], pp. 1-7.
Pezzullo P.C. (ed.) 2024b, *Environmental Communication as Care*, Special Issue of "Environmental Communication" 18 [1-2].
Phillips M. 2015, *Re-ethicizing Corporate Greening? Ecofeminism, Activism and the Ethics of Care*, in Pullen A. and Rhodes C. (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Ethics, Politics and Organizations*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 51-66.
Phillips M. 2016, *Embodied Care and Planet Earth: Ecofeminism, Maternalism and Postmaternalism*, in "Australian Feminist Studies" 31 [90], pp. 468-485.
Phillips M. 2019, *"Daring to Care": Challenging Corporate Environmentalism*, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 156 [4], pp. 1151-1164.
Polezzi L. 2022, *Translation*, in Burns J. and Duncan D. (eds.), *Transnational Modern Languages: A Handbook*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, pp. 305-312.
Pym A. 2012, *On Translator Ethics: Principles for Mediation Between Cultures*, John

Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia.
Raja U.S. 2024, *Exploring Virtual Reality as a Potential Care Technology*, in Pezzullo P.C. (ed.), *Environmental Communication as Care*, Special Issue of "Environmental Communication" 18 [1-2], pp. 76-81.
Reeves K. 2018 [1999], *The Re-vision of Printmaking*, in Pelzer-Montada R. (ed.), *Perspectives on Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing Since 1986*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp. 71-82.
Roberts H.G.A., Barciela R., Flint S., Fussell I., Maestri E., Mañosa Nyblon C., Marple A., Sabet F. and Stott P. 2023, *New Narratives for a Healthy Planet: Creative Writing and Art Projects Reveal* We Still Have a Chance, in "The Lancet Planetary Health" 7 [8], pp. 646-647.
Rushton E.A.C. 2024, *Responding to the Moral Complexities of Climate Change Education Through Intergenerational Dialogue in Teacher Education*, in "Journal of Moral Education" 54 [1], pp. 94-106.
Scerbo R. 2021, *Ecoartivism in Times of Climate Change and Toxic Waste Emergencies*, in "Confluencia" 36 [2], pp. 141-158.
Shread C. 2023, *Ecological Approaches*, in Meylaerts R. and Marais K. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation Theory and Concepts*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 113-125.
Taylor C. 1998, *Language to Language: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Italian/English Translators*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Tipton R. 2024, *The Routledge Guide to Teaching Ethics in Translation and Interpreting Education*, Routledge, London.
Tymoczko M. 2010, *Translation, Resistance, Activism: An Overview*, in Tymoczko M. (ed.), *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA.
Vidal Claramonte M.C.Á. 2022, *Translation and Contemporary Art: Transdisciplinary Encounters*, Routledge, London/New York.
Washbourne K. 2019, *Ethics*, in Washbourne K. and Van Wyke B. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Literary Translation*, Routledge, London/New York, pp. 399-418.
Weisberg R. 2018 [1986], *The Syntax of the Print: In Search of an Aesthetic Context*, in Pelzer-Montada R. (ed.), *Perspectives on Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing Since 1986*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, pp. 56-68.
Weissbrod R. and Kohn A. 2019, *Translating the Visual: A Multimodal Perspective*, Routledge, London/New York.
Yusuf J.-E. (Wie) and St. John III B. (eds.) 2022, *Communicating Climate Change: Making Environmental Messaging Accessible*, Routledge, London/New York.

## Websites

Double Elephant Print Workshop and Screenprint Studio n.d., *Double Elephant Print Workshop and Screenprint Studio*. https://www.doubleelephant.org.uk/ (14.09.2025)
Oxford English Dictionary 2025, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Oxford University Press. https://www.oed.com (15.07.2025).
University of Exeter Green Futures 2022, *We Still Have a Chance*. https://greenfutures.exeter.ac.uk/we-still-have-a-chance/ (15.09.2025).

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 167-193
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p167
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# THE PERFORMATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE SITE OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN *CALL ME BY YOUR NAME* Translating queer *fuck* into Chinese

RAY WANG
HONG KONG METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

**Abstract** – André Aciman's highly acclaimed English queer novel, *Call Me by Your Name* (*Call* 2007), won the Lambda Literary Award for Best Gay Fiction in 2007. The novel has been translated into four Chinese editions; two editions in simplified Chinese published by two publishing houses in the Chinese mainland and two in traditional Chinese issued by a Taiwanese publisher. Applying the descriptive framework of verbal camp (Harvey 2000) and incorporating the three modes of translation proposed by Marc Démont (2017) in queer literary texts, the article conducts a textual comparative study of the term *fuck* across six instances in the four Chinese editions published in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in 2009, 2012, and 2018. This article seeks to answer the following questions: How is the term *fuck* rendered differently in the four translations? In what ways are these translations shaped by social and political contexts? What are the socio-political implications of these renditions? The comparative study will highlight shifts in translations across various cultural and political contexts and discuss their ideological implications.

**Keywords**: *Call Me by Your Name*; verbal camp; translating queer texts; socio-political implications.

## 1. *Call Me by Your Name* and its Chinese translations

Set in northern Italy during the summer of 1983, *Call Me by Your Name* unfolds retrospectively through the first-person perspective of Elio, a 17-year-old precocious American-Italian Jewish boy with a strong sense of curiosity. It chronicles the development of same-sex desires between Elio and Oliver, an older American-Jewish academic guest, who is seven years Elio's senior. Oliver is welcomed as a summer guest by Elio's father, Professor Perlman, for a six-week homestay, during which Perlman assists the young scholar in revising his manuscript about Heraclitus.

*Call Me by Your Name*, authored by André Aciman, was first published in 2007 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Notably, the novel received the Lambda Literary Awards (LLA)[1] for Best Gay Fiction in the same year of its

[1] Established in 1989, the Lambda Literary Awards (LLA) serves as a platform dedicated to identifying and celebrating LGBTQ books and their authors. To honor exceptional LGBTQ

publication. Additionally, it was nominated as a bestseller by major publications such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. Since its initial publication, the novel has been republished several times both in the United States and in the UK. On Book Marks, an American review aggregator, the novel received overwhelmingly positive reviews, with no "mixed" or "pan" ratings, indicating a consensus of "rave" and "positive" reviews.[2] The novel holds a rating of over four stars out of five on both Goodreads and Amazon,[3] with the former at 4.1 from 501,170 ratings and the Kindle version on Amazon at 4.6 from 42,268 ratings. Its popularity is further evidenced by its extensive global circulation, having been translated into multiple languages by renowned publishers worldwide.

Among them, *Call Me by Your Name* has attracted critical acclaim and commercial success across Chinese-speaking communities. Figure 1 sets out the publication details of the novel and its four Chinese translations. For the convenience of this comparative study, *Call Me by Your Name* will be referred to as the ST (source text) or "*Call*" in this article. Its Chinese translations will be indicated as follows:

TT1:《以你的名字呼唤我》(*Call Me by Your Name*) (2009) by Rye Field Publishing Company (Taiwan);

TT2:《以你的名字呼唤我》(*Call Me by Your Name*) (2018) by Rye Field Publishing Company (Taiwan);

TT3:《请以你的名字呼唤我》(*Please Call Me by Your Name)* (2012) by China Friendship Publishing Company (Chinese mainland);

TT4:《夏日终曲》(*The Summer Finale*) (2018) by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (Chinese mainland).

| Publishing Year | Place of Distribution | Author / Translator | Publishing Houses | Book Title (my back translation) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2007 | US | André Aciman | Farrar, Straus and Giroux | *Call Me by Your Name* |
| 2009 | Taiwan | Wu Yanrong | Rye Field Publishing Company | 以你的名字呼唤我 (*Call Me by Your Name*) |
| 2012 | The Chinese mainland | Quan Jing (pseudonymous) | China Friendship Publishing Company/ Everight Book | 请以你的名字呼唤我 (*Please Call Me by Your Name*) |
| 2018 | Taiwan | Wu Yanrong | Rye Field Publishing Company | 以你的名字呼唤我 (*Call Me by Your Name*) |

literary works, the LLA seeks to enhance the visibility and recognition of these works within the broader literary landscape.

[2] https://bookmarks.reviews/reviews/call-me-by-your-name/, last accessed on May 24, 2024.

[3] Goodreads is a subsidiary of Amazon, both of which offer book reviews and recommendations to book lovers worldwide.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2018 | The Chinese mainland | Wu Yanrong | Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press/ Shanghai Yazhong Culture Communication Company | 夏日终曲 (*The Summer Finale*) |

Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, the first Chinese translation of *Call* (TT1) was published by the Taiwanese publisher Rye Field Publications (RFP), a division of Cité Publishing Limited, one of the leading publishers in Taiwan. The title, 以你的名字呼喚我, was by Taiwanese translator Wu Yanrong, who holds degrees in diplomacy, communication and philosophy from the US and Taiwan. Her academic background demonstrates her strong competence in intercultural and bilingual communication. Wu has produced numerous translations, including works on Christianity, world religion, fiction, autobiography, and art. Following Wu's translation, the first Chinese mainland translation (TT3) was produced by the pseudonymous translator Quan Jing, whose identity is not substantiated in the publisher's introduction. This translation was published in 2012 by China Friendship Publishing Company (CFPC) and distributed by Everight Book, a privately owned book distributor in Guangzhou, China. Although CFPC lacks an official website, a brief introduction on Baidu Baike[4] describes it as a publisher that helps people in the Chinese mainland understand the social development and customs of Hong Kong and Taiwan, thus promoting cultural exchanges across the areas.

Lured by the global commercial success of the film adaptation of *Call* in 2017, Taiwan and the Chinese mainland recognized the pink economic gains[5] and released two editions with new cover designs based on the film, both translated by Wu Yanrong. This echoes what Rahul Rao (2015) has termed as "global homo-capitalism" in the post-neoliberalist era. To capitalize on the film's success, the new Taiwanese edition (TT2) was released in January 2018, followed closely by the Chinese mainland version a month later. The quick release of the Taiwanese edition was achieved without changing the original publisher, distributor, or translator. Due to the successful film adaptation and the positive market response to the 2009 edition, along with Taiwan's inclusive LGBTQ+ culture and support from the

[4] "Zhongguo Youyi Chuban Gongsi", Baike, Baidu, last modified November 27, 2022, http://baike.baidu.com/item/中国友谊出版公司/10748943.

[5] The pink economy encompasses the economic activities and consumer spending associated with the LGBTQ+ community, including goods, services, and entertainment tailored to their needs. As a recognized market segment, it garners attention from businesses, marketers, and policymakers who seek to tap into the economic potential of this queer community.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), this reprint translation became a bestseller.

It is important to note that the new Chinese edition (TT4) is not an original mainland translation; it is based on the Taiwanese translation and retains the same translator but features a new title (夏日终曲 – *The Summer Finale*, my translation) on the cover. This decision likely reflects a strategic choice by the publisher to acquire the copyright rather than seek a new local translator, ensuring that they did not miss out on the market boom created by the film. The book has enjoyed great popularity in the Chinese mainland since its release and reached its 24th printing by November 2022. This popularity indicates the publisher's ability to accurately identify the homo-capitalist opportunity and predict the profitability of the book. Moreover, this second edition in the Chinese mainland represents a collaboration between Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) – one of the most important state-owned publishers of foreign language books and audio-visual products based in the Chinese capital Beijing – and its private partner publisher, Shanghai Yazhong Culture Communication Company (YCCC) which originally proposed and curated the translation project and also holds the exclusive right to publish this edition and the right to use the cover image. In the Chinese mainland, joint publishing partnerships between private publishers and state-owned publishers are quite common and typical. In this case, FLTRP serves as the gatekeeper, as state-owned publishers are the only legal and qualified entities authorized to apply for the International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) issued by the National Press and Publication Administration (administered by the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee since 2018). This reliance on state authorization means that private publishers' ability to publish is heavily influenced by the government. Consequently, books circulating publicly in China are subject to strict government distribution rules and government control, including government censorship and self-censorship. Thus, the publication of the new translation edition of *Call* in the Chinese mainland is not only a profit-driven project but also an endeavor that operates within the framework of state censorship.

Applying the descriptive framework of verbal camp (Harvey 2000) and incorporating the three modes of translation proposed by Marc Démont (2017) in queer literary texts, the article conducts a textual comparative study of the term *fuck* across six instances in the four Chinese editions published in the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in 2009, 2012, and 2018. It seeks to answer the following questions: How is the term *fuck* rendered differently in the four translations? In what ways are these translations shaped by social and political contexts? What are the socio-political implications of these renditions? The comparative study will highlight shifts in translations across various cultural and political contexts and discuss their ideological

implications.

## 2. The performative and transformative use of camp

As Butler (2009) points out, gender performativity refers to the enactment of gender. In other words, gender is not an inherent characteristic but is performed by individuals, especially in an exaggerated form, as illustrated by drag, which Butler ([1990] 2006) uses to demonstrate gender performativity within the dominant cisgender heteronormative regime. Butler ([1990] 2006, 1993) challenges the notion of fixed and essentialized gender and sexuality, deconstructing binary gender identities. She posits that gender identity is an ongoing process of "doing" gender in multifaceted, unstable ways that are subject to regulatory forces. Inspired by Butler's concept of gender performativity, queer theorists further develop the theory to interpret queer performances as intentional actions that are "self-reflexively constituted to unsettle heteronormalcy" (Meyer 1994, as cited in Waitt, Gorman-Murray 2008, p. 187). Moreover, queer performances subvert the straight/gay binary, offering a framework to explore gender and sexuality as "fluid, discontinuous, and improvisational" (Waitt, Gorman-Murray 2008, p. 187). This perspective allows for a re-evaluation of camp as a gay language.

An early attempt to understand 'camp' can be traced to Christopher Isherwood's novel *The World in the Evening* (1954), in which two characters discuss the nuances of camp. One character, Stephen Monk, suggests that camp can be viewed as a mannerism that carries "an underlying seriousness", "expressing what is basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance" (Isherwood 1954, p. 125). In other words, queer individuals do not make fun of what matters to them; they *have fun with* what matters to them. Susan Sontag, in her *Notes on Camp* (1999), claims that "the essence of camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration" (p. 53). Camp thus becomes associated with "a certain mode of aestheticism", "one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon" and is "simultaneously marginal as well as apolitical which prioritizes style over content" (Sontag 1999, p. 54). Both Isherwood and Sontag portray camp as an exaggerated form of enjoyment or aesthetic expression embraced by queer communities. However, as Booth rightly notes, their conceptualizations of camp are somewhat loosely defined and come with limitations. Isherwood's definition is "suggestive rather than limiting" (Booth 1999, p. 66), and his novel "never quite put its finger on camp" (1999, p. 67), while Sontag "cast[s] the net too wide" (1999, p. 68). Booth redefines camp as a form of self-representation "committed to the marginal with a commitment greater than the marginal merits" (p. 69).

To explore the political implications and potential subversiveness of camp, I turn to Babuscio, who emphasizes the potential political function and subversive agency of camp persona. In *The Cinema of Camp*, Babuscio investigates the interwoven connection between camp and gay sensibility. He defines gay sensibility "as a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream; a heightened awareness of certain human complications of feeling that spring from the fact of social oppression" (Babuscio 1999, p. 118). Camp, in this context, embodies "elements in a person, situation, or activity that express, or are created by a gay sensibility" (Babuscio 1999, p. 118). Significantly, due to homosexual deviation from the dominant hetero-patriarchal culture, camp serves to "challenge the status quo" (1999, p. 120) and is considered "something of a proto-political phenomenon" (1999, p. 127).

To further explore the politics and agency of camp, I also reference Harvey's critique of Sontag and Booth, which argues that they neglect a crucial facet by confining camp solely to aesthetic evaluation, thereby overlooking the potential of gender and sexual discourses to convey political points (Harvey 2000, p. 241). Harvey provides a framework for interrogating the political valences and disruptive possibilities inherent within camp aesthetics, moving beyond a narrow focus on aesthetic judgment. He emphasizes the need to distinguish between surface and identity, deconstructing the cultural aestheticism of camp that Sontag particularly engages with. Harvey highlights the agency of the camp persona as an "intent-driven performer" with subversive political potential, applying the concept to literary and translation studies. He views fiction as a medium for expressing camp and examines the translation of camp to highlight boundaries and priorities across different cultural contexts. His research describes camp as a linguistic phenomenon evident in "fictional representations of homosexual men's speech" (Harvey 1998, p. 295). More specifically, it is seen as "a typical semiotic resource of gay men in their critique of straight society and in their attempt to carve out a space for their difference" (1998, p. 311). In this sense, camp talk represents a distinctive use of language among homosexuals that is closely linked to their identity construction.

Following this line of inquiry, I will draw on Harvey's (2000) descriptive framework for verbal camp, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. This framework describes a unique way of using language that "allows speakers the potential to manipulate the language system and discourse context" (Harvey 2000, p. 243). Building on Babuscio's (1999) four characteristics of camp – theatricality, humor, irony, and aestheticism – the verbal camp strategies outlined in Harvey's framework are strategically employed by homosexuals to politically deconstruct the entrenched dichotomies of "homosexuality" versus "heterosexuality" and "natural" versus "unnatural".

Harvey identifies four strategies of verbal camp: paradox, inversion, ludicrism, and parody. Each strategy can generate various textual features, such as double-entendre, motivated naming practices, "high" culture, and "low" experience, expected gender markers, and parody of aristocratic mannerism through foreign languages.

| Strategy | Surface features |
|---|---|
| Paradox *through* | incongruities of register<br>explicitness and covertness<br>'high' culture and 'low' experience |
| Inversion *of* | gendered proper nouns<br>grammatical gender markers<br>expected rhetorical routines<br>established value system |
| Ludicrism *by* | |
| Heightened language awareness *through* | motivated naming practices<br>puns/word-play |
| Pragmatic force *through* | double-entendre |
| Parody *of* | |
| Aristocratic mannerism *by* | use of French |
| Femininity *by* | innuendo<br>hyperbole<br>exclamation<br>vocatives |

Figure 2
A descriptive framework for verbal camp (Harvey 2000, p. 243).

Harvey notes that, since the 1960s, the connection between camp and homosexuality has been evident in both heterosexual and non-heterosexual works. This connection distinguishes between semiotic resources/linguistic practices and homosexual identity and "binds homosexual men together sub-culturally and allows them to articulate a critique of hegemonic structures and values" (Harvey 2000, p. 243). Thus, language can be understood as a site of gender performativity, where specific usages serve as the means through which gender is performed.

To explore how homosexuality is represented in the source text through verbal camp and how it is reframed in the Chinese-speaking communities through translation, I will focus on the renditions of the term *fuck* as case studies for this article. The novel's central character, Elio, engages in self-exploration of sexuality, including gender inversion and parodies of femininity, through his camp uses of *fuck*, which serve as both performative and transformative sites of male homosexuality. I will first conduct a descriptive analysis, followed by a comparative study of the camp

features of *fuck* in the four Chinese editions, using Marc Démont's model of three modes of queer translation to examine how the translations reinforce or challenge the dominant ideologies in the target cultures.

## 3. Marc Démont's three modes of translating queer texts

To facilitate analysis, I draw on Marc Démont's discussion in his work *On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts* (2017), where he proposes three modes of translating queer texts: misrecognizing, minoritizing, and queering translation (see Figure 3 below). Démont posits that a queer text can be misrecognized in terms of either content or context. Through his case study of a translation of a Spanish poem into English, he identifies two features of misrecognized content: either homosexual desire is transformed into homosocial desire, or gender identifications are normalized and straightened. In either case, queer desire becomes non-recognized. Both features aim to camouflage homosexual affection, replacing it with "bromance", or brotherhood romance. The misrecognition of context involves neglecting the different semantic connotations that a word or phrase can evoke in a cross-cultural setting. Démont illustrates this with the translation of "bear culture" from English into Italian. In American gay culture, "bear" implies a burly, often hairy man embodying untamed masculinity, while in Italian culture this meaning is decoupled and replaced with chauvinism. Démont concludes that a "close" translation, by which he means a literal translation, "unleashes a chain of unanticipated associations in the receiving culture… it does not bring us 'closer' to the original" (Démont 2017, p. 159). In summary, the misrecognition mode either ignores homosexual expressions of affection by rewriting them beyond recognition or by disregarding cross-cultural differences.

The minoritizing mode should not be confused with Deleuze and Guattari's (1986) notion of minoritization. According to Démont, the minoritizing mode loses connotations in translation by focusing exclusively on denotation. In other words, the multi-layered connotations of queerness embedded in the source text are lost, reduced to a unidimensional text. Focuses are rendered to only one dimension of the text, thereby attenuating the "potential discontinuity, associations, and uncouplings around which the original text, and its own sexual rhetoric, are organized" (Démont 2017, p. 162). Whereas the misrecognition mode suppresses queerness, the minoritizing mode assimilates it by "transforming it into a fixed explicit form" in order to "serve the goal of identity politics at the expense of queerness" (Démont 2017, p.163).

Queering translating, in contrast, does not suppress or assimilate but rather acknowledges and recreates queerness, aiming as it does to "respect the

queer meaning potential of a text" (Démont 2017, p. 166). This is achieved through acknowledgment, meaning the full disclosure of queerness in the source text, rather than its removal, rewriting, or reduction to denotations in the target text. To acknowledge queerness, translators can draw on the connotative semantic web of a queer word or phrase to achieve a fuller rendering, rather than limiting themselves to denotative equivalence. This involves acknowledging the multiple levels of meaning in a queer text, including both the denotative and connotative semantic webs that encompass literal meaning, homosexual undertones, and cultural shifts. Moreover, Démont argues that queerness can be recreated through a translator's note to counteract the reductive or essentializing effects of the misrecognizing and minoritizing approaches. By acknowledging and recreating queerness in translation, the latent potential queerness embedded in the source text becomes more visible and explicit for target readers.

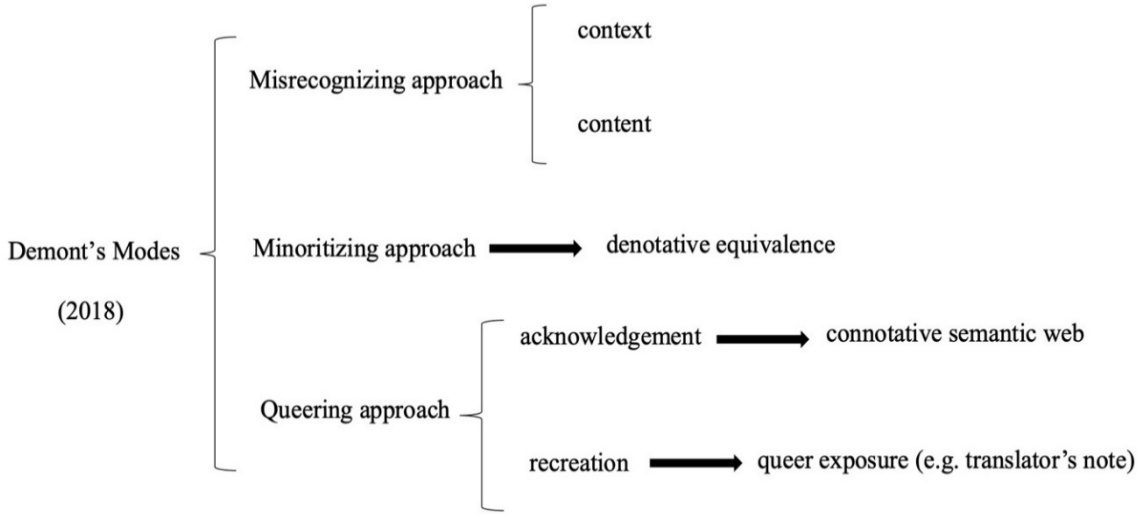


Figure 3
Marc Démont's modes of queer translation.

## 4. *Fuck* as a site of homosexual gender performativity in the ST

The word *fuck* serves as a significant element of verbal camp in the novel, allowing Elio to manipulate language to performatively express his gender inversion and parody femininity as he navigates his sexual identity. This Section analyses the Chinese translations of Elio's use of *fuck*, which appears

six times in the source text.[6] These instances include Elio's homosexual fantasies, explicit homosexual acts, and the famous scene where he fantasizes about Oliver masturbating with a peach.

The ST uses Elio's first-person narrative to directly engage with his reflections, feelings, and emotional experiences. By using the word *fuck*, the text not only showcases Elio and Oliver's homoerotic behavior but also appropriates the term in performative ways that shift it away from its reductive, essentializing, dichotomizing associations of the top/bottom duality[7] in same-sex relationships. This Section will focus on analysing the linguistic features of the examples where *fuck* is used. The analysis will explore how Elio's use of *fuck* destabilizes gender roles in his homosexual relationship with Oliver. In these cases, language is used to challenge established norms regarding gender relationships, such as Elio's real-life sexual behavior and sexual fantasies involving the peach. Furthermore, Elio's parody of femininity is examined through emphatic utterances that include repetition, italics, exclamation marks, and vocative terms. I will discuss in detail the effects of the term *fuck* and its significance, including homosexual bonding and parody of femininity (examples 1 and 2); heightened homoerotic desire compared to heterosexual intimacy (example 3); and the clandestine, passionate nature of the homosexual desire experienced by Elio and Oliver (examples 4 and 5).

**Example 1**
I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". (p. 144)

Here, Elio expresses his desire for Oliver outside the post office the day after their first lovemaking. In a soft, intimate, whispering voice, Elio addresses Oliver as "Elio" and asks Oliver to penetrate him. Addressing each other by first name, initially suggested by Oliver, is now adopted by Elio in an erotic plea. On the one hand, he seeks Oliver's attention; on the other hand, he aims to establish their erotic relationship. The use of the vocative expresses intimacy and is a textual feature that attracts "the attention of an addressee, in

[6] All the examples analysed in this study are compiled in the attached Annexes at the end of this article. Annex 1 presents a parallel corpus consisting of the ST, alongside TT1 and TT3, accompanied by my back-translations to facilitate comparative textual analysis. Annex 2 offers a similar parallel corpus comprising the ST, TT2, and TT4, with my corresponding back-translations. Within the TT columns, the Chinese mainland and the Taiwanese editions are juxtaposed to enable direct comparisons between the respective translations.

[7] Top/bottom duality refers to the identities characterized by the preferences of penetration in gay anal intercourse and homosociality. Top and bottom are the dominant versus submissive role-plays, with top for the dominant penetrator/the castrating and bottom for the submissive penetrated/the castrated. The essentialized and reductive duality corresponds to the stereotypical male/female gender roles.

order to establish or maintain a relationship between this addressee and some proposition" (Lambrecht 1996, p. 267). Moreover, "Fuck me, Elio" subverts the conventional image of the male aggressor in sexual intercourse, suggesting that Elio, as a biological male in the patriarchal-heterosexual context, is not merely the one asking to be "fucked". This inversion of male virility into female submissiveness disrupts established gender norms.

Additionally, *fuck* serves as a site of camp performance for Elio's parody of femininity, challenging the prevailing heterosexual gender value system. This can be illustrated through Harvey's framework, where the parody of femininity is achieved by, among other means, using "an emphatic style of utterance" such as "hyperbole, exclamation and vocative terms" (2000, p. 253), marked by typographical devices such as italics and punctuation.

**Example 2**
…till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!* while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach… (p. 147)

In this instance, the camp use of *fuck* reflects Elio's strategies for achieving gender inversion and parodying femininity. It arises in Elio's stream of consciousness as he masturbates with a pitless peach, imagining sexual intimacy with Oliver while referring to him as "Elio". This echoes the title of the novel, suggesting that they are each other's lost halves. As he penetrates the peach, Elio imaginatively transforms himself into the peach, which symbolizes the female genitalia. As an object of queer aesthetics, the peach becomes a vehicle for Elio's parody of the female experience. At the same time, the peach, which is performatively penetrated and figuratively castrated by Elio, serves as an incarnation of Oliver, with whom Elio becomes one.

Elio's parody of femininity is achieved through exclamations and typographic features. The italicized sentence "*Harder, I said!*" mimics an affectionate feminine moan, reinforcing Elio's transformation into the feminine role in his fantasy. Additionally, Elio's masochistic propensity as a performer of femininity manifests in his repeated commands ("*Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said*!"), followed by an exclamation mark suggesting an orgasmic moan. This barrage of commands reveals an "intensity" that is "identified as feminine" because it is fundamentally "reactive" (Harvey 2000, p. 255).

**Example 3**
Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia. (p. 145)

Throughout the novel, the term *fuck* is used when referring to Elio's homosexual desire. Here, Elio's intense homosexual desire for penetration by Oliver is highlighted through the vulgar verbal camp of "fuck me", contrasting with the more tender "make love to" regarding his heterosexual relationship with Marzia. This juxtaposition suggests that Elio uses his heterosexual encounters as a cover for his strong homosexual desires, reinforcing his spirited homosexual impulses.

**Example 4**
I said a drink, not a fuck. (p. 236)

**Example 5**
*Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* (p. 243)

Examples 4 and 5, both from the novel's final section, entitled "Ghost Spots", show Elio's responses to learning about Oliver's heterosexual family in the United States years after their separation. The term *fuck* expresses the clandestine yet passionate bond with Oliver, contrasting the fierce emotions of same-sex intimacy with the subdued articulations of heterosexual desire. The term *fuck* evokes Elio's (and Oliver's) memories of their shared homosexual past, heightening homoerotic desire through inversion of gender roles and parody of femininity.

Elio's camp parodies, expressed through his performative use of *fuck*, constitute "an exhibition of stylized effeminacy" (Booth 1999, p. 69) that "diverge[s] from the supposed male verbal norm" (Harvey 2000, p. 53). These examples illustrate that *fuck* serves various purposes in a queer context: fostering homosexual bonding, subverting gender norms, intensifying non-normative desire, and articulating the fervent nature of homosexual desire. As Harvey (2000) posits, these intent-driven acts of political subversion challenge hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality.

## 5. Translating queer *fuck* into Chinese

In this Section, I examine how the homoerotic term *fuck* is translated in the four Chinese editions in order to identify: (1) the translation shifts observed in the features of queer *fuck* between the ST and the TTs, (2) the different modes used in translating the queer *fuck*, and (3) the ideological implications of the translated texts in the contexts of the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

### *5.1.* Fuck *as a site of homosexual gender performativity in TT1 and TT3*

As discussed in the previous Section, the homosexual theme of the original text is highlighted by the use of the more vulgar and violent term *fuck* in reference to homosexual acts between the male protagonists, contrasting with the mild and "civilized" description of heterosexual intercourse. Through the rhetorical use of *fuck*, Elio unobtrusively subverts the stereotypical gender role of the 'offensive' male in sexual activity and transforms himself into the feminine, submissive, and masochistic 'bottom' role in his same-sex erotic life.

In TT1, the term "fuck" is retained and rendered closely in register and other stylistic features, though the translation strategy is also shaped by queer politics in Taiwan. In all but one instance, "fuck" is translated as "操", a polyphonic character in Mandarin, pronounced as either cāo or cào. According to the *Revised Mandarin Chinese Dictionary*[8] published by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, 操 (cāo), as a verb, means "to take or hold", "to master", "to drive", "to speak a certain language or to use a certain accent", "to practice or exercise", while, as a noun, it can mean "moral" or "an exercise designed to build physical strength" (Note: words in quotation marks are my back-translations). Moreover, the word 操 can be pronounced alternately as cào, particularly when it is used to refer to integrity or moral principles in a person's conduct. However, in modern spoken Chinese, the original meaning of the pronunciation 操 cào is frequently repurposed as a homophone for 肏 cào ("to penetrate" or "to fuck") to circumvent the direct use of the latter, which is deemed excessively vulgar and graphic in its lexical form, i.e., the upper part of the character 入 means "to enter or to penetrate" while the bottom means "the flesh". Noteworthy, it is particularly pointed out by《中国现代汉语大词典》(*Modern Chinese Dictionary*) (2018) that 肏 cào is commonly used to suggest male-initiated sexual behavior towards females, which indicates a cisgender heterosexual perspective in lexicography. The re-appropriated homophone 操 cào, while less vulgar in its lexical presentation than 肏 cào, is used as either profanity or a curse in spoken Chinese. I contend that translating the English term *fuck* into the Chinese 操 cào not only retains the explicit and vulgar connotations related to sexual activities but, more importantly, also acknowledges the performativity embodied in the term *fuck* in the ST. This strategy represents Elio's homoerotic gender inversion and parodies of femininity as he navigates

[8] https://dict.revised.moe.edu.tw/dictView.jsp?ID=9774&la=0&powerMode=0#col4.

sexual becoming. The performativity of 操 cào lies in its subversive and queering power, challenging cisgender heterosexual agenda when used in the context of Elio's homoerotic fantasies.

**Example 1**
ST: I said a drink, not a fuck. (p. 236)
TT1: 我是說喝一杯, 不是說上個床 (p. 240)
(Back-translation: I meant a drink, not getting on the bed with you)

In this instance, the translator opts for a more literary and euphemistic approach by using "上個床" (back-translation: "to get onto the bed" or "to have sex"). Although this translation recognizes the queer sex implied by *fuck*, it lacks consistency with the recurrent queering of *fuck* translated as the performative 操 cào. By reducing the performative *fuck* to a uni-dimensional meaning of simply having sex, this minoritized translation ignores Elio's endeavor to revisit his homosexual history with Oliver through the queering of *fuck* employed as a recall in this specific context.

However, TT1 also adds layers of connotations. Traditional gender dynamics of a dominant male versus a submissive female in heterosexual relationships are transposed onto the homosexual roles of top and bottom.

**Example 2**
ST: I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". (p. 144)
TT1: 就在他進郵局前, 我湊近他耳邊輕聲說: "操我吧, 艾里歐。" (p. 147)
(Back-translation: Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio")

In this example, the ST "fuck me" is rendered into a plea "操我吧" in TT1. The modal particle "吧" in the imperative can serve as a euphemism, prompting the listener to affirm what the speaker has said and inviting the listener to engage in the dialogue as an active participant (Xu 2003). By transforming an imperative into an inviting plea, TT1 not only acknowledges the top/bottom dynamic between Elio and Oliver but also reinforces stereotypical portrayals of a 'weak' bottom and a 'strong' top, thereby parodying traditional gender roles of a dominant male and submissive female.

**Example 3**
ST: …till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!* while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach… (p. 147)
TT1:…直到我以為自己聽到桃子對我說：**操我, 艾里歐, 用力操我**。又過了一會兒，我在心裡搜尋奧利弗的影像，這時又聽到：**我說了, 給我用力一點！**不是有這樣一個故事嗎？故事裡的腳色變成了桃子。(p. 149)
(Back-translation: …Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: **Fuck me, Elio,**

> **fuck me harder**. After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver, when I heard it again, **I said, harder!** Isn't there a story about that? There is a story where the character turns into a peach)

A similar translation strategy of both acknowledging and recreating queerness can be observed in Example 3, where Elio has sexual fantasies about Oliver while masturbating with a peach. In terms of queer acknowledgment, the typographic features such as italics and capitalization – analysed earlier in the ST – contribute to Elio's parody of femininity during his imaginary dialogue with Oliver. To capture the queer essence, TT1 substitutes the typographic elements of the ST with the stylistic conventions of the target language, notably altering the font style within the sentence to evoke comparable parodic effects. Meanwhile, the back translation underscores its recognition and faithful representation of the feminine sexual commands and proactive reactions present in the ST.

Regarding the recreation of queer representation, Elio's mental search for "images from Ovid" is notably reframed in Example 3 as "我在心裡搜尋奧利弗的影像" (p. 149), meaning "I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver" (my back-translation). The ST draws an analogy between Elio's homosexual desire for Oliver and his Ovidian fantasy of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne. In Greek mythology, the nymph Daphne swears to remain chaste and flees from Apollo, who pursues her relentlessly. When Apollo almost catches her, Daphne prays to her father to destroy her face, and she is soon transformed into a laurel tree. However, Apollo continues to long for Daphne and passionately kisses the tree bark. Similarly, while masturbating, Elio fantasizes about the peach substituting Oliver, just as Apollo fantasizes about Daphne as the laurel tree. In this case, TT1 subverts the heterosexual desire depicted in the Ovid myth by replacing the name "Ovid" with "Oliver", the object of Elio's homoerotic fantasies. This queering of the original myth transforms the heterosexual encounter into homosexual eroticism. Additionally, this queer rewriting enhances the accessibility of the ST analogy for the target audience, particularly for those unfamiliar with the Ovidian narrative from Greek mythology, by overtly inscribing queer connotations into the reference. Thus, the queer visibility rendered in the target text has not only been preserved but also enhanced by acknowledging and recreating potential or existing homosexuality in literary texts. Significantly, TT1 offers another possibility of explicitation for improving homosexual visibility beyond the translator's note. Explicitation is defined by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995, p. 9) as a "procedé qui consiste à introduire dans LA des précisions qui restent implicites dans LD, mais qui se dégagent du contexte ou de la situation" (English translation: the process of introducing into TT what remains implicit in ST, but which emerges from the

context or situation). For example, the externalization of Elio's queer fantasies about Oliver in the peach scene.

> **Example 4**
> ST: *Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing* The Seven Last Words of Christ *each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* (p. 243)
> TT1:
> 喔，對了，這個人當時跟你們差不多大，大部分時間，他白天都靜靜地改編《耶穌臨終七言》，晚上卻偷偷溜進我房間，我們操到腦汁都流出來了。(p. 247)
> (Back-translation: *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out*)

TT1's explicitation is in its more graphic representation of sexual intercourse, rendering "fuck our brains out" as "操到腦汁都流出來了", meaning "fucked until our brain juice flowed out" (my back-translation). This translation goes even further than the ST in representing same-sex carnal desire, thus underlining the novel's queer theme. TT1's queering approach extends upon Gideon Toury's concept of the adequacy norm, which emphasizes the accurate rendering of the ST (Toury 1980). As demonstrated in the preceding analysis, TT1 acknowledges the inherent queerness of the ST by retaining Elio's linguistic features of gender inversion and his parodic performance of femininity. Furthermore, TT1 operates on a second level of queering translation, recreating queerness through the strategic use of a modal auxiliary device, typographical techniques, and explicitation strategies, thereby reinforcing the queer intimacy shared between the protagonists. This two-pronged approach adheres to the adequacy norm by preserving the source text's queer valences and extending them through a supplementary queering of the translation process itself. TT1's queering approach reconstitutes Toury's norm of adequacy by foregrounding queer representations not merely as elements to be accurately rendered, but as catalysts for a queering of the translational apparatus itself. Translation has thus become a transformative site that not only refracts queer modes of signification but also constitutes a mode of queer world-making in its own right.

In contrast, TT3, published in the Chinese mainland, adopts a drastically different approach, where the translation of Elio's queer attempts at gender inversion even pushes the boundaries of Démont's definition of misrecognition. According to Démont (2017), misrecognition refers to a

translation approach that either transforms same-sex desire into homosocial desire or straightens and normalizes gender identifications. TT3 entirely leaves out the translation of the queerness embedded in the previously mentioned examples: "*Fuck me, Elio*" (p. 144) and "*Fuck me Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said*!" (p. 147). This indicates that the subversive strategy that challenges the power relation embedded in heteronormativity is entirely erased in this edition, within the context of strict censorship mechanisms in the Chinese mainland.

Censorship in China, according to Tan (2015), regulates translation practices in several ways, including total blocking or preventing, partial blocking, and reduced censorship, as a form of state and non-state interference with the influx of global knowledge and ideas. Based on the three forms of information surveillance, Tan (2017) proposes three translation typologies corresponding to the means of regulation in the Chinese context: non-translation, partial translation, and full translation. The non-translation strategy used in the above cases represents the extreme end of the three typologies. Non-translation, as defined by Tan, refers to "'translations' that have not been made, or 'translations' that do not exist at all" (Tan 2017, p. 48). According to the *Provisional Regulations concerning Appraising Obscene and Sexual Publications* (my translation) (1988)[9] (hereafter *Regulations*), the term "obscene publications" refers to those that propagate obscene acts or arouse people's sexual desires. Such publications are deemed sufficient to deprave and degenerate ordinary people, lacking any artistic or scientific value. Item 6 Article 2 of the *Regulations* lists publications of sexual perversion, including those with homosexual content, as one of the statutory offenses, those which are "salaciously and concretely describing the sexual acts of homosexuals or other perverted acts, or concretely describing violence, abuse or humiliating acts related to perversion". Although homosexuality was decriminalized in 1997 and de-pathologized in the Chinese mainland in 2001, this provision is still in force and controls the Chinese publishing industry to this day. It can be argued that TT3's non-translation of "*Fuck me, Elio*" (p. 144) and "*Fuck me Elio, fuck me harder,* and after a moment, *Harder, I said*!" (p. 147) is a case of either state censorship or self-censorship by translators, publishers, editors, or commissioners, as content related to homosexuality and gender norm violations is likely to be viewed as "politically subversive", "ideologically reactionary", "morally unhealthy" and "obscene" in the Chinese mainland (Tan 2017, p. 49).

Alongside the misrecognized subversive gender performance in the above expressions, the thematic vocative term "Elio", through which Elio

[9] https://law.pkulaw.com/Readbugui/863cdb56cb85845bbdfb.html/

addresses Oliver by his own name, diminishes the narrative's resonance with the novel's queer undertone. For TT3, a more significant consideration is that in order to publish the translation in the Chinese mainland, the publisher must comply with stringent censorship regulations, often at the cost of toning down or even removing the ST's portrayal of homosexuality and gender inversion. The legislation concerning censorship is subject to varying interpretations by the authorities due to the vague boundaries drawn between obscenity and non-obscenity within the *Regulations*, coupled with the lack of legal clarification as to why homosexuality is considered obscene (Wang, Bao 2023). Given this vagueness, the following example illustrates TT3's ambivalent treatment of homosexual and heterosexual desire in translation.

**Example 5**
ST: Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia. (p. 145)
TT3:
不到半小时前，我还渴望着奥利弗，这会儿我却准备跟玛琪雅做爱。(p. 136)
(Back-translation: Less than half an hour ago, I was longing for Oliver, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia)
TT1:
不到半小時前，我要奧利佛操我，這會兒我卻準備跟瑪琪雅做愛。(p. 148)
(Back-translation: Less than half an hour ago, I wanted Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia)

TT3 does not omit this passage but dilutes the explicit homosexual desire into homosociality,[10] misrecognizing the queerness embedded in the ST. The misrecognition strategy adopted by TT3 becomes evident when comparing its translation to TT1's rendition: the term 操我 ("fuck me") in TT1 is replaced and toned down by 渴望 ("long for") in TT3. In contrast to the completely erased stronger homosexual desire of Elio, TT3 acknowledges and preserves his heterosexual eroticism. In essence, the translation diminishes Elio's homoerotic longing for Oliver while amplifying his heterosexual desire. Interestingly, the strategy of removing homoerotic elements in translation is not uniformly applied in TT3. The following example (Example 6) in TT3 illustrates the maintenance of the explicitation approach, the same strategy adopted in TT1.

**Example 6**
ST: *Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ*

[10] The concept refers to a "social preference for members' of one's own gender, but does not necessarily imply erotic attraction" (Britton 1990, p. 423).

> *each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* (p. 243)
>
> TT3:喔,对了,这个人当时跟你们差不多大,大部分的时间,他白天都静静地改编《耶稣临终七言》,晚上却偷偷溜进我房间,我们操到脑汁都流出来了。(p. 230)
>
> (Back-translation: *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing The Seven Last Words of Christ each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out*)

Given the aforementioned vagueness in the censorship legislation, mainland publishers, particularly private entities such as CFPC (the publisher of TT3), find themselves caught between state regulations and the lucrative market of the pink economy. In response to this situation, they tactically employ ambivalent coping strategies to leverage this vagueness to their advantage where possible. This argument will be further explored in the next Section through the analysis of the TT4 translation.

### *5.2.* Fuck *as a site of homosexual gender performativity in TT2 and TT4*

The two Taiwanese translations, TT1 and TT2, are entirely identical in content (see the full Annexes). Thus, the new movie tie-in edition (2018) should not be seen as a retranslation of the ST, but rather as a reprint by the same publisher, drawing from its 2009 edition. This reprinted translation is tailored to the target market's preferences, capitalizing on the success of the film adaptation of the novel. The favorable reception of the 2009 edition, which saw 14 printings as of April 2017, combined with Taiwan's inclusive LGBTQ+ culture under the DPP's governance, has ensured that the reprint translation remains a bestseller in the book market.

TT4 was published in China by the Beijing-based state publishing house FLTRP in collaboration with a private publishing house in Shanghai, during a time when state censorship concerning texts considered potentially queer was tightening in China since the mid-2010s (Wang, Bao 2023). Initially, the regulatory regime targeted audio-visual media, including online streaming platforms, TV shows, and cinematic releases. It was not until 2016 that homosexual romance began to be banned on Chinese TV screens. An official document from the China Television Drama Production Industry Association stipulated that "no television drama shall show abnormal sexual relationships and behaviors, such as incest, same-sex relationships, sexual perversion, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual violence, and so on". The following year, the China Netcasting Services Association (CNSA), an organization supervised by the State Administration of Radio, Film and

Television (SARFT), implemented the *Guidelines for the Content Review of Online Audio-visual Programs* (my translation). The *Guidelines* impose stringent restrictions on the circulation of online audiovisual content, in which homosexuality is categorized as "obscene pornography", "vulgar and low-level entertainment", and showing an "abnormal sexual relationship", juxtaposed with "incest, sexual perversions, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual violence".[11] Given this context, it is not surprising that the film adaptation of the ST was banned from the official screening at the 2018 Beijing International Film Festival in March by the government authority, i.e., the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China.[12] This reflects the Chinese government's tightening control over domestic cultural ideologies. Notably, the state publication of TT4 came only a month before the film screening was suspended, suggesting that the authorities are more worried about the easy accessibility and wider reach of this queer-themed film than the limited readership of the book release. Furthermore, the ISBN for the book is entirely controlled by the government. However, the fact that the Chinese mainland still permits state-run publishers to release translated novels with homosexual themes on the market indicates that the circulation of such themes has not been entirely halted. Instead, the government's attitude appears vague, echoing the official stance of "no encouraging, no discouraging, and no promoting" homosexuality (Lavin *et al.* 2017, p. xvi).

This ambiguous regulation surrounding homosexual depictions allows for interpretive flexibility, enabling the authorities to apply it in equivocal ways. Translators, editors, and publishers may strategically leverage this ambivalence to enhance profit and influence, as seen in the treatment of queer representations in TT3 and TT4. While TT4 does not omit sentences like TT3, there is no uniform standard of censorship across the translated texts. Instead, TT4 adopts a hybrid approach to rendering same-sex desire. This situational response to societal structures and censorship regimes parallels how BL (Boy's Love) fans have continually negotiated the Chinese government's negative stance towards danmei/BL dramas and fiction. When adapted BL dramas (*dangai*) emerged, fans coined "socialist brotherhood" to refer to same-sex friendships framed within celebrated socialist values (Ge 2022), thereby cloaking the actual male homosexuality. The de-gayifying translation strategy of transforming queer content into bromance directly responds to *dangai* dramas' use of "socialist brotherhood" to disguise gay male love.

[11] http://www.cnsa.cn/art/2017/6/30/art_1505_26038.html (14.08.2023).

[12] https://www.hk01.com/即时中国/173208/以你的名字呼唤我-中宣部掌权第一击-北京国际电影节突撤片 (04.02.2023).

**Example 7**
ST: I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". (p. 144)
TT4: 就在他进邮局前，我凑近他的耳边轻声说: "来吧, 埃利奥。" (p. 132)
(Back-translation: Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Come on, Elio")

The Chinese mainland translation in Example 7 demonstrates this pattern: "Fuck me" is mistranslated as the homosocial "come on", failing to capture the gender performativity and homosexual undertone of the ST. This misrecognized content transforms Elio's intense, non-normative desire into bromance. In addition to navigating censorship, some translations creatively respond to and are shaped by the dominant sexual ideology. By leveraging ambiguity and adopting hybrid strategies, translations negotiate restrictions while still subverting heteronormative frameworks. Though constrained by censorship and ideology, they find covert ways to represent non-normative desires. This nuanced discussion elucidates translations' situational agency in navigating hegemonic structures and normative discourses. In addition to the misrecognized queer content, TT4 also misrecognizes the nuances of the target cultural context, overlooking the varied semantic implications that a word or phrase can carry in a cross-cultural scenario.

**Example 8**
ST: …till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder,* and after a moment, *Harder, I said*! while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach… (p. 147)
TT4:...直到我以为自己听到桃子对我说：**埃里奥，用力**。又过了一会儿，我在脑海中搜寻奥维德作品里的形象时，又听到了：**我说过了，再用力点！**是不是有一个角色最后变成了桃子？(p. 135)
(Back-translation: …Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: Elio, harder. After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Ovid, when I heard it again, I said, harder! Did one of the characters end up as a peach?)

The translation of the peach scene in Example 8 exemplifies this pattern. Unlike TT2, which explicates the homosexual undertone in the ST by replacing Ovid's name with Oliver, TT4 completely ignores the target reader's potential unfamiliarity with the Roman poet by transliterating his name into Chinese without any footnotes to explain its cultural relevance to Elio's homosexual masturbation with the peach. Such transliteration "does not bring us 'closer' to the original" (Démont 2017, p. 159); rather, it distances the ST from TT4 readers and greatly increases the difficulty of comprehension experienced by readers. As Démont explains, the misrecognized context turns the "potential subversive content … into a conservative strategy to hide a queer sexuality" (2017, p. 159). Despite this,

the censorship of homosexual content in TT4 is inconsistent. TT4 appears to adopt the queering approach used in the Taiwanese translations TT1 and TT2 when translating "I was asking Oliver to fuck me and "we'd fuck our brains out" simply by changing the Taiwanese "操" (cào) for "干" (gàn), which are semantically synonymous in Chinese vernacular.

## 6. Conclusion

As shown in this article, the Taiwanese translations consistently employ a queering translation approach when confronting verbal camp. These translations not only recognize the queerness of the source text but also preserve Elio's linguistic nuances for gender reversal and femininity parody while enhancing queer visibility through explicitation. In contrast to the consistent queering translation approach followed by the Taiwanese translations, the two Chinese mainland editions, i.e., TT3 and TT4, adopt a hybrid approach that demonstrates an ambivalence toward queer gender performativity, inconsistent adherence to censorship mechanisms, and varying manipulation of queer content. However, TT3, published by the private publisher CFPC, seems to apply even stricter self-censorship regarding queerness than TT4, published by the state-run FLTRP. Given the strict but ambiguous legal boundaries defining pornography in the Chinese mainland and the increased state regulation over LGBTQ+ content, private publishers like CFPC bear greater responsibility for managing publication risks. For this reason, it is logical for CFPC to adopt stricter self-censorship measures to avoid potential violations of publishing laws. An extreme case can be found in TT3's "non-translation" (Tan 2017, p. 48) of one of Elio's queer attempts at gender inversion: "Fuck me, Elio" (p. 144) and "*Fuck me Elio, fuck me harder,* and after a moment, *Harder, I said!*" (p. 147).

In contrast, TT4 does not employ such an extreme non-translation strategy for the same sentences. Instead, TT4 censors and manipulates its translations by either misrecognizing the homosexual content as homo-social interactions or misrecognizing the target cultural context, leading to a disconnect between the source text and its readers. This disconnect complicates the recognition of the original same-sex desire for the readers. Nevertheless, these strategies are not consistently implemented in both Chinese mainland editions. Rather, ambivalent coping strategies are adopted to leverage the vagueness to their advantage when possible. For example, TT3 does not always employ the non-translation strategy concerning queer representations. Case studies reveal that TT3 also adopts a similar misrecognizing approach as TT4, reshaping homosexuality into homo-social interactions. Paradoxically, both editions concurrently retain the strategy of explicitation seen in the Taiwanese version regarding the graphic depiction of

homosexual intercourse in the original text. The ambiguous regulations and censorship mechanisms concerning portrayals of homosexuality in the Chinese mainland provide room for interpretations, allowing authorities flexibility in their application. Translators, editors, and publishers can tactically exploit this vagueness to enhance profits and impact, as demonstrated in how queer representations are handled in TT3's and TT4's translations of verbal camp. The discovery that Taiwan tends to embrace a more "queering" approach, whereas Chinese mainland publishers oscillate between "misrecognizing", "minoritizing" and "queering" strategies, illustrates how social activism or governmental control can shape translation practices.

**Bionote:** Dr. Ray Wang is a Lecturer in the Department of Humanities, Language and Translation at Hong Kong Metropolitan University. He holds a PhD in Translation Studies from Hong Kong Baptist University and is an experienced professional translator and subtitler. His research focuses on queer literary translation, queer popular culture, queer activism, multimodality in translation, and gender studies.

**Author's address:** rlhwang@hkmu.edu.hk

**Acknowledgements**: I am grateful to Hong Kong Baptist University for funding my PhD research under the Talent 100 PhD Scholarship Scheme, and to my PhD supervisors, Prof. Yau Wai-ping and Prof. Robert J. Neather of the Department of Translation, Interpreting, and Intercultural Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University, for their academic support of my PhD research. I would also like to extend my special thanks to the reviewers and editors for their valuable feedback on my manuscript.

## References


Aciman A. 2007, *Call Me by Your Name*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, United States.

Aciman A. 2007, *Call Me by Your Name*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, United States; trans. by Wu Y. 2009, *以你的名字呼唤我*，Rye Field Publishing, Taipei.

Aciman A. 2007, *Call Me by Your Name*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, United States; trans. by Quan J. 2012, *请以你的名字呼唤我*，China Friendship Publishing, Beijing.

Aciman A. 2007, *Call Me by Your Name*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, United States; trans. by Wu Y. 2018, *以你的名字呼唤我*，Rye Field Publishing, Taipei.

Acima, A. 2007, *Call Me by Your Name*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, United States; trans. by Wu Y. 2018, *夏日终曲*，Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing.

Babuscio J. 1999, *The Cinema of Camp (*Aka *Camp and the Gay Sensibility)*, in Cleto F. (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader,* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 117-135. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrp56.14.

Booth M.1999, Campe-toi!*: On the Origins and Definitions of Camp*, in Cleto F. (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 66-79. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrp56.9.

Britton D. M. 1990, *Homophobia and Homosociality: An Analysis of Boundary Maintenance*, in "The Sociological Quarterly" 31 [3], pp. 423-439. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4120971.

Butler J. 1993, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Routledge, New York/London.

Butler J. [1990] 2006, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York/London.

Butler J. 2009, *Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics*, "AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana" 4 [3], pp. i-xiii.

Deleuze G. and Guattari F. 1986, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. by Polan D., The University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Démont M. 2017, *On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts*, in Baer B.J. and Kaindl K. (eds.), *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer: Theory, Practice, Activism*, Routledge, New York, pp. 157-171.

Ge L. 2022, *Dual Ambivalence: The Untamed Girls as a Counterpublic*, in "Media, Culture Society" 44 [5], pp. 1021-1033.

*Guidelines for the Content Review of Online Audio-visual Programmes*, http://www.cnsa.cn/art/2017/6/30/art_1505_26038.html (07.10.2025).

Harvey K. 1998, *Translating Camp Talk: Gay Identities and Cultural Transfer*, in "The Translator" 4 [2], pp. 295-320.

Harvey K. 2000, *Gay Community, Gay Identity and the Translated Text*, in "TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction" 13 [1], pp. 137-165.

Harvey K. 2000, *Describing Camp Talk: Language/Pragmatics/Politics*, in "Language and Literature" 9 [3], pp. 240-260.

Isherwood C. 1954, *The World in the Evening*, Methuen, United Kingdom.

Lambrecht K. 1996, *Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representations of Discourse Referents* [Vol. 71], Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Lavin M., Yang L. and Zhao J. (eds.) 2017, *Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in The Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwan*, Hong Kong

University Press, Hong Kong.

*Provisional Regulations Concerning Appraising Obscene and Sexual Publications*, 1988. https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/1988/12/27/provisional-regulations-concerning-appraising-obscene-and-sexual-publications/ /https://law.pkulaw.com/Readbugui/863cdb56cb85845bbdfb.html (07.10. 2025).

Rao R. 2015, *Global Homocapitalism*, in "Radical Philosophy" 194, pp. 38-49.

Sontag S. 1999, *Notes on 'Camp'*, in Cleto F. (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 53-65. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrp56.8.

Tan Z. 2015, *Censorship in Translation: The Case of the People's Republic of China*, in "Neohelicon" 42 [1], pp. 313-339.

Tan Z. 2017, *Censorship in Translation: The Dynamics of Non-, Partial and Full Translations in the Chinese Context*, in "Meta: Journal Des Traducteurs/Meta: Translators' Journal" 62 [1], pp. 45-68.

Toury G. 1980, *In Search of a Theory of Translation*, Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University.

Toury G. 1980, *The Translator as a Nonconformist-to-be, or: How to Train Translators so as to Violate Translational Norms*, in Wilss W. and Poulsen S.O. (eds.), "Angewandte Übersetzungswissenschaft: Internationales Übersetzungswissenschaftliches Kolloquium an der Wirtschaftsuniversität", Århus Business School, Århus, Denmark, pp. 180-193.

Vinay J.P. and Darbelnet J. [1958] 1995, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais: Méthode de traduction*, Didier, Paris, trans. and ed. by Sager J.C. and Hamel M.J. 1995, *Comparative Stylistics of French and English: A Methodology for Translation*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia.

Waitt G. and Gorman-Murray A. 2008, *Camp in the Country: Re-negotiating Sexuality and Gender through a Rural Lesbian and Gay Festival*, in "Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change", 6 [3], pp. 185-207. https://doi.org/10.1080/14766820802647616.

Wang S. and Bao H. 2023, *'Sissy Capital' and the Governance of Non-Normative Genders in China's Platform Economy*, in "China Information", pp. 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X221147481.

Xu J. 2003, *Mondality Interpretation of the Tone Particle "吧"*, in "Journal of Peking University (Philosophy and Social sciences)" 40 [4], pp. 143-148.

Zhang K. 2018, *Modern Chinese Dictionary*, Shanxi people's Publishing House.

# Annexes

## I. Comparisons between the ST, TT1 and TT3

| Source Texts (ST) | (Target Texts) TTs | Back-translations (my translations) |
|---|---|---|
| I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". | **Taiwan (2009)**<br>就在他進郵局前，<br>我湊近他耳邊輕聲說：　"操我吧，艾里歐。" | Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2012)** | |
| …till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!* while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach… | **Taiwan (2009)**<br>…直到我以為自己聽到桃子對我說：操我，　艾里歐，用力操我。又過了一會兒，我在心裡搜尋奧利弗的影像，這時又聽到：我說了，<br>給我用力一點！不是有這樣一個故事嗎？故事裡的腳色變成了桃子。 | …Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder. After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver, when I heard it again, I said, harder! There is a story where the character turns into a peach. |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2012)** | |
| Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia… | **Taiwan (2009)**<br>不到半小時前，我要奧利佛操我，這會兒我卻準備跟瑪琪雅做愛。 | Less than half an hour ago, I wanted Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia. |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2012)**<br>不到半小时前，我还渴望着奥利弗，这会儿我却准备跟玛琪雅做爱。 | Less than half an hour ago, I was longing for Oliver, and now I am ready to make love to Marzia. |
| I said a drink, not a fuck. | **Taiwan (2009)**<br>我是說喝一杯，不是說上個床。 | I meant a drink, not a fuck. |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2012)**<br>我是说喝一杯，不是说上个床。 | I meant a drink, not a fuck. |
| *Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing* The Seven Last Words of Christ *each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* | **Taiwan (2009)**<br>喔，對了，這個人當時跟你們差不多大，大部分時間，他白天都靜靜地改編《耶穌臨終七言》，晚上卻偷偷溜進我房間，我們操到腦汁都流出來了。 | *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing* The Seven Last Words of Christ *each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.* |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2012)**<br>喔，　对了，<br>这个人当时跟你们差不多大，<br>大部分的时间，<br>他白天都静静地改编《耶稣临终七言》，　晚上却偷偷溜进我房间，<br>我们操到脑汁都流出来了。 | *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing* The Seven Last Words of Christ *each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.* |

## II. Comparisons between the ST, TT2 and TT4

| Source Texts (ST) | (Target Texts) TTs | Back-translations (my translations) |
|---|---|---|
| I came up to his ear as he was just about to enter the post office and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". | **Taiwan (2018)**<br>就在他進郵局前,<br>我湊近他耳邊輕聲說: "操我吧, 艾里歐。" | Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Fuck me, Elio". |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2018)**<br>就在他进邮局前，我凑近他的耳边轻声说: "来吧, 埃利奥" | Just before he entered the post office, I bent in next to his ear and whispered, "Come on, Elio". |
| …till I thought I heard it say to me, *Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder*, and after a moment, *Harder, I said!* while I scanned my mind for images from Ovid – wasn't there a character who had turned into a peach … | **Taiwan (2018)**<br>…直到我以為自己聽到桃子對我說：操我, 艾里歐, 用力操我。又過了一會兒，我在心裡搜尋奧利弗的影像，這時又聽到：我說了,<br>給我用力一點！不是有這樣一個故事嗎？故事裡的腳色變成了桃子。 | …Until I thought I heard peaches say to me: Fuck me, Elio, fuck me harder. After a while, I was mentally searching for an image of Oliver, when I heard it again, I said, harder! There is a story where the character turns into a peach. |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2018)**<br>…直到我以为自己听到桃子对我说，埃利奥，用力。又过了一会儿，我在脑海中搜寻奥维德作品里的形象时，又听到了：我说过了，再用力点！是不是有一个角色最后变成了桃子？ | …Until I thought I heard peaches say to me, Elio, harder. After a while, as I searched my mind for images from Ovid's work, I heard it again, I said, harder! Did one of the characters end up as a peach? |
| Barely half an hour ago I was asking Oliver to fuck me and now here I was about to make love to Marzia… | **Taiwan (2018)**<br>不到半小時前，我要奧利佛操我，這會兒我卻準備跟瑪琪雅做愛… | Less than half an hour ago, I wanted Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make love with Marzia... |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2018)**<br>不到半小时前，我还在要奥利弗干我，这会儿我却准备跟马儿齐亚亲热… | Less than half an hour ago, I was asking Oliver to fuck me, and now I am ready to make out with Marzia… |
| I said a drink, not a fuck. | **Taiwan (2018)**<br>我是說喝一杯, 不是說上個床。 | I meant a drink, not a fuck. |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2018)**<br>我是说喝一杯，不是说上个床。 | I meant a drink, not a fuck. |
| *Oh, and by the way, this man who was almost your age back then and who spent most of his days quietly transcribing* The Seven Last Words of Christ *each morning would sneak into my room at night and we'd fuck our brains out.* | **Taiwan (2018)**<br>喔，對了，這個人當時跟你們差不多大，大部分時間，他白天都靜靜地改編《耶穌臨終七言》，晚上卻偷偷溜進我房間，我們操到腦汁都流出來了。 | *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing* The Seven Last Words of Christ *each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.* |
| | **Chinese Mainland (2018)**<br>喔，对了，这个人当时跟你们差不多大，大部分的时间，他白天都在静静地改编《十字架上的基督临终七言》，晚上却偷偷溜进我房间，我们干到脑汁都流出来了。 | *Oh, by the way, this guy was about your age at the time, and he spent most of his days quietly transcribing* The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross *each morning while sneaking into my room at night, and we fucked until our brain juice flowed out.* |

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 195-207
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p195


# TRANSLATION AS REGENERATION
# On the Works of Paulette Nardal, Véronique Tadjo and Werewere Liking

NATAŠA RASCHI
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI URBINO "CARLO BO"

**Abstract** – The article presents three case studies: Paulette Nardal, who translated American texts for French-speaking authors of the Négritude, creating a connection between Black writers from three continents at the beginning of the 20th century; Véronique Tadjo, who wrote an African myth in French, self-translating it into English; and Werewere Liking, who mixes many African languages in her literary production, which is the result of living in Ky-Yi village in the Ivory Coast, where she has been hosting artists from all over Africa for more than thirty years. All of these are examples of women translators who were able to promote possible social, political and cultural change through their adaptation work, all of which is presented as a unique ethical translation project.

**Keywords**: cultural studies; interlinguistic translation; intersemiotic translation; self-translation; Black Francophone women.

## 1. Introduction

Studying linguistic phenomena is not enough when we approach translation: an in-depth study of the cultural universe where languages belong, placing language-cultures at the heart of the problem, is always necessary. No one has ever summarized the ultimate aim of such an operation better than Antoine Berman: "La traduction est mise en rapport ou elle n'est rien" (Berman 1984, p. 16). The verb *traduire* comes from the Latin prefix *trans-* (passage) and the verb *ducere* (*dux*, *ducis*); to lead, to carry and, therefore, to cross: this is the *mise en rapport* as movement and displacement where the etymology of the verb *to translate* lies. But what kind of *mise en rapport* do we talk about in the context of the cultural production from the southern hemisphere? This article provides food for thought by briefly investigating the translation activity of three French-speaking women who are emblematic of this hemisphere, especially for the breadth and originality of their production. Above all, they have been iconic for their *engagement* shown here by providing concrete case studies, in order to demonstrate the double dimension of *défense et illustration* of their cultural background. This refers

to a double dynamic which accounts for more than one global "south" and distinguishes "the south" from the global "north".

The case of French-speaking authors is very stimulating as they live and write in multilingual and multicultural contexts where French is nourished by constant mutations and encounters. One of the salient features of their production reflects on language and "sur la manière dont s'articulent les rapports [entre les] langues / littératures dans des contextes différents" (Gauvin 1997, p. 11) at the centre of their identity. From the verb *articuler*, which means above all *joindre* (connecter, enchaîner), important questions emerge about the act of translating by female authors who, in the cases investigated, experience not only a situation of *entre-deux*, but of *entre-plusieurs*. For this reason, the different modes of expression which are present in their art – never an end in itself, but rather a total art to be considered as discursive, artistic, musical, corporeal – determine the development of that "surconscience linguistique" about which Lise Gauvin speaks (Gauvin 1997, p. 11).

Linguistic and cultural plurality is precisely the *fil rouge* underpinning their productions, hence the difficulties in the act of translating, like a chess game so dear to Ferdinand de Saussure (Saussure 1995, p. 168) and later taken up by Umberto Eco in his *Introduzione* to *Esercizi di stile* (Eco 1983, p. 19). Because translation must not only *say* (an act understood in the sense of the horizontal dimension), but *make*, according to the idea made explicit by Henri Meschonnic (1999, p. 17). The task of translation is also to return textual, intertextual and extratextual elements, including that polyhedral complexity that leads back to the vertical dimension. It must transmit the progressive stratification of cultural polyphony, according to Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Thick Translation* (1993) and to Paul Bandia's studies when Bandia insists that "il faut accorder à l'éthique de la différence sa juste place dans la théorie et tenir compte des questions de la position traductive (translation position, ethics of location) et du contexte global d'échange culturel" (Bandia 2001, pp. 136-137). This is ethical in the sense of a profound knowledge, capable of passing through the "chair des mots" (Rancière 1998) for restitution that knows how to "construire des comparables" (Ricœur 2004, p. 10) and, in a final analysis, to outline a wider-ranging project that goes *Oltre l'Occidente* (Bollettieri Bosinelli, Di Giovanni 2009). Indeed, the reading of these three women's work allows us to glimpse the creation of a liminal space that preludes that form of transition dear to Édouard Glissant when he states "il n'est frontière qu'on n'outrepasse" (Glissant 2006, p. 16). Nowadays we still insist on claiming that "traduire, c'est aussi échanger, diffuser et véhiculer des idées, des histoires d'une région à d'autres du vaste monde comme contribution à son évolution" (Huerdo Moreno, Robert 2023, p. 26) and this is exactly what Paulette Nardal, Véronique Tadjo and Werewere Liking, as examples of activists-

translators, are able to offer.

## 2. Translation as multiplication: the case of Paulette Nardal

Originally from Martinique, Nardal ("Le François", 12 October 1896 – Fort-de-France, 16 February 1985) was the first of seven sisters (listed in order): Paule, known as Paulette, Émilie, Alice, Jane, Lucy, Cécile and Andrée, who distinguished themselves through study and commitment: "The seven Nardal sisters were among the very first women of African descent to be educated in the French colonial system. The Nardals organized social reforms, published widely and influenced some of the most important politicians, artists and intellectuals of their time" (Musil Church 2013, p. 375). What they did was an example of activism.

In 1920, at the age of twenty-four, Paulette entered the Sorbonne to study English and was the first Black woman to graduate from that prestigious university. Once in Paris, she realized her solitude, in the sense that there were no spaces for Black people to congregate and, for this reason, she opened the doors of her house located in Clamart, in the Parisian banlieue,[1] in the period between the two World Wars (1920-1939), starting an important literary salon which served as a springboard for magazines to which she herself would actively contribute (Umoren 2018, p. 17). On Sunday afternoons, artists who were the force behind the Harlem Renaissance could meet. These included pan-Africanist activist Marcus Garvey and the Jamaican novelist Claude McKay, together with the couple Suzanne and Aimé Césaire, the politician Félix Eboué, the young Léopold Sédar Senghor, the 1921 Prix Goncourt winner René Maran and many young Black intellectuals fighting for their civil rights. In particular, the Nardal sisters

> surent offrir l'occasion de s'exprimer librement aux écrivains issus de ces îles et surtout à ceux des États-Unis connaissant peu le français. Démultipliant ainsi auprès des Haïtiens et des Africains, peu entraînés à parler l'anglais, les valeurs révolutionnaires que leur livrait la lecture des poèmes, essais et romans américains. (Achille 1992, p. x)

Paulette Nardal spoke good English, read Black American authors in their original language, was endowed with an extraordinary critical sense, wrote about literature, politics, gospel music, was very active and enterprising, and was above all a pioneer in urging unity among Blacks, whether they were African, African American or Antillean (Edwards 2003, p. 119). Several

[1] 7, rue Hébert.

testimonies of her work as an interpreter remain, in particular a conversation between the Martinican René Maran and the Jamaican Marcus Garvey, a difficult undertaking in which she had to co-construct a discourse between Jamaican English and French languages from Africa and the West Indies and incorporate the distant political situations of those who belonged to different colonial empires. Paulette Nardal, however, is mainly remembered for her work as a translator. In 1927, she contacted the Parisian Éditions Payot to propose a translation of Alain LeRoy Locke's work, *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, published in America in 1925, which she did not manage to sign. In January 1928, she joined the team of the pan-Africanist journal *La Dépêche Africaine* (1928-1956). Around October 1931, Paulette and Jane Nardal, together with their cousin Louis Thomas Achille, founded the bilingual magazine *La Revue du Monde Noir / The Revue of the Black World* dedicated to the condition of Black people in the world, their art and literature, the Creole language, the complex Creole society and the trauma of slavery.[2] Each issue, starting from the first of November, is presented bilingually, with each page divided into two columns, French on the left and English on the right. This is curious given that both English-speaking and French-speaking authors are present in the different issues, almost as if French were the language of departure, when this priority is not always accurate. This editorial adventure, which consisted of six issues, ended in April 1932, officially due to economic difficulties, but essentially because the Ministère des colonies, one of the financiers of the enterprise, renounced its participation as it saw a certain danger to its supremacy in the dominated territories.

Paulette Nardal's work is intimately linked to the magazine she founded. She worked there as a secretary, as a translator from French into English and vice versa, as well as being the author of two articles. The first, *Une noire parle à Cambridge et à Genève*, published in the debut issue, is dedicated to Grace Walker (*La Revue du Monde Noir* 1, pp. 40-41). The second, *Éveil de la conscience de race*, is important for three reasons (*La Revue du Monde Noir* 6, pp. 343-349). The author argues for the uniqueness of the experience of oppression faced by Black women. She openly manifests the intention to "créer entre les Noirs du monde entier, sans distinction de nationalité, un lien intellectuel et moral qui leur permette de se mieux connaître" and above all, referring to Latin culture, she clearly states "nous entendons dépasser le cadre de cette culture / we want to go beyond this culture" (*La Revue du Monde Noir* 6, p. 349), making explicit the need for cultural independence, well ahead of its time.

[2] The chosen title evokes the *Revue des Deux Mondes* founded in 1829 and still active because of the common objective of proposing a space for the comparison of European and American ideas.

Nardal crossed continents, she created a physical and mental space for herself, and produced a form of oral and written dialogue. Maryse Condé, interviewed in 2004 for the film *Paulette Nardal, la fierté d'être une négresse*, adds that Nardal was a revolutionary, because she was the initiator of Black culture and the first to oppose the collective imagination of the Black woman as an erotic object. Her work made it possible for the founders of Négritude to meet and encounter important works of this American movement that she had discovered, had studied and translated. Thanks to her multiple activities as scholar, researcher, translator and "ferrywoman" of texts and ideas from one side of the ocean to the other, from one language to another, she nourished the pages of her magazine, because every single text had to be shared.

And yet, despite all this, Nardal returned to Martinique in 1939, but she was not given any credit. Césaire never admitted his debt to intellectuals of her calibre, she was not mentioned by Senghor in his 1948 *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française*, nor was she a participant in the two *Congrès des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs* in Paris and Rome.[3] This was a rather significant oversight for Nardal capable of occupying multiple places and marking occasions for encounters between languages and cultures, precursor of Black feminist activity and godmother of Négritude, whose portrait would not be complete without paying tribute to this *passeuse de cultures* "dont la personnalité mêlait hérédité africaine, éducation familiale, culture créole, formation universitaire et chic parisien" (Achille 1992, p. xvi).

## 3. Translation as weaving: the case of Véronique Tadjo

Perfectly at ease with her father's Baoulé language, her mother's French and the English of her upbringing, Véronique Tadjo (b. 1955) grew up in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. She studied Anglophone literature at the Sorbonne University in Paris and, after several years spent first in Kenya and then in South Africa, now lives in the UK.

A prolific author and multifaceted artist, poet and novelist, painter and illustrator of children's and young people's books, Tadjo boasts a production that is attentive to the socio-cultural problems that afflict the African continent as a whole; from the recovery of the founding myths to the value of masks, from the importance of everyday objects, such as the polychrome and variegated fabrics of the *pagnes*, to the African legends that populate orality.

[3] The two *Congrès des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs* in Paris (19-22 September 1956) and Rome (26 March-1st April 1959) have been published by Présence Africaine (see also Mouralis, Raschi, 2019).

Her work is faithful to the idea of the transversality of disciplines and the sharing of knowledge as well as experience. Talking about translation in the case of Tadjo allows us to focus on the ethical issues raised by her effort to recover ancient knowledge in order to transfuse it into the present day and thus create connections. It can share and create bridges between the past and the present, for work that goes beyond the dichotomous definitions of prose and poetry, orality and writing, in order to exalt research committed to strong pedagogical values. The linguistic path that has led Tadjo from the research and rewriting of the founding myths to the colourful illustrations, realized with a decisive stroke, combined with an innate talent and great care for the texts, make her authorship, particularly original, evident in her books for children. In them, the *fil rouge* is always about Harmony lost and then found again on condition that Man listens to Nature to re-conquer it.

Writing for Tadjo means recovering, modulating and reinterpreting the ancient founding memory, rewriting it according to the needs of contemporaneity. Often, among her protagonists, we find figures from the African oral tradition, both Anglophone and Francophone, in particular in the initial volume dedicated to *Mamy Wata et le monstre*, or Mummy Water in the English-speaking world (Tadjo 2000). The character is a sort of siren, exalted for her magical powers of salvation, about whom Tadjo writes in French and then self-translates into English on the same page. In addition to her personal commitment as author and illustrator, there is also the effort of research, as in the case of the collection *Talking Drums*, an anthology of Anglophone and Francophone African poems, initially proposed in English with her translation and illustrations (Tadjo 2000), and later presented with a translation project entirely in Italian for the Giannino Stoppani publishing house in Bologna (2005).

A writer with a highly personal and intense style, sometimes apocalyptic, Tadjo emphasizes her strong affiliation with African tradition and history in its entirety,[4] as when she publishes the legend of the very young Queen Pokou who sacrifices her only son by throwing him into the Comoé River to save her people. This legend from the 18th century is common to both English-speaking African countries such as Ghana and French-speaking countries such as the Ivory Coast (Memel-Fotê 1991, p. 270). As this production spans the entire African continent, Tadjo succeeds in creating an admirable travelling adventure not only through the amplification

[4] The myth of Abla Pokou, a queen from Ghana who did not hesitate to sacrifice her only son for the salvation of her people, can be found in the following works: Dadié B. 1936, *Assémien Déhylé, roi du Sanwi*, Album officiel de la Mission pontificale, Dakar, pp. 201-221 (first edition); Dadié B. 1954, *Légendes africaines*, Seghers, Paris; Adiko A. 1971, *L'Épopée de la reine Abla Pokou*, Imprimerie commerciale, Abidjan; Zègoua Gbessi Nokan C. 1984, *Abraha Pokou et trois autres pièces*, Paris, Présence africaine; Tadjo V. 2004, *Reine Pokou*, Actes Sud, Paris (Grand Prix de la Littéraire Noire de L'Afrique 2005).

of space and time, but also through drawings and colours. The versatility of her travels and encounters is the basis of her open-mindedness, which also leads her to mix subjects of study and cultural interests. While it is true that she feels a deep attachment to this creative journey, it would be limiting to speak only of physical displacement, travelling is a useful activity to allow her to question herself, to put things into perspective and to hold all the threads together, such as her translation of children's stories, a weaving of voices that highlight the movements from which they emerge and which they are capable of provoking.

The *finesse* of the writing is reflected in the plurality of the translation that becomes interlinguistic (French and English that merge and are mirrored on the same page, as in the case of *Mamy Wata*). It is also intersemiotic (a text that is amplified and enriched thanks to illustrations, as in the case of *Masque*) (Tadjo 2002). It is a piece of total art already enclosed and made explicit in that programmatic summary contained in the opening poem of her first collection where Tadjo declares:

> ET NOUS N'AURONS PAS BESOIN
> DE FOUDRE
> POUR TISSER
> DES SOLEILS (Tadjo 1984, p. 5).

Translation is understood as a weaving capable of creating order through the original fusion of an interlinguistic and intercultural project by the international conference, organized in Tadjo's honour at the University of Johannesburg from 23 to 26 November 2013 entitled *Véronique Tadjo: Literary Postcoloniality, Post-Feminity or Asserted Africanness?* The proceedings were published in the volume *Écrire, traduire, peindre VÉRONIQUE TADJO Writing, Translating, Painting* where the two languages French and English express a form of constant dialogue that is absolutely necessary to embrace the entirety of the African continent, thus pointing the way to a possible lasting and peaceful development (Baram *et al.* 2016).

## 4. Translation as polyphony: the case of Werewere Liking

Originally from Cameroon, an officially bilingual country (French-English), Liking (b. 1950) settled in Côte d'Ivoire in the 1980s and founded Village Ky-Yi, in Abidjan, in 1985. She welcomes and trains artists there from all corners of the continent and, with them, fulfils a project given over to total art and community life. An eclectic author of poems, novels and songs, a painter, singer and multi-instrumentalist, she proposes and stages *pièces* that travel the world enriched by instruments, costumes, giant puppets and sets entirely

realized within her pan-African micro-reality. In her works, Liking manages to merge the most distant cultural elements, essentially on stage, as the written text always follows the performance (Liking-Gnepo 2003). Continuous sharing, discussion and exchanges lead to the questioning of traditions in order to reinterpret ancient cultures in a modern way, paying special attention to women's rights.

Her first work as a translator was *Un Touareg s'est marié à une Pygmée* (Liking 1992), a musical epic, more precisely a *mvett* epic that revolves around a type of five-string harp-guitar of fundamental importance to the traditional African culture (Ndoutoume 1970). The protagonist is a Tuareg, a person who symbolizes rebellion and nomadism, who, having set out from the desert in search of water for life, travels through different African spaces on a musical journey to the heart of the continent. Each new stage sees the insertion of a song in a different indigenous language, in the order Bété, Malinké, Fou, Bassa, Lingala, which the author transcribes and inserts into the *pièce*. The linguistic pluralism on the page refers to the crossing of spaces and the need to give voice to all African peoples in their spatial, cultural and linguistic plurality. The perfect union of this Africa "plurielle, [...] multiple, [...] unique" (Liking 1992, p. 22) can only be realized after overcoming the nine frontiers or "barreaux de segrégation" (Liking 1992, p. 11), a syntagma with which Liking stigmatizes the cartographic fragmentation of the African continent. The final union between the Tuareg and the Pygmy refers to the union of the desert and water, of the *brousse* and the forest, giving hope for a radiant finale capable of re-founding the existence of the entire continent. Based on those values that African people know how to bring to "jouer sa partition / au concert des nations" (Liking 1992, p. 16) and thus testifying as central to the dialogue as expressed by the multifaceted artistic disciplines and cultural realities that, though distant from each other, are recovered here, transcribed and translated for a confrontation that becomes a synthesis.

The same polyphony is manifested in *Médée. Les risques d'une réputation* (2007) in which the artist takes up versions by Euripides, Seneca and Christa Wolf, a play that opens and closes on a convention of *conteuses* analysing the myth, multiplying voices and doubts with numerous questions and consequent, often antithetical answers (Liking 2007). The stage version of the play (three months of performances at the Teatro Baretti in Turin which began in January 2005) featured seven women from different countries whose encounter occurred mainly linguistically since their languages, respectively French, Guéré from the North of the Ivory Coast, Neapolitan and Serbian, are clearly present on stage when Medea hurls her curse at the people of Corinth who accuse her of evil as a witch and a foreigner. This is a stratified and complex play characterized by the game of mirrors and cross-references, by reports on the myth and by the voices of the myth, in which the

strength of a language emerges and becomes prose and poetry, leaving room for singing that reinterprets the classical myth according to the dictates of African tradition. This refuses infanticide, and in light of the most pressing current problems of rejecting the foreigner as different or 'other'. The multilingualism of the actresses on stage, where music, songs and gestures accompany the audience's understanding, is not present in the version signed by the author who, however, inserts at that precise moment, so dense with tension and pathos, a song in Bassa, the language of her origins, followed by her self-translation into French (Liking 2007, pp. 30-34). This closes the central scene of the play: an absolutely necessary line, as Liking claims in an interview published at the end of the volume (Liking 2007, pp. 137-142). Since Medea hurls her own curse at those guilty of totally rejecting her as the foreigner, her words, shouted and immediate, can only spring from the deep treasure chest of the mother tongue, which, because of its disruptiveness, is capable of disturbing the addressee to the point of touching the apex of Medea's grief as a woman and mother.

To consider this work as an art form expressed only in writing would be limiting, since theatrical translation is an interweaving of voices that never fails to move towards other experiments and forms of dialogue, highlighting that movement that constantly renews the play between transparency and opacity. With the complexity of her production, Werewere Liking embraces the entire continent from which the work emerges and offers a significant example of the multicultural dimensions that animates it and that is essentially pan-African, especially through the amplification of languages used in a synergetic manner, whereby the secret of translation seems to be that of not neglecting any of the variations inherent in this polyphonic world.

## 5. Conclusion

As wide-ranging productions, these examined works reveal a "molar knowledge" (Eco 2003, p. 191) of the intricate network of relationships within which they operate, with editorial characteristics and translation choices that are sometimes very explicit. Indeed, by using different tools, they construct narratives that impose a widening of a gaze beyond boundaries to the other, to the different, to the foreigner, making translation a physical place, a forum for exchange and a subject for reflection. In this interdisciplinary confrontation / meeting, the texts presented become the experimental site of experiences of interlinguistic and intersemiotic translations of concrete and critical works. Such projects demonstrate, from time to time, the importance of choices linked to the cultural contexts, in the analysis and restitution of the texts in translation, or in their composition in order to offer a self-translation, united by their capacity to indicate possible

changes in social and political perspectives. These are aimed at embracing different Global Souths in order to promote a form of internal dialogue and extend the cultural knowledge beyond these areas.

The examination of the three selected cases of women-orchestras, whose work stands out for being multifaceted, polychromatic and polyphonic, reveals an act of translation articulated in research and reflection, writing and rewriting, translation and self-translation. It is able to produce a constructive dialogue that amplifies linguistic and cultural forms to the point of dilating their boundaries (which is the point from which the paper starts), allowing a glimpse of other forms of publication, capable of realizing that *conciliation of contraries* about which Heraclitus spoke. These women translators of languages and cultures, impose themselves thanks to a "mise en fonctionnement de la langue par un acte individuel d'utilisation" (Benveniste 2008, p. 80). Each offers a personal contribution to the definition and multiplication of spaces that have always been characterized by a problematic relationship between languages, history and literature, memory and identity because in these spaces, the cultural encounters have never been "généré de Genèse" (Glissant 1997, p. 36). The past is a "trou", like "la cale du bateau négrier" or a "tabula rasa", whose "naissance sans commencement" (Chamoiseau 1997, p. 225) needs to be recounted through a "parole" which is deprived of any form of linear diachrony that "n'est pas comme un palmier droit et lisse", but that can "commence depuis la première racine et [...] va bourgeonnant sans arrêt jusqu'aux nuages" (Glissant 1964, p. 170) like the "rhizome" dear to Édouard Glissant (Pellegrino 2022).

It is precisely the fundamental image of the rhizome that seems to me to be the key to the reinterpretation of the translation projects just proposed. It is not just about *reparation*, as Bandia argues (Bandia 2008), in terms of looking back at the painful past of colonial domination. This paper asserts that it is mainly a matter of *regeneration*, in the sense of overcoming the limits imposed, thanks to the propulsive thrust generated by new languages, literatures and pedagogies, where multiple levels of writing and rewriting are configured. The articulation of ways to co-construct the text, connections to share meaning by recipients as linguistically, culturally and generationally varied as possible, releases its potential and points the way to deeper transformations.

Indeed, these works cast a different light on the authors' relationships with space, which corresponds to a precise invitation to seek, in order to experiment with other models of crossing. By putting into perspective the way in which the three categories of seeking, constructing and translating are articulated by these women, the article argues that the question of the political dimension is renewed and amplified through translation choices that are able to build a cultural universe understood as one whole (Tymoczko 2007). All this is made possible thanks to their ability to dominate entropy, to

generate co-participation and to "oser inventer l'avenir" (Gakunzi 2012) by promoting an ethics of translation which can travel far and wide across the *éclaté* world of the African matrix, in order to recompose it, giving it form and life.

**Bionote:** Nataša Raschi is Associate Professor of French Language at the DISCUI Department of the University of Urbino «Carlo Bo». Her research interests include French Linguistics, especially in relation to French as a specialized language, in particular in the field of mathematics (*La langue des mathématiques chez Diderot*, Roma, Carocci, 2020), diatopic linguistic variation (*Langue française et presse africaine*, Roma, Aracne, 2010) and Francophone Studies (*Francophonie,* 77, edited with Bernard Mouralis, autumn 2019). She is a member of the Société Diderot, the DORIF (Centro di documentazione e di Ricerca per la didattica della lingua francese nell'Università italiana) and the SUSLLF (Società Universitaria di Studi sulla Lingua e la Letteratura Francese).

**Author's address**: natasa.raschi@uniurb.it

# References

AA. VV. 1992 (1931-1932), *La Revue du Monde Noir / The Review of the Black World*, Jean-Michel Place, Paris.

Adiko A. 1971, *L'Épopée de la reine Abla Pokou*, Imprimerie commerciale, Abidjan.

Achille L.Th. 1992, *Préface*, in *La Revue du Monde Noir / The Review of the Black World*, Jean-Michel Place, Paris, pp. vii-xvii.

Appiah K.A. 1993, *Thick Translation*, in "Callaloo" 16 [4], pp. 808-819.

Bandia P. 2001, *Le concept bermanien de l'«Étranger» dans le prisme de la traduction postcoloniale*, in "TTR" 14 [2], pp. 123-139.

Bandia P. 2008, *Translation as Reparation*: *Writing and Translation in Postcolonial Africa*, St. Jerome, Manchester.

Baram Reid A., Thompson P., Fotheringham C. and Raschi N. 2016, *Véronique Tadjo et la traduction – a discussion on and in translation*, in Davies Cordova S. and Kabwe-Segatti D. (eds.), *Écrire, traduire, peindre VÉRONIQUE TADJO Writing, Translating, Painting*, Paris, Présence Africaine (Les Cahiers), pp. 301-323.

Benveniste É. 2008 (1965-1972), *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Vol II, Gallimard, Paris.

Berman A. 1984, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger : culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*, Gallimard, Paris.

Bollettieri Bosinelli R.M. and Di Giovanni E. (eds.) 2009, *Oltre l'Occidente*, Bompiani, Milano.

Chamoiseau P. 1997, *Écrire en pays dominé*, Gallimard, Paris.

Dadié B. 1936, *Assémien Déhylé, roi du Sanwi*, Album officiel de la Mission pontificale, Dakar, pp. 201-221.

Dadié B. 1954, *Légendes africaines*, Seghers, Paris.

Eco U. 1983, *Introduzione*, in Queneau R., *Esercizi di stile*, Einaudi, Torino.

Eco U. 2003, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa*, Bompiani, Milano.

Edwards B.H. 2003, *The Practice of Diaspora. Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, Harvard University Press, Harvard.

Gakunzi D. 2012, *"Oser inventer l'avenir" – La parole de Thomas Sankara*, L'Harmattan, Paris.

Gauvin L. (ed.) 1997, *L'écrivain francophone à la croisée des langues*, Karthala, Paris.

Glissant É. 1964, *Le Quatrième Siècle*, Seuil, Paris.

Glissant É. 1997, *Traité du Tout-Monde*, Gallimard, Paris.

Glissant É. 2006, *Il n'est frontière qu'on n'outrepasse*, in "Le Monde diplomatique" 1, pp. 16-17.

Huerdo Moreno C. and Robert J. 2023, *Traductrices du monde entier, levez-vous!*, in "La Revue nouvelle" 1, pp. 26-27.

Liking W. 1992, *Un Touareg s'est marié à une Pygmée*, Lansman, Morlanwelz.

Liking W. 2007, *Médée. Les risques d'une réputation / Medea. I rischi d'una certa reputazione*, introduction by Mossetto A.P., translation by Raschi N. (translator) and epilogue by Tagliacozzo S., Edizioni Libreria Stampatori, Torino.

Liking-Gnepo W. 2003, *Le parler-chanter / Parlare cantando*, trad. it. di Raschi N., L'Harmattan, Paris/Torino.

Memel-Fotê H. 1991, *Des ancêtres fondateurs aux Pères de la nation. Introduction à une anthropologie de la démocratie*, in "Cahiers d'Études Africaines" 31 [123], pp. 263-285.

Meschonnic H. 1999, *Poétique du traduire*, Verdier, Lagrasse.

Mouralis B. and Raschi N. (eds.) 2019, *60 ans après le Deuxième Congrès des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs (Rome, 1959) : L'héritage*, in "Francofonia" 77.
Musil Church E. 2013, *In Search of Seven Sisters: A Biography of the Nardal Sisters of Martinique*, in "Callaloo" vol. 36 [2], pp. 375-390.
Nardal P. 1931, *Une noire parle à Cambridge et à Genève*, in "La Revue du Monde Noir" 1, pp. 40-41.
Nardal P. 1932, *Éveil de la conscience de race*, in "La Revue du Monde Noir" 6, pp. 343-349.
Ndoutoume T.N. 1970, *Le mvett épopée fang*, Présence Africaine, Paris.
Pellegrino I. 2022, *Fictionnaliser l'origine.* Le Quatrième Siècle *d'Edouard Glissant et* Texaco *de Patrick Chamoiseau*, in "CompLit. Journal of European Literature, Arts and Society" 3, pp. 181-188.
Rancière P. 1998, *La chair des mots. Politiques de l'écriture*, Galilée, Paris.
Ricœur P. 2004, *Sur la traduction*, Bayard, Paris.
Saussure F. de 1995 [1916], *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, Payot, Paris.
Senghor L.S. 1948, *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
Servant J. 2004, *Paulette Nardal. La fierté d'être négresse*, Éditions de la Lanterne, Paris.
Tadjo V. 1984, *Latérite*, Hatier, Paris (Prix littéraire de l'Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique).
Tadjo V. 2000, *Mamy Wata et le monster / Mamy Wata and the monster*, Milet, London.
Tadjo V. (ed.) 2000, *Talking Drums*, A&C Black, London; *Tamburi parlanti*, 2005 Giannino Stoppani edizioni, Bologna.
Tadjo V. 2002, *Masque, raconte-moi*, Nouvelles Éditions Ivoiriennes, Abidjan.
Tadjo V. 2004, *Reine Pokou*, Actes Sud, Paris.
Tadjo V. 2013, *Les enfants qui plantaient des arbres*, illustrated by Kœnig F., Oskar, Paris.
Tymoczko M. 2007, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators*, St. Jerome Publishing, Manchester.
Umoren I.D. 2018, *Race Women Internationalists: Activist-Intellectuals and Global Freedom Struggles*, University of California Press, California.
Zègoua Gbessi Nokan C. 1984, *Abraha Pokou et trois autres pièces*, Présence africaine, Paris.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 209-229
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p209
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# TRANSLATING INTO ITALIAN CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN'S *HERLAND* (1915)

C. BRUNA MANCINI
UNIVERSITÀ DELLA CALABRIA

**Abstract** – Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915) setting is considered the first feminist literary utopia centred on a land inhabited and governed by women. During the geographical and metaphorical journey of three male characters through fictional locations in South America, they gradually question the working mechanism of the patriarchal order, discussing the hegemonic discourse, binary opposition, and the culturally embedded assumptions about gender. In the following essay I will analyse some passages from the Italian translation *Terradilei* (1980) by Angela Campana and *Terra di lei* (2011) by Anna Scacchi, with a short reference to Franco Venturi's version, published in 2015, in order to discuss the complex concepts of the active presence and creativity of the translator in the text, a self-sufficient node in a dynamic web, connected with the principle of fidelity in translation.

**Keywords**: female utopia/dystopia; professionalization of women; depression; independence; poietic encounter.

> *As I learned more and more to appreciate what these women had accomplished, the less proud I was of what we, with all our manhood, had done. You see, they had had no wars. They had had no kings, and no priests, and no aristocracies. They were sisters, and as they grew, they grew together – not by competition, but by united action.*
>
> (C. Perkins Gilman, *Herland,* 1915, p. 202).

## 1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman and her struggle for women's rights

Charlotte Perkins Gilman has been often defined as the most original feminist that the United States of America has ever had. In 1993 she was named the sixth most influential woman of the twentieth century. In Charlotte's biography, Cynthia Davis recalls that the American realist novelist, literary critic, and playwright William Dean Howells regarded Perkins Gilman's profile and her mind as "the best" of all American women (Davis 2010, p.

XII; see also Ann 1997, p. 7); Rebecca West declared her the greatest woman in the world of her period, and H. G. Wells' first request upon visiting the States was to meet her (Davis 2010, p. XII). Nonetheless, Perkins Gilman's reputation declined in the years before her death; thereafter, she dropped out of the public consciousness for several decades: "By the time of her death in 1935, none of her numerous works remained in print, and several decades passed before their gradual reappearance. In her final years, her once-radical views and her oft-reiterated message of public service had, by her own estimate, come to seem dated" (Davis 2010, p. XII).

On the public stage she was both famous and infamous, a circumstance that may explain why she wrote her autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman. An Autobiography* (1935), to correct constant misunderstandings regarding her life and legacy. However, the text has often been judged as unreliable, and opaque, considering the most controversial questions that saw her as a protagonist, such as her ideas on marriage, motherhood, the professionalization of women, and, above all, the mental illness she was suffering from that defined her as the voice of depression and madness. In 1991, Joanne B. Karpinski observed that:

> Written at a time when Gilman felt her public reputation to be in eclipse and in the knowledge that a fatal illness would soon bring her public usefulness to an end, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* is an apologia pro vita sua. On one hand, Gilman sees her calling to be a 'world server' in the tradition of her Beecher forebears as a justification for the unconventional aspects of her personal life that scandalized her contemporaries; on the other, she sees the chronic bouts of physical debilitation and mental depression that plagued her lifelong after a postpartum breakdown at the age of twenty-four as extenuating what she regards as a failure to accomplish all she hoped. (Karpinski 1991, p. 157)

Gilman is renowned for fighting for female economic independence and the rights of wage-earning women, and helped found the National Household Economics Association, a nineteenth-century American women's organization which promoted the new field of home economics (see Stage 1997, pp. 17-33). She embraced Edward Bellamy's vision of peaceful and co-operative humanity and supported his call for state-supported domestic services as a way to restructure society. *Women and Economics. A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (1898) was her first book, one that gave her great fame. It was translated into seven languages and Gilman was immediately hailed as the leading intellectual in the women's movement. As a matter of fact, the suffrage leader Carrie Chapman Catt insisted that Charlotte deserved the top spot. It is essential to note that her book resonates deeply with today's continuing debate about gender difference and inequality.

Starting from her own experience, Gilman wrote a true treatise

concerning the economy of gender, in which she prefigured that the one and only necessary revolution would have been the freedom of women from the prison of the domestic sphere and their success in the public one. In *Love and Economics: Charlotte Perkins Gilman on 'The Woman Question'* (2005), Cynthia J. Davis wrote:

> Gilman's 'whole argument' in *Women and Economics* is fairly straightforward: as a result of middle-class women's economic dependence on men, they had become more feminine and less human, thwarting what Gilman took to be evolution's plan. The process would only reverse itself once these women learned to stand on their own two feet. And once they did, both they and the men, also stunted by current inequities, would finally fulfill their human potential, to the world's great benefit. Though others had made similar arguments, few had stated the case so succinctly or persuasively. (Davis 2005, p. 243)

At that time the suffragette movement was determined to obtain the right to vote for women. Charlotte recognized the importance of such an essential right of citizenship, but she deemed it insufficient. For her, it was extremely important the female involvement into the labour market as well as into the organization of society, and the refusal of the 'natural' gender division of roles. On the other hand, as Davis observed, "knowledge of her life and work reveal that, for her, woman was a question – and her own life a challenge – because female identity was still wrapped up in the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker, and because the process of disentanglement remained so difficult" (Davis 2005, p. 256). Perkins Gilman's own experiences taught her how difficult it was for a woman to decide which role should have prevailed, and how to realize such a goal. In fact, while she was writing *Women and Economics*, she was also working on how much space love and work should have occupied in her own and other women's lives. As Davis observes, "although *Women and Economics* maps life as capacious enough for both marriage and career, her papers suggest more friction and competition. It was typical of Gilman to parade her ideals before her public and to save her doubts for backstage" (2005, p. 256).

Moreover, she perfectly foresaw that many 'psychic disturbances' that, during that period, were associated with femininity – such as hysteria, that in the nineteenth century was considered 'the woman's disease' – were actually the dramatic result of male supremacy and the associative imprisonment and subjection of women in the domestic sphere. It is known that Gilman wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) after suffering from severe and continuous nervous breakdowns; for this reason she was advised by medical authorities to live a domestic life as far as possible, but such a regime sent her near the borderline of utter mental ruin. In this sense, in the story, she seemed to symbolically memorialize the insecurities and despair of her first marriage. In

the short story she discloses as a secret diary the record of the depression of the imaginative woman narrator and unveils the pain and conflicts existing between her and her husband, trying to reply to the stereotype of the mad or hysterical woman so attentively sketched by the society of her times. Totally misunderstood and unappreciated by her life companion, the protagonist identifies herself as the trapped woman behind the wallpaper (see Edelstein 2011, pp. 180-199; Kimura 2005, pp. 13-26).

## 2. *Herland*, a feminist/female/amazonian utopia without men

*Herland* was first published in 1915, the year after the outbreak of the First World War I, and deeply influenced the relationship between man and woman. It is considered a female/feminist/maternal utopia. Fátima Vieira observed in *The Concept of Utopia* (2010):

> Utopia, as a neologism, is an interesting case: it began its life as a lexical neologism, but over the centuries, after the process of deneologization, its meaning changed many times, and it has been adopted by authors and researchers from different fields of study, with divergent interests and conflicting aims. Its history can be seen as a collection of moments when a clear semantic renewal of the word occurred. The word utopia has itself often been used as the root for the formation of new words. These include words such as eutopia, dystopia, anti-utopia, alotopia, euchronia, heterotopia, ecotopia and hyperutopia, which are, in fact, derivation neologisms. And with the creation of every new associated word the concept of utopia took on a more precise meaning. (Vieira 2010, p. 3)

Utopianism seeks perfectibility, but such an impulse is itself dystopic as perfection continually changes over time and with society. In the Introduction to *Utopia/Dystopia. Conditions of Historical Possibility* (2010) the editors Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash assert that "Every utopia always comes with its implied dystopia" (Gordin *et al.* 2010, p. 2). Thus, utopia and dystopia are the two sides of the same coin. Moreover, the utopia of one person can be the dystopia of someone else. In fact, Gilman's utopia is also the site of such a cultural clash; as a matter of fact, it represents a lucid, persuasive, ironic analysis of modern life as she knew it. Michael R. Hill wrote: "*Herland* is the first half of a witty, sociologically astute critique of life in the United States" (Hill 1996, p. 251).

Gilman's ideal world is an isolated society composed entirely of women who reproduce by parthenogenesis (namely, asexually), through the force of a supreme desire for maternity. Hence, this tale rewrites the origin myths of this female society, as well as the stereotypes and the gender roles of the hetero-patriarchal society. In this utopic land there are no longer

untouchable distinctions between the public and the private spheres. Every activity is realized through cooperation. There are mothers, but no families or men at all. Friendship and sisterhood contain essential values, such as access to education, the prevention of conflicts, and their continual search for improved living conditions. Therefore, in this utopia, where there is no space for men because of an historical event that happened in their distant past, women are civilized, wise, logical, athletic, sensitive, pacific, fearless, independent.

The power these women exercise is far from being an instrument of dominion; after all, the women of *Herland* derive from one family, as they "all descended from one mother" (p. 192), who was the Queen-Priestess-Mother of them all (p. 194). The three men who discover this "land of women" during an expedition (Terry O. Nicholson, Jeff Margrave and Vandyck Jennings, who is the narrator) perceive Feminisia – which is how Terry, the most chauvinist character, refers to it – as a "(m)ighty lucky piece of land" (p. 52). Everything is beautiful, orderly, clean, perfectly looked after by extraordinary 'wonder-women', or ultra-women, or New Women who seem to recall the myth of the Amazons; but they are even a reflection of the new ideal of femininity that emerged in the late 19th century and challenged conventional gender roles, expressing autonomy and individuality.

The first description of the Herlanders is expressed by the narrator, Vandyck, a sociologist – like Gilman herself – who is open to understanding new ways of living. He observes that "they all wore short hair, some few inches at most, some curly, some not; all light and clean and fresh-looking" (p. 110). Their garments are simple in the extreme, and absolutely comfortable:

> There was a one-piece cotton undergarment, thin and soft, that reached over the knees and shoulders, something like the one-piece pajamas some fellows wear, and a kind of half-hose, that came up to just under the knee and stayed there – half elastic tops of their own, and covered the edges of the first.
> Then there was a thicker variety of union suit […] of varying weights and somewhat sturdier material […] Then there were tunics, knee-length, and some long robes. (*Herland* p. 96)

These women represent alterity par excellence and are constantly compared with the idea of femininity from the society the three male characters come from, so they are clearly characterized beyond any defined notion of gender. As a matter of fact, on their arrival the three men mistake the young girls for boys, and this kind of reference appears more than once during the narration. As there are no men, Herlanders do not follow the traditional patriarchal ideal of femininity, showing that gender is a social construction. Obviously, this utopian society the three men are experiencing and "studying" is constantly

compared to the one they come from. And this comparison is far from being flattering. As Van, the narrator, observes:

> As I learned more and more to appreciate what these women had accomplished, the less proud I was of what we, with all our manhood, had done. You see, they had had no wars. They had had no kings, and no priests, and no aristocracies. They were sisters, and as they grew, they grew together – not by competition, but by united action. (*Herland* p. 202)

Even if this new race of women is ready to encompass, without any reservations, the newness represented by love between men and women, opening their own society to the miracle of sexual reproduction, the care of children, the knowledge of other lands and populations, the women of Herland are not inclined to accept a worldview so deeply different from their own. So, even if they accept the new idea that two of them would have married two male visitors, not even the deep and intense love they have learned to feel for their husbands can push them to renounce their own rights:

> When in our pre-marital discussions one of those dear girls had said 'We understand it thus and thus' or 'We hold such and such to be true' we men, in our deep-seated convictions of the power of love, and our easy views about beliefs and principles, fondly imagined that we could convince them otherwise. What we imagined, before marriage, did not matter anymore than what an average innocent young girl imagines. We found the facts to be different. (p. 396)

In this female utopia, the first step towards their model of perfection rests on a shared form of knowledge, and a rational educational operation. Furthermore, their concept of love is a universal one that implies deep and eternal friendship, and the wealth of their own land, without resulting in any form of arrogant or aggressive patriotism. As a consequence of such an education, according to the three men, the beautiful women of Herland do not know the art of seduction, associated with the concept of femininity conceived through an essentially patriarchal perspective: "The thing that Terry had so complained of when we first came – that they weren't 'feminine' they lacked 'charm' now became a great comfort. Their vigorous beauty was an aesthetic pleasure, not an irritant. Their dress and ornaments had not a touch of the 'come-and-find-me' element" (p. 416). As a matter of fact, even their dresses are conceived exclusively in order to be comfortable and suit with a wide range of situations. Nowadays, we would call them 'unisex' or 'agender'.

But is Herland really the perfect place in which to live? As we know, in that land there is no theatre as we know it, or the engaging stories imbued with passion, jealousy, ambition, social and political conflicts, dispute between nations, the clash between good and evil. If Herland is the paradise

of beauty, well-being, and rights, in which independent, strong, and willful women have been able to develop their potential in a harmonious way, it is also a land without eros, passion, sensuality, in which Maternity is envisioned as the ultimate, supreme purpose of everything, reproposing a kind of eugenic reproductive policy. Obviously, for many of us today such a land could represent a dystopia. After all, is it 'utopic' that only the women who can give birth can be considered Ultra-women, or Wonder-women? How does their model of perfection appear to us, given that it does not admit anomalies, fragilities, obstacles?

Regarding this, Vittoria Franco has observed that, instead of imagining a "desirable" space, Gilman's aim could have been to imagine a different relationship between men and women – a relationship without dominion, freed from the idea(l) of possession and male superiority; the challenge is to build a communal world centred on respect and rights for everyone, in which women could shine in the public sphere. For Gilman, economics, education, clothing, prisons, parenting, male-female relationships, human evolution, social organization, and literature in particular, could help to transform the harsh realities and crushing inequalities of everyday life found pervasively in male-dominated societies, not only in her time. Hill writes:

> As a pedagogical device […], *Herland* is an engaging, persuasive, and highly effective effort. The novel's light, patient, sympathetic voice is a worked example of the tolerant, noncoercive instructional mode employed by Herland's exemplary tutors: Somel, Moadine, and Zava. Sociological instruction through fiction is one of Gilman's literary strengths, and it is difficult to find a more straightforward instance of this genre than Gilman's own *First Class in Sociology* (1897-1898), a short novel of hypothetical classroom dialogue serialized in the American Fabian. (Hill 1996, p. 253)

## 3. Translating *Herland* into Italian

The first Italian translation of *Herland* was realized by Angela Campana, and published in 1980 by La Tartaruga, Milano. The name of the translator does not appear on the book cover, nor on the title page. The title of the novel is translated as *Terradilei*, combining two words as in the English original. The narration is preceded by the translation of an Introduction signed by Anne J. Lane and written in 1978. The second translation, by Anna Scacchi, was published in 2011 by Donzelli in the series *Saggi* (*Essays*). The title of the volume is *La terra delle donne.* Herland *e altri racconti* (1891-1916), because it gathers together the translation of *Terra di lei* (in this case, the words of the title are not agglutinated, and the text was published singularly in 1980) with a selection of eleven short stories and essays by Gilman herself. A preface by the historian of philosophy Vittoria Franco entitled *Una donna*

*alla ricerca della libertà* (*A Woman Looking for Freedom*) opens the volume, followed up by another introduction by Scacchi, entitled *Una donna vittoriana a Utopia* (*A Victorian Woman in Utopia*). Scacchi, both translator and essayist, is a renowned expert in American Studies at the University of Padua, and has written extensively on Gilman.

Scacchi's translation is very meticulous and raises many issues concerning the difficulties of translating from English into Italian. For example, when the female translator converts her source text, written by an American feminist writer like Gilman, into Italian using the 'masculine plural' as a neutral 'inclusive' form for groups that include exclusively female people, it is clear that she is trying to present the narrator's point of view. The narrator, Vandyck Jennings' view is a patriarchal one, even if this character is very receptive to the new world he is describing and will eventually alter his own mindset in favour of that new society. Moreover, Scacchi wrote about the first translation by Campana, lamenting that one of the most uncanny passages in the text, from the point of view of a feminist genealogy, does not appear in the publication. This is the missing sentence, from chapter V: "There was literally no one left on this beautiful high garden land but a bunch of hysterical girls and some older slave women" (Gilman 1998, p. 47).

In the considered passage, Van is reporting the history of Herland in his own words and how it became a place without men. This is Scacchi's own translation: "Non c'era rimasto letteralmente più nessuno in questo paradiso di montagna, se non un gruppo di ragazze isteriche e alcune schiave più anziane" (Gilman 2011, p. 55). In this example, "beautiful high garden land" is transformed into a "mountain paradise", but – above all – the translator does not sidestep the term "hysterical" which is important if we consider that it is used by Van at the beginning of the narration; without mentioning the question of the "female malady" which is fundamental in Gilman's writing and could not be simply erased.

The third Italian translation is *Terradilei* by Franco Venturi (where all the words of the Italian title are again fused together), with parallel text, and published in 2015 by La Vita Felice. Venturi translates the previous passage as follows: "Non c'era letteralmente nessuno in questa località di montagna con bei giardini, ma solo un gruppo di ragazze isteriche e alcune donne schiave più anziane" (Gilman 2015, p. 168). His Italian translation of "this beautiful high garden land" misses the term 'high' and, in the following part of the sentence, uses a truncated structuring that eliminates the article 'dei' (i.e. 'con *dei* bei giardini'). The result is an inelegant and unnatural version of Perkins Gilman's text that does not reflect her refined and meticulous phrasing. Franco Venturi has been described as an internationally known famous historian of the second part of the twentieth century. His Introduction to the text is very short, yet brilliant. On the other hand, Scacchi's appears

more elegant. Her translation reveals a deep knowledge of Gilman's narrative, in addition to Gilman's attempt to transform the world through literature. In fact, in her Introduction she writes:

> Lo scopo di Gilman è […] quello di trasformare il mondo, e la letteratura ne è uno dei mezzi, anzi un mezzo tra i più potenti, grazie alla sua capacità di rendere le idee astratte carne, di produrre nuove possibili trame per le vite dei lettori, di liberare le donne dalle trappole narrative che confinano il loro essere nel mondo. (Gilman 2011, p. XXXI; introduction by Scacchi A.)

Obviously, the translation of a literary text can also free women from such 'narrative traps', if the translator aims at contributing to help his/her readers to destroy the chains of preconceived notions and ideals; after all, that should be the purpose of any utopian text too: to free people from their identification with codes of behaviour imposed by a particular society. In particular, Gilman's writing represents a powerful act of agency for women, that is characterized by both a humorous and satirical vein which the translator should not fail to repropose in his/her target text. Despite that – incidentally – translating a forgotten and metaphorically "silenced text" (because of the gender of its author, as in Gilman's case) is, more than ever, a cultural empowering act.

In this sense, there seems to be little doubt over the translator's visibility, as postulated by Laurence Venuti. Every translation choice in the target text declares his/her presence and creativity. Moreover, Enrico Terrinoni's analysis, in his *Oltre abita il silenzio. Tradurre la letteratura* (2019), shows that the équipe's presence (proof-readers, revisors, editors, publishers, and so on) are part of the translation process, often working in disguise under the name of the author himself/herself. The target text is a re-creation, with the translator as an active node in a complex and dynamic web – we could say paraphrasing Céline Frigau Manning (Cordingley, Manning 2017, p. 260). Good examples of that seem to be the choices made in the three different translations of *Herland* that I have analysed. If we consider the following passage from the source text, it is interesting to note the two different approaches to its translation.[1]

| **Source text** | **Trans 1** | **Trans 2** |
|---|---|---|
| **Never, anywhere before**, had I seen women of **precisely** this quality. **Fishwives and market women** might show | **Non avevo mai visto** donne così. **Avevo visto pescivendole, venditrici ambulanti** con quella forza fisica; ma erano poi | **Mai prima di allora avevo visto** donne del genere. **Le pescivendole e le venditrici dei mercati** a volta mostrano |

[1] In the following table, the bold lettering is meant to signal the parallel translations of the same portion of text that will be discussed in the ensuing pages. Indeed, the underlined expression is the most problematic case of mistranslation by Angela Campana's version.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| similar strength, but it was coarse and heavy. These were **merely athletic - light and powerful**. **College professors, teachers, writers - many women** showed similar intelligence but **often wore a strained nervous look**, while these were **as calm as cows**, for all their evident intellect.<br>We **observed pretty closely** just then, **for all of us felt that** it was a crucial moment.<br>**The leader** gave some word of command and beckoned us on, and the surrounding mass moved a step nearer. (Gilman, p. 86) | donne corpulente e sgraziate, mentre queste erano **semplicemente atletiche, vigorose e leggere**. E avevo visto **scrittrici, professoresse d'università** con quella luce d'intelligenza nello sguardo, **ma avevano poi spesso facce tirate e ansiose.** Mentre queste erano serene, **placide come la luna**.<br>Le **spiavamo molto attenti** anche noi, in quei momenti cruciali.<br>E poi **la capobanda** diede un ordine e ci fece segno di muoversi, e allora **tutte quante attorno a noi** avanzarono d'un passo. (Campana, Gilman 1980, p. 46) | una forza fisica simile, ma di un tipo volgare e rude. Loro erano **semplicemente atletiche**, **agili e vigorose**. Molte **donne, professoresse universitarie, insegnanti, scrittrici,** hanno un aspetto altrettanto intelligente, **ma è spesso accompagnato da uno sguardo affaticato e nervoso.** Loro invece, anche se erano chiaramente dotate di un intelletto vivace, sembravano **placide come giumente al pascolo**.<br>Le **osservammo attentamente**, a quel punto, **perché avevamo tutti la sensazione che** si trattasse di un momento cruciale.<br>**La donna che era a capo del gruppo** pronunciò delle parole con tono di comando e ci fece cenno di proseguire, mentre **la massa che ci circondava** si fece più vicina. (Scacchi, Gilman 2011, pp. 24-25) |

At first glance, it is clear that Scacchi's translation of *Herland*, published in 2011, possesses a stricter consonance with the source text. In fact, even if her volume is not a parallel text version, Scacchi's version does not censor or change any part of the original version; rather, whenever it is possible, she tries to clarify in order to comply with Gilman's text. For example, when Gilman describes women of Herland "as calm as cows", the troublesome comparison is translated by Scacchi with "placide come giumente al pascolo" (Gilman 2011, p. 24),[2] while, on the contrary, Campana opts for an uncommon "placide come la luna" (Gilman 1980, p. 46).[3] As Dana Seitler

[2] "(A)s placid as grazing mares", my translation.
[3] "(A)s placid as the moon", my translation.

(2003) demonstrates, Gilman uses livestock analogies to establish distinctions between nature and culture and to expose the crude economic underpinnings of patriarchal protectionism. In particular, she equates the excessive emphasis on women's sexual difference with the over-sexing of milk cows perceived as walking milk-machines. From this perspective, the reference to cows does not appear to be a degrading comparison, as it could seem, but rather it is a strong connection with Gilman's point of view; thus, it should not be transformed, as Campana does, because it is a characteristic image of Gilman's narrative.

Moreover, the sentence "Fishwives and market women might show similar strength, but it was coarse and heavy" (Gilman 1998, p. 46) is translated by Scacchi with: "Le pescivendole e le venditrici dei mercati a volta mostrano una forza fisica simile, ma di un tipo volgare e rude" (Gilman 2011, p. 24). Here each translation choice seems to be wary in lauding the Wonder-Women of Herland, without any intention to degrade, mortify, and humiliate the ordinary women working in the markets. Campana completely transforms the sentence structure: "Avevo visto pescivendole, venditrici ambulanti con quella forza fisica; ma erano poi donne corpulente e sgraziate, mentre queste erano semplicemente atletiche, vigorose e leggere" (Gilman 1980, p. 46). In this version the sentence opens with "avevo visto" ("had I seen"), used by Gilman only in the very first sentence of the passage, while in Campana's translation it is repeated three times over a few lines. Moreover, the sequence after the semicolon clearly contrasts the fishwives and the market women (who are defined as "corpulent" and "ungraceful") with the ideal women of the utopian land ("athletic", "strong", and "light"). It is a physical humiliation Gilman would have never realized or imagined.

Another similar example seems to be "the leader" of the last paragraph of quotations. Scacchi translates "la donna che era a capo del gruppo" (Gilman 2011, p. 25) in order to underline the female leadership. The same term is translated to "la capobanda" by Campana, infusing a sense of irony ("capobanda" as "band conductor") or of danger ("capobanda" as "ringleader"). From this perspective, Scacchi underlines the female authorship as an extra-ordinary form of female empowerment and agency without any sense of inappropriateness which seems a perfect fit with Gilman's narrative.

Obviously, translations sometimes reveal declared and undeclared references to previous translations. This seems to be the case for Franco Venturi's version. For example, when he translates:

> **Non avevo mai visto donne così.** Avevo visto **pescivendole, venditrici ambulanti** con quella forza fisica; ma erano poi donne corpulente e sgraziate, mentre queste erano **semplicemente atletiche, vigorose e leggere**. E avevo visto scrittrici, professoresse d'università con quella luce di intelligenza nello sguardo, ma avevano poi spesso facce tirate e ansiose. Mentre queste erano **serene, placide come la luna**.

> Le spiavamo molto attenti anche noi, in quei momenti cruciali.
> E poi **la capobanda** diede un ordine e ci fece segno di muoversi, e allora tutte quante attorno a noi avanzarono di un passo.[4] (Gilman 2015, p. 87)

As observed before, Venturi was primarily an historian; perhaps that is why his translation seems to over-rely on Campana's version. Sometimes there are minor translation choices undertaken, presumably by Venturi himself, because there is no clear indication of who did them; anyway, the text is substantially the same. In the previous short excerpt, for example, the evidence of such a connection is highlighted by the repetition of "avevo visto" and, in particular, the choices of "la capobanda" and "serene, placide come la luna" that unveil Campana's hand.

When we talk of the visible presence of the translator within the target text, we are discussing a real occupancy and ownership, as shown earlier. In fact, in Venturi's text it is easy enough to recognize Campana's version. On the other hand, there are many points in which Campana's target text seems to drift dangerously from the original text, losing the depiction of the female characters who have originality and strength that Gilman seems to provide for them. This is the case where "the leader" is translated as "la capobanda", and with the complete removal of the sentence containing the H-word.

## 4. Nodes in a web: the long-standing question of fidelity

Enrico Terrinoni observes that each translation becomes a substantial part of future readings concerning the author(s) of the source texts in other languages: "un nuovo testo che verrà riscritto, ritradotto e rimesso in circolo attraverso letture future. Queste genereranno altri testi (mentali, mnemonici se vogliamo), che una volta esplicati, ovvero ancora una volta tradotti, ne produrranno di altri. E così via, ad infinitum" (Terrinoni 2019, p. 124). In this sense, the re-use of Campana's translation realized by Venturi in his own version looks paradigmatic. On the contrary, there is the question of fidelity to the source text written by Gilman. In fact, many references, terms, and discourses peculiar to the author seem to be eluded or – even worse – misunderstood by both Campana and Venturi; for example, the livestock analogies, the use of a social-Darwinian vocabulary concerning "sex-attributes", the vision for progressive gender relations, the fight for women's rights to enter the public sphere and the world of work.

Is it fair if the translator's creativeness allows him/her to slip away completely from perspectives and concepts that are peculiar to Gilman

[4] From now on the lettering in bold font signals the sections from the quotation discussed immediately after. The underlined expression is the major problematic case of mistranslation by Angela Campana's version.

herself? In *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, which came out in 1992, André Lefevere affirmed that:

> All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewriting can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever-increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulation processes of literature are exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. (Lefevere 2004, p. VII)

It is also necessary to consider how precisely a translated text or document has to conform to its source. It is known that one of the main issues distressing every translator (even the non-literary ones, dealing with their certified translations) is the much-debated question of fidelity. Evidently, literary translation has always served a special purpose or many purposes at the same time, and each time it has been shaped by a certain force, power, ideology, and political perspective. In *Translation as Rewriting: The Concept and Its Implications on the Emergence of a National Literature* (2001) Berrin Aksoy observes that:

> […] translation takes the form of rewriting an original text, since it is performed under certain constraints and for certain purposes. The original text is chosen for a certain purpose and the guidelines of translation are defined to serve this purpose by the translator and/or by those who initiate the translation activity. In this case, rewriting in order to fit that purpose, along with fidelity to the original, become the main issues for the translator. (Aksoy 2001, unpaginated)

Even if not simply derivative and servile, as it was considered traditionally (Shuping 2013, p. 59), translation has a number of constraints: first of all, the lexical, morphological, syntactical, and semantic ones, but also the rules of genres, the adherence to particular traits and tropes, and not least, the poetics of the translated author and text. In short, translation seems to be a "poietic encounter" – as Franco Buffoni defined it – between the translator and the original text, in which a momentary 'betrayal' has been made in order to be 'loyal' to the author's loftiness. In *Franco Buffoni: The Poietic Encounter* (2011), Jacob Blakesley asserts that:

> […] the poietic encounter is, at heart, the standpoint from which Buffoni analyzes others' translations, it is also the standard by which his own versions ask to be interpreted. […] It is not, then, a question of 'fidelity': the famous dichotomies (from Cicero's *ut orator/ut interpres*, brutta fedele/bella infedele,

> and target-oriented/source-oriented, to Lawrence Venuti's invisibility/visibility, and Mounin's *traductions des professeurs/traductions des poetes*) are no longer valuable concepts, as Buffoni argues. (Blakesley 2011, pp. 286, 293)

The autonomy of the translation does not become unmoored from its source text, nevertheless, retains artistic independence through an intense poietic dialogue with the original author and text. For Buffoni, translation is envisioned as an existential experience intended to relive the creative act that inspired the original. From this perspective, it seems clear that a literary translator should work exclusively on texts and authors he/she respects and is deeply acquainted with. In other words, he/she should know and understand the context, the aims, the undertones, the style, even the understatements and the silences of the text in translation, in order to give it a new life in a different language and in a different context.

### *4.1. Autonomy and fidelity in translation: Herland versus USA*

In a crucial passage of Gilman's novel concerning the comparison between Herland and the United States of America (where the three male characters come from), many exemplary issues show up clearly; in particular, there is a harsh critique of the androcentric society associated with a teasing condemnation of the sexual division of labour that relegated women to a 'disabled', subaltern, passive existence, totally enclosed within roles as wives and mothers. During an intense dialogue between the American male visitors and the new women, Gilman juxtaposes the concept of education (the real innovation of Herland), a society keen on any inclination towards diversity and improvement, with the manifest narrow-mindedness of the three men. In fact, the utopic land described by Gilman is always geared towards newness, learning, curiosity, open-mindedness, while the three explorers exhibit a clear inclination to intolerance, sexism, racism, fanaticism, typical of the colonialist strategy of domination and oppression.

In *A Unique Story*, the fifth chapter, the author introduces the two contrasting groups of speakers: the visitors, who try to convince their listeners about the perfection of their world, even if they know they are repeating the usual propaganda techniques, and some women of Herland, who are eager to learn and ameliorate ideas in their own society without any bias:

> We tried to put in a good word for competition, and they were keenly interested. Indeed, we soon found from their earnest questions of us that they were prepared to believe our world must be better than theirs. They were not sure; they wanted to know; but there was no such arrogance about them as might have been expected.
> We rather spread ourselves, telling of the advantages of competition: how it

> developed fine qualities; that without it there would be "no stimulus to industry." Terry was very strong on that point.
> "No stimulus to industry," they repeated, with that puzzled look we had learned to know so well. "STIMULUS? TO INDUSTRY? But don't you LIKE to work?"
> "No man would work unless he had to," Terry declared.
> "Oh, no MAN! You mean that is one of your sex distinctions?"
> "No, indeed!" he said hastily. "No one, I mean, man or woman, would work without incentive. Competition is the – the motor power, you see." (Gilman 1998, p. 60)

Terry represents the conventional male chauvinist, nationalist, colonialist, and classist attitude. He is a wealthy and privileged womanizer as well as an icon of the capitalistic spirit. For this reason, he feels completely out of context and lost in Gilman's paradise. Scacchi's translation perfectly renders any suggestion and ironic allusion that the implied author conveys through the narrator's point of view:

> Cercammo di **mostrar loro** i privilegi della competizione e quelle donne mostrarono un **vivo interesse.** In effetti presto ci accorgemmo che erano pronte a credere che il nostro mondo fosse di gran lunga migliore del loro. Non ne erano sicure, volevano sapere, ma non avevano l'arroganza che ci si sarebbe potuti aspettare.
> Ci dilungammo ampiamente a parlare dei vantaggi della competizione, di come sviluppasse eccellenti qualità e del fatto che senza di essa non ci sarebbe "l'incentivo a lavorare". Terry insistette molto su questo punto.
> "Non ci sarebbe l'incentivo a lavorare", ripeterono con quello sguardo perplesso che avevamo imparato a conoscere bene. "*Incentivo*? A *lavorare*? Ma non vi *piace* lavorare?".
> "Nessun uomo lavorerebbe se non vi fosse costretto", dichiarò Terry.
> "Ah, nessun *uomo*! Volete dire che questa è una delle vostre caratteristiche sessuali?".
> "Assolutamente no!", si affrettò a replicare lui. "Nessuno, voglio dire nessun uomo né donna, lavorerebbe senza un incentive. La competizione, sapete, è […] la forza mortice". (Gilman 2011, pp. 60-61; transl. Scacchi)

Scacchi's translation appears refined and pleasantly antiquated (see the use of "mostrar loro",[5] and "vivo interesse",[6] for example), and succeeds in reestablishing the style and the tone used by Gilman, even if something has to be sacrificed in order to obtain a smooth reading act; for instance, "from their earnest questions of us" turns out to be implicit. On the other hand, on this occasion, Campana translates every single word (followed closely by Venturi, whose translation is identical – see Gilman 2015, p. 203) even if the result is less elegant, to say; as in "ma non avevano quell'arroganza che

[5] "(T)o show them", my translation.
[6] "(K)een interest", my translation.

avrebbero anche potuto avere", in which there is an useless and redundant repetition of the verb "avere" / "to have"; or, again, in "e chiedevano", set soon after the comma, that sounds vague and inadequate, in order to translate "they wanted to know" from the source text:

> Tentammo una difesa della competizione, e loro ci ascoltarono con interesse. Devo dire che ci accorgemmo presto, **dalle loro assidue domande**, che erano pronte a credere che il nostro mondo fosse migliore del loro. Non ne erano sicure, **e chiedevano**; **ma non avevano quell'arroganza che avrebbero anche potuto avere**.
> Ci diffondemmo a illustrare i pregi della competizione: affinava la capacità, dicemmo, e davano il necessario stimolo a lavorare. Terry batté molto su questo punto.
> – Stimolo a lavorare – ripeterono loro, con quel fare perplesso che ormai conoscevamo bene. – *Stimolo*? Ma non vi *piace* lavorare?
> – Nessun uomo lavorerebbe se non ci fosse costretto – dichiarò Terry.
> – Ah, nessun uomo! È un'altra delle vostre distinzioni fra i sessi.
> – No, no! – s'affrettò a spiegare lui. – Volevo dire nessuno, né uomo né donna. Nessuno lavorerebbe **se non fosse spinto a farlo**. La competizione è […] la forza motrice, ecco. (Gilman 1980, pp. 89-90)

On careful analyses, the sentence "se non fosse spinto a farlo" ("if he was not pushed to do it") also seems insufficient to translate "(no one) would work without incentive", because it seems clear that the author had the intention to insist once again on the necessity of an economic stimulus to push the Western citizens to participate in social welfare. Thus, the capitalist society ends up undermining the development of any sense of community obligation and commitment. In this regard, Jeanne M. Connell writes that "Gilman's purpose in *Herland* is to highlight the problems inherent in the individualistic tendencies in American society and to suggest remedies" (Connell 1995, p. 23). Obviously, in Gilman's novel, Terry's presumptuous claims are easily dismantled by a couple of unsophisticated but precise comments made by a small group of female individuals who live in a society where there is no poverty, no crime, no pollution, no war, no disease, and who have learned to grow together by united action, mutual respect, and shared goals.

### *4.2. The question of female spaces: "What is 'the home'?"*

Another influential topic addressed in this Section of the novel is the question of maternity and the so-called 'woman question'. Soon after the previous quoted passage, Gilman gives space and voice to the quintessential misogynist, Terry Nicholson, who has to confront the young and beautiful Somel, who is assigned to teach Van how to read, write, and speak the Herlandian language as well as to learn English herself, and Zava, one of the older women who tutors the three men in the ways of Herland:

> "It is not with us" they explained gently, "so it is hard for us to understand. Do you mean, for instance, that with you no mother would work for her children without the stimulus of competition?"
> No, he (Terry) admitted that he did not mean that. Mothers, he supposed, would of course work for their children in the home; but the world's work was different – that had to be done by men, and required the competitive element.
> All our teachers were eagerly interested. […] "Tell us – what is the work of the world, that men do – which we have not here?"
> "Oh, everything," Terry said grandly. "The men do everything, with us." He squared his broad shoulders and lifted his chest. "We do not allow our women to work. Women are loved – idolized – honored – kept in the home to care for the children."
> "What is 'the home'?" asked Somel a little wistfully.
> But Zava begged: "Tell me first, do NO women work, really?"
> "Why, yes," Terry admitted. "Some have to, of the poorer sort."
> "About how many – in your country?"
> "About seven or eight million," said Jeff, as mischievous as ever. (Gilman 1998, p 60-1)

Once again, the total opposition between the two cultures is clear in analysis, especially in connection with the space(s) occupied by women in society. The country Terry and the other male visitors come from is envisaged as an individualistic society. Connell observes that in the story the sense of community and solidarity displayed by the fictional Herlanders is compared to the isolation of real American family life. Gilman suggests that isolation also serves to separate women from public life, enclosing them within the 'domestic sphere':

> Nature relegates women to the roles of wife and mother. In Victorian society the ideal woman managed the household servants and devoted her life to her children and husband. The romantic ideal was that these women were loved, idolized, and honored by their husbands.
> But actual family life in Victorian America fell far short of these ideals. […] The undemocratic nature of social relations in the home also impacts negatively on the public sphere. The inequalities between men and women in the private sphere that existed under liberalism at the turn of the century, led Gilman to conclude that Victorian domestic life was not a good training ground for democracy. (Connell 1995, p. 27)

In short, Gilman redesigns public and private spaces in order to allow women the opportunity to participate in all aspects of public life; especially, in the workplace. In this respect, once again Scacchi renders Terry's perspective properly through Van's eyes and the stunned reaction of his female listeners that seems to embarrass both Van and Jeff:

> Le madri, pensava lui (Terry), avrebbero sicuramente lavorato per i propri figli, a casa. Ma gli affari del mondo erano una cosa diversa… dovevano essere svolti dagli uomini e richiedevano l'elemento della competizione.

> Le nostre insegnanti erano tutte vivamente interessate.
> "Desideriamo così tanto imparare […] Diteci […] che cosa sono questi affari del mondo che fanno gli uomini, che noi qui non abbiamo?"
> "Oh, di tutto", disse Terry con tono di importanza. "Da noi gli uomini si occupano di tutto". Drizzò le ampie spalle e gonfiò il petto. "Non permettiamo alle nostre donne di lavorare. Le donne sono amate […] idolatrate […] onorate […] e vengono tenute in casa, a prendersi cura dei bambini".
> "Che cos'è la 'casa'?", chiese Somel, con un'aria pensosa.
> Ma Zara chiese: "Prima, però, ditemi, davvero non c'è alcuna donna che lavori?"
> "Be', sì", ammise Terry. "Qualcuna delle più povere è costretta a farlo".
> "Circa sette o otto milioni", disse Jeff, con la solita malignità. (Gilman 2011, p. 61)

In this respect, Campana's version appears again less flowing and accurate regarding the choice of words and the exact tone of the narration. Just think of the definition "lavoro nel mondo", so abstract and blurry that becomes difficult to understand in Italian; or "curare i bambini" that appears limiting and imprecise in relation to the source text, as "curare" – differently from "prendersi cura di", used by Scacchi in her translation – means 'to nurse'.

> Le madri, in casa, naturalmente lavoravano per i loro figli. Ma il lavoro nel mondo era diverso: quello dovevano farlo gli uomini, e lì ci voleva la competizione.
> Loro ascoltavano attente.
> − Siamo così curiose di sapere. […] Il vostro dev'essere un mondo vario e meraviglioso. Diteci cos'è questo lavoro nel mondo che devono fare gli uomini, che noi qui non abbiamo?
> − Oh, tutto – disse grandiosamente Terry.− Da noi fanno tutto gli uomini…− Drizzò le spalle e gonfiò il petto. − Noi non permettiamo alle nostre donne di lavorare. Noi le donne le amiamo, le onoriamo, le idolatriamo. Le teniamo in casa, nel **santuario domestico**, a curare i bambini.
> − Che cos'è il santuario domestico? − chiese Somel.
> Ma Zava s'intromise: −No, **per favore,** ditemi prima: davvero nessuna donna lavora?
> − Be', qualcuna sì, per forza − disse Terry.− Le più povere.
> − E quante sono, nel vostro paese?
> − Sette o otto milioni − disse Jeff, il malign. (Gilman 1980, p. 90)

Moreover, in the quoted passage, Campana inserts additional terms that risk betraying Gilman's source text. Such is the case with "nel santuario domestico" / "into the domestic sanctuary", that the translator uses as if "home" / "casa" could not be accurate enough. Another good example is Rava's reply to Terry: "No, per favore, ditemi prima: davvero nessuna donna lavora?". The addition of the adverb "per favore" / "please" completely transforms the tone of the sentence, which appears imploring and suppliant instead of parenthetical and elucidative. Naturally, Franco Venturi's version follows Campana's in every respect. In the opening of the following chapter,

even if the character of Van had always been proud of his country, he has to admit that "these women, without the slightest appearance of malice or satire, continually bring up points of discussion which we spent our best efforts in evading" (Gilman 1996, p. 62). For Gilman, this awareness represents the first step toward a radical transformation of society. In *With Her in Ourland*, the sequel to *Herland* published in 1916, Gilman presents the second half of the so-called Herland chronicle. In it the narration dissects the patriarchal and technological madness of World War I, and points constructively to an alternative future based on the pragmatic application of feminist values (Hill 1996, p. 251). Unfortunately, the text is still waiting for an Italian translation.

**Bionote:** C. Bruna Mancini is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Calabria and Member of the Board of the Italian Association of English Studies. In 2005 she published Sguardi su Londra. Immagini di una città mostruosa (Liguori). She edited and translated into Italian *The Mercenary Lover* by Eliza Haywood (Liguori, 2003) and *Angelica, or, Quixote in Petticoats* by Charlotte Lennox (Liguori, 2006). In 2015 she translated *The Shelter* by Caryl Phillips (Napoli, Liguori). In 2020 she published *Spazi del Femminile nelle letterature e culture di lingua inglese tra Settecento e Ottocento* (Mimesis) and co-edited with David Punter *Space(s) of the Fantastic. A 21rst Century Manifesto* (Routledge, 2020). In 2024 she published *Violenza di genere in Orlando di Virginia Woolf passando per Room of One's Own e Three Guineas* (Mimesis). She is co-director of the series "Margini" (Mimesis) and co-directs the online journal Margins Marges Margini (https://mimesisjournals.com/ojs/index.php/margins).

**Author's address:** bruna.mancin@unical.it.

# References


Aksoy B. 2001, *Translation as Rewriting: The Concept and Its Implications on the Emergence of a National Literature*, in "Translation Journal" 5 [3]. https://translationjournal.net/journal/17turkey.htm (05.10.2023).

Ann J.L. 1997, *To Herland and Beyond: The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville/London.

Blakesley J. 2011, *Franco Buffoni: The Poietic Encounter*, in "Journal of Italian Translation" 6 [1-2], pp. 286-313.

Buffoni F. 2007, *Con Il testo a Fronte: Indagine sul tradurre e l'essere tradotti*, Interlinea, Novara.

Christensen A.G. 2017, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman's* Herland *and the Tradition of the Scientific Utopia*, in "Utopian Studies" 28 [2], pp. 286-304.

Connell J.M. 1995, *Revisiting the Concept of Community: An Examination of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Utopian Vision*, in "Peabody Journal of Education" 70 [4], pp. 19-33.

Cordingley A. and Frigau Manning C. (eds.) 2017, *Collaborative Translation: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*, Bloomsbury, London.

Daca M. 2017, *Female and Male Solidarity in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's* Herland*: Myths Deconstructed*, in "Beyond Philology" 14 [4], pp. 65-79.

Davis C.J. 2005, *Love and Economics: Charlotte Perkins Gilman on 'The Woman Question'*, in "ATQ: 19th Century American Literature and Culture" 19 [4], pp. 242–248.

Davis C.J. 2010, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Biography*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA.

Edelstein S. 2011, *The Yellow Newspaper. Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Sensational Journalism*, in Tuttle J.S. and Farley Kessler C. (eds.), *Charlotte Perkins Gilman. New Texts, New Contexts*, The Ohio State University, Columbus, pp. 180-199.

Gilman C.P. 1980, *Terradilei*, trad. italiana di Campana A., La Tartaruga, Milano.

Gilman C.P. 1991, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Gilman C.P. 1997, *With Her in Ourland: Sequel to Herland*, in Deegan M.J. and Hill M.R. (eds.), Bloomsbury Publishing, New York.

Gilman C.P. 1997, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution*, Dover Publications, Mineola, New York.

Gilman C.P. [1915] 1998, *Herland*, Dover Publications, Mineola, New York.

Gilman C.P. 2011, *La terra delle donne. Herland e altri racconti* (1891-1916), edizione italiana a cura di Scacchi A., prefazione di Franco V., Donzelli, Roma.

Gilman C.P. 2015, *Terradilei*, a cura di Venturi F., testo inglese a fronte, La Vita Felice, Milano.

Gilman C.P. 2019, *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Writings*, Gibbs Smith, Kaysville.

Gordin M.D., Tilley H. and Prakash G. (eds.) 2010, *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Hill M.R. 1996, *Herland, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, in Magill F.N. (ed.), *Masterpieces of Women's Literature*, HarperCollins, New York, pp. 251-254.

Karpinski J.B. 1991, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman by Charlotte Perkins Gilman / Growing Up in Boston's Gilded Age: The Journal of Alice Stone Blackwell, 1872–1874*, in "Legacy" 8 [2], pp. 157-159.

Kimura A. 2005, *A Story on the Verge: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Narrative of Madness in 'The Yellow Wallpaper'*, in "The Journal of Psychoanalytical Study of English Language and Literature" 25, pp. 13-26.

Lane, A.J. 1991, *To Herland and Beyond: The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Pantheon, New York.

Lamont V. 2005, *Cattle Branding and the Traffic in Women in Early Twentieth-Century Westerns by Women*, in "Legacy" 22 [1], pp. 30-46.

Lefevere A. 2004, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Shanghai.

Peebles Tavera S. 2018, *Her Body,* Herland*: Reproductive Health and Dis/topian Satire in Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, in "Utopian Studies" 29 [1], pp. 1-20.

Seitler D. 2003, *Unnatural Selection: Mothers, Eugenic Feminism, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Regeneration Narratives*, in "American Quarterly" 44 [1], pp. 61-88.

Shuping R. 2013, *Translation as Rewriting*, in "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science" 3 [18], pp. 55-59.

Stage S. 1997, *Ellen Richards and the Social Significance of the Home Economics Movement*, in Stage S. and Vincenti V.B. (eds.), *Rethinking Home Economics, Women and the History of a Profession*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

Terrinoni E. 2019, *Oltre abita il silenzio. Tradurre la letteratura*, Il Saggiatore, Milano.

Tuttle J.S. and Kessler C.F. (eds.) 2011, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman. New Texts, New Context*s, The Ohio State University, Columbus.

Venuti L. 2019, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, Routledge, London/New York.

Vieira F. 2010, *The Concept of Utopia*, in Claeys G. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 3-27.

Lingue e Linguaggi
Lingue Linguaggi 72 (2025), 231-253
ISSN 2239-0367, e-ISSN 2239-0359
DOI 10.1285/i22390359v72p231
http://siba-ese.unisalento.it, © 2025 Università del Salento


# EMPIRES OF THE EVERYDAY
## Poetry as a translator of Empire

ANNA LEE-POPHAM
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

**Abstract** – This article examines how poetry might act as a translator of Empire and posits that such translation is a critical component of resistance, following Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian's (2020) framing of translator as witness-bearer. I consider ways that poetry might engage in acts of translation across a single language to reflect the historical and contemporary contexts of imperialism and colonialization, and recognize this as a political process, drawing from scholars working on translation and/or language, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2018), Luciana de Mesquita Silva and Dennys Silva-Reis (2019), and Don Mee Choi (2020). This article specifically examines a collection of poetry I wrote, titled *Empires of the Everyday*, wherein the poems spar with an AI translator to expose the history and ongoing presence of colonialism and state violence. Through this examination, this article asks: How might a poetry versed in a Black feminist praxis render a translation of Empire possible? How might such a translation focus attention on "reflecting, intuiting, making sense of, and undoing the times we live in", which Dionne Brand (2017b, audio recording) has suggested is the liberating work of poetry? How is such a process of translating across paradigms implicated in acts of activism as resistance?

**Keywords**: Empire; translation; poetry; resistance; activism.

## 1. Introduction

In this article, I draw from the approaches and theories of translators, poets, and other thinkers and examine a collection of poetry I wrote titled *Empires of the Everyday*[1] to ask: How might a poetry versed in a Black feminist praxis[2] render a translation of Empire possible? How might such a translation focus attention on "reflecting, intuiting, making sense of, and undoing the times we live in" (Brand 2017b, audio recording)? How is such a process of translating across paradigms implicated in acts of activism as resistance? To explore these questions, I begin with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's

[1] *Empires of the Everyday* was published by McClelland and Stewart in 2024.
[2] This article draws from the understanding of Black feminism articulated by the Combahee River Collective (1977, no pagination), including that "liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy".

framing of Empire as "the political subject that effectively regulates […] global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world" (2020, p. xi). Hardt and Negri continue:

> Empire establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries and barriers. It is a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontier. (Hardt, Negri 2020, p. xii)

I then draw from Antonio Gramsci's (1971) understanding of cultural hegemony, which articulates that a key project of Empire is to prevent those living within its borders from seeing its imagination and to render unrecognizable the ways this imagination is ever-present and omnipresent. Hegemony,[3] which Gramsci came to view as the "most important face of power" (Femia 1981, p. 26), is exercised through civil society. According to Emeritus Professor of Political Theory Joseph V. Femia, Gramsci identified civil society as "the ideological superstructure, the institutions and technical instruments that create and diffuse modes of thought" (1981, p. 26). This attempt to hide the imagination of Empire can be seen in acts of the State, which, "when [it] wants to initiate an unpopular action or policy, creates in advance a suitable, or appropriate, public opinion; that is, it organizes and centralizes certain elements of civil society" (Gramsci 1971, pp. 27-28). From this, I move to poet Don Mee Choi's articulation of how "the language of capture, torture, massacre is difficult to decipher. It's practically a foreign language" (2020, p. 43), which suggests that life within Empire (that is, within both its geographic location and its imaginative realm) requires a translation.

As a response to the above questions – about the potential role of poetry as activist-translator of Empire – I propose that poetry, as a form that bends language and so invites readers to bend their comprehension of what is possible, might offer opportunity for such a translation. This, in turn, might create the possibility of resistance – and even contribute to the necessary transformation of hegemony "from a principle that mystifies the social situation to one that exposes exploitation and supersedes it" (Femia 1981, p. 53). Drawing from Édouard Glissant's (1997) right to opacity, I suggest that this hegemony – through attempting to make simple or transparent that which is deeply complex – "mystifies the social situation" (Femia 1981 p. 53), making the nuance of social and political contexts less perceptible. Yet, these

[3] Hegemony is "an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society, in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all tastes, morality, customs, religions and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotations" (Williams 1960, p. 587).

social and political contexts (and the associated lived realities) in their complexity and nuance, exist within states of opacity,[4] which Glissant explains as "that which cannot be reduced, which is the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence" (1997, p. 191). By "expos[ing] exploitation and [even] supersed[ing] it" (Femia 1981, p. 53), opacity can supersede a false simplicity created, as explained by poet Dionne Brand below, by the language, and specifically the narrative, of Empire. Similarly, I would suggest that the process of exposing exploitation is not one of rendering greater transparency but rather of "reflecting, intuiting, making sense of, and undoing the times we live in", a process Brand (2017b, audio recording) explains as the liberating work of poetry. Brand (2018b, audio recording) elucidates:

> Poetry is always abstract even when it is narrative poetry. […] Good poetry anyway, that is poetry that fills out its entire capacities on line and meter and metaphor and pressure on the unknown, putting different things together to make new meaning all the time, that work that should keep happening in every line.

Similarly, according to academic Alessandro Corio (2013, p. 922), Glissant argues that "poetry does not utter or appropriate the expression of the living, but relentlessly searches for a word which is capable of listening for the 'cry of the world' and which thereby allows itself to intersect with its enigma".

This article approaches the role of poetry as translator as one deeply tied to activism, in the form of resistance, in that poetry as translator of Empire does not seek to replicate, reproduce, or paraphrase the language of Empire, as reported by mainstream news or other state-backed entities. Rather poetry, as a form of translatory activism, can "reflect" (Brand, 2017b, audio recording) what is implicit, yet often unsaid or simplified, in those texts and communications. Through this, I would suggest that poetry can be seen as taking on a role that is similar to that of the "activist role of the translator", which Distinguished Professor in Comparative Poetics and Global Politics Rebecca Ruth Gould and translator, poet, and critic Kayvan Tahmasebian explain as "the corrector of the false representations" (2020, p. 4).[5] Just as "an activist agenda may motivate a translator to intervene with the meanings

[4] Glissant's "right to opacity" recognizes that "if we examine the process of 'understanding' people and ideas from the perspective of Western thought, we discover that its basis is this requirement for transparency" (1997, pp. 189-190).

[5] In Gould and Tahmasebian's introduction to *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, they explain that Bader Eddin (in Chapter 9) writes about the translation on social media of graffiti from Aleppo about the Syrian war. They articulate that in the chapter Eddin "warns against the oversimplification of the disastrous wartime conditions in Syria by the images that circulate, via social media, around the world" (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020, p. 4).

and tones of the original" (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020, p. 4), I would suggest that a poet may also engage in a process of reconfiguring translation, in that

> if there is a fidelity inhering in activist translation, it is to the 'situation' […] which is intrinsically and irrevocably political. This situation is comprised of the socio-political contexts into which the translated text seeks to intervene. (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020, p. 4)

I would offer that the same process is true for the poet's relationship to a poetic text.

From these understandings, this article sees the poet as translator in the role of "poet *engagé*", which Brand explains as the "tradition of poets who think of poetry as a political act, who think about poetry as a kind of making new meaning in the world" (in Bresge 2019, no pagination), and in the role of engaging in "a poetics of liberation [by] not writ[ing] toward anything called justice, but against tyranny" (Brand 2017b, audio recording). Here I am suggesting that engaged poets work in parallel with, as Mourad (2000, p. 165) writes, "engaged translators [who …] make special selections and use specific translation strategies to introduce, serve, or foster an ideology or agenda 'that explicitly challenge[s] the dominant narratives of the time' [quoting Baker 2010, p. 23]". This framing draws from English and Portuguese language lecturer Luciana de Mesquita Silva and adjunct professor in translation theory Dennys Silva-Reis's recognition that "the categories of gender and race are not only social but also categories of linguistic-cultural analysis" (2019, p. 14) and "no use of the word is neutral [therefore] the reading of texts (and later their translations) is a moment of utterance and voicing" (p. 15). This seems to echo Brand's poem *No Language Is Neutral* (1990), in which she writes,

> A hidden verb
> takes inventory of those small years like a person
> waiting at a corner, counting and growing thin
> through life as a cloth and as water
>
> […]
>
> I became more secretive, language
> seemed to split in two, one branch fell silent, the other
> argued hotly for going home. (p. 28)
>
> […]
>
> I have listened to the hard
> gossip of race that inhabits this road. Even in this I
> have tried to hum mud and feathers and sit peacefully
> in this foliage of bones and rain. (p. 31)

Here I posit that poetry is engaged in translation as a process with impacts, echoing Brand's perspective of seeing her poetry as "an action which propels or generates an action, so a poem is an action in the world, a line is an action in the world and so the world will be different the moment I say this" (Brand 2023, audio recording).

In this article, poetry takes on the role of translator as witness-bearer, which Gould and Tahmasebian explain occurs when "the boundary between author and translator is rendered invisible. The particular kind of agency of the translator as witness-bearer often merges with that of the poet" (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020, p. 2). I will examine herein how, in my collection of poetry, *Empires of the Everyday*, this translator as witness-bearer seeks to "make sense of" (Brand 2017b, audio recording) everyday life within Empire. I suggest that poetry in this role is both a form of resistance in and of itself and an articulation of the need for resistance through re-instilling in language the complexity and opacity (Glissant 1997) that exist in the social world. I would suggest that the role of translator as witness-bearer aligns with Brand's explanation of the role of poet as witness; Brand explains: "I've always thought of myself as a writer who follows, who listens, who accounts" (2023, audio recording).

In *Empires of the Everyday*, this translation occurs within – or perhaps across – a single language (in this case English) that translates current events into poetic text. The project is interested in ways that poetry, by not adhering to the rules of the language of Empire and instead leaning into the poetic form, can reflect, intuit, and make sense of (Brand, 2017b, audio recording) historical and contemporary imperial and colonial contexts. While it has been said that poetry is untranslatable, I aim to suggest, instead, that poetry can act as a vital tool for translation – a translation that is embedded in, and perhaps necessary to, resistance and liberatory possibilities.

## 2. Translating Empire

### *2.1. The necessary translation of Empire*

I am specifically interested in the ways that Hardt and Negri extend their understanding of Empire, articulated above, into a focus on the role of translation in the context of liberation struggles. Hardt and Negri state: "For a cycle [of struggle] to form [across processes of liberation], the recipients of the news must be able to 'translate' the events into their own language, recognize the struggles as their own, and thus add a link to the chain" (Hardt, Negri 2000, pp. 50-51). They continue:

> There is no common language of struggles that could 'translate' the particular language of each into a cosmopolitan language. Struggles in other parts of the world and even our own struggles seem to be written in an incomprehensible foreign language. This too points toward an important political task: to construct a new common language that facilitates communication, as the languages of anti-imperialism and proletarian internationalism did for the struggles of a previous era. Perhaps this needs to be a new type of communication that functions not on the basis of resemblances but on the basis of differences: a communication of singularities. (Hardt, Negri 2020, p. 57)

This statement – a linking to a common language – seems to follow the poet Adrienne Rich's (1991) interest in *The Dream of a Common Language*[6] held within poetry. Haines (2017, p. 207) explains Rich's poetic practice as "commoning; it is an activity that removes life and language from capitalist relations, patriarchal arrangements, and heteronormative compulsions, experimenting with new social relations in the process". This article attempts to explore the ways towards which this common language contributes to understandings of both hegemony and liberation by translating the language of Empire into the language of poetry.

### *2.2. Empire's narrative and poetry's diacritics*[7]

Emphasizing the embeddedness of narrative within Empire, Brand (2017a) proposes "a radical indictment of Narrative", stating:

> For Black people, Narrative, as it is constituted now, is incapable of transmitting or sounding a tomorrow beyond brutalisation. It is incapable of transmitting or sounding a present, a today, since our lived today is cluttered in frequencies of oppression and responses to oppression. (Brand 2017a, p. 59)

Brand continues:

> Narrative is, to my mind, almost always implicated in the colonial/imperialist/racist project – with one's best efforts one writes back to, or against, first the existence and then the persistence of the dominant narratives of coloniality, racism and imperialism. […] So predicated this narrative language compels us to answer in the same language, struck through, enlivened by the action of our bodies in race. […] In effect, we narrate non-being. (Brand 2017a, p. 60)

Brand (2017a, p. 59) suggests that poetry, in contrast, "perhaps, with its capacities to deposit and unearth plural meanings, with its refusals of a

[6] Rich's 1991 poetry collection is titled *The Dream of a Common Language* and contains a poem by the same name.

[7] Diacritics are "small letter-shaped symbols or other marks which can be added to a vowel or consonant symbol to modify or redefine its meaning in various ways" (IPA 1999, p. 15).

particular interrogative gaze might cut out a space toward a description of being in the diaspora". According to Brand:

> the reader interrogates Narrative but Poetry interrogates the reader. […] The reader's response is tangential to poetry, whereas it is crucial to narrative. Poetry requires a deciphering of meaning whereas narrative enjoins, hails the known world. (Brand 2017a, p. 59)

Brand emphasizes the diacritical work of poetry, writing:

> much in the way that diacritical marks supplement certain alphabets changing the sound, tone, or meaning of certain words, Poetry, in my formulation, changes what I see as the racist alphabets of narratives – the prevalent modes of speech and key impediments to Black being. (Brand 2017a, p. 59)

Through this, Brand outlines the ways that poetry allows one to see without the limits of Empire.

### *2.3. What does translating Empire do?*

In this framing of poetry as translator, I extend and offer a slight shift to Professor of Philosophy and French Damian Tissot's explanation of Antoine Berman's articulation of the role of the translator. Tissot states that, according to Berman, "the translator should find a way of making textually accessible to the target reader what is precisely different from their reality" (Tissot 2017, p. 39). I would suggest that poetry as translator can instead make accessible to the reader what is *precisely consistent and opaque but perceived as transparent* in one's reality. Furthermore, I would suggest that it is poetry's capacity to bend language that offers these insights into one's reality (as articulated in Section 3.2 below). This perspective draws also from Kay O'Halloran *et al.*'s understanding of intersemiotic translation as "the constant translation of signs into other signs [forming] the basis of cultural communication" (O'Halloran *et al.* 2016, p. 199). Umberto Eco explains:

> Culture continuously translates signs into other signs, and definitions into other definitions, words into icons, icons into ostensive signs, ostensive signs into new definitions, new definitions into propositional functions, propositional functions into exemplifying sentences, and so on; in this way it proposes to its members an uninterrupted chain of cultural units composing other cultural units, and thus translating and explaining them. (Eco 1979, p. 71)

I suggest that poetry disrupts this cultural translation process and engages in a separate process of translation, operating with a distinctly different set of signs. The poems in *Empires of the Everyday*, some of which are included below, attempt to engage in this process of "reflecting, intuiting, making

sense of, and undoing" (Brand 2017b, audio recording) the contemporary everyday, its signs, and its symbols, and through doing so engage in a deeper refusal to "renovate the narratives of coloniality and imperialism" (Brand 2017a, p. 63). In this way, *Empires of the Everyday* attempts to "render metropolitan language into [poetic] vernaculars" by, like the translator as witness-bearer, "inventing new forms and generating new meanings from felicitous if unexpected linguistic juxtaposition" (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020, p. 3).

Similarly, poetry can (and *Empires of the Everyday* attempts to) do the work of translating between paradigms (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020), specifically the paradigm of Empire and a liberatory paradigm, by "rendering theories" (Wróblewska 2020, pp. 15-16) created from the language of one social and political context into a different form of language. I am interested in ways that this process can "intervene into the existing power relations and alter the composition of the historical bloc" (Wróblewska 2020, p. 18).[8] To do so effectively, "a translator must exploit parallels between source and target culture, taking into account their different points of development" (Wróblewska 2020, pp. 15-16).

Drawing from Brand's discussion of narrative (outlined above), I suggest that the language of Empire cannot in fact translate itself, and so requires a different mode to enable translation. This also extends Gramsci's understanding that different fields of study must be translated (Wróblewska 2020, p. 16). While Gramsci ([1995] 1999, p. 452) explains that an economic argument may be expressed in the language of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, or Karl Marx, poetry can use a language that operates outside the constraints of Empire. In this, I wish to suggest that, as a vehicle for translation, poetry reflects, with the goal of undoing (Brand 2017b, audio recording), the historical and contemporary contexts by existing outside of, and even without, the confines of narrative. This is done with the goal of "making sense of" (Brand 2017b, audio recording) the contemporary moment and its historical lineage. Crucially this understanding and its development is an act of resistance because thinking outside the constraints of Empire, beyond its imagination, is a critical step in "undoing the time we live in" (Brand 2017b, audio recording). I suggest, therefore, that this thinking, enabled through poetry as translator, is a critical component of resistance, and so too of activism.

[8] The "historical bloc" is put forward by Antonio Gramsci as "the social order that produces and re-produces the hegemony of the dominant class through a nexus of institutions, social relations, and ideas" (Gould, Tahmasebian 2020, p. 7).

# 3. Poetry as translator

## *3.1. The disorientation of translation and poetry*

This examination of the role of poetry as translator is rooted in Frantz Fanon's understanding of the language of the colonizer. As articulated by Professor in African American Studies John Drabinski (2019), Fanon emphasized that,

> if speaking a language means participating in a world and adopting a civilization, then the language of the colonized, a language imposed by centuries of colonial domination and dedicated to the elimination or abjection of other expressive forms, speaks the world of the colonizer. (no pagination)

Similarly, this article also builds on scholar John Patrick Leary's positioning that "the language we have to understand and describe our era's inequality is itself one of the instruments of perpetuating it" (Leary 2018, p. 1), which then moves Leary to ask: "How can we think and act critically in the present when the very medium of the present, language, constantly betrays us?" (p. 2). To respond, I look to academic, novelist, and critic Raymond Williams's *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Society and Culture* (1985), which Leary's book follows and which sought to instill in readers an understanding of language as "not a tradition to be learned, nor a consensus to be accepted, [but …] a vocabulary to use, to find our own ways in, to change as we find it necessary to change it, as we go on making our own language and history" (Williams 1985, p. 24). Here, I suggest that poetry, as a translator that bends language, creates specific and interesting opportunities to make one's own language, and so too make sense of one's own history and future.

While this article attempts to explore the ways that poetry, as a translator, might push the boundaries of "speaking the world of the colonizer" (Fanon in Drabinksi 2019), it also learns from philosopher and cultural critic Walter Benjamin's differentiation between translation and poetry. Benjamin (1997, p. 159) articulates that "the poet's intention is spontaneous, primary, concrete, whereas the translator's is derivative, final, ideal". I suggest that by considering poetry as a specific form of language into which ideas can be translated, a form of language that is primary, concrete, and guided by spontaneity, a different sense and meaning can be offered to ideas communicated in the narrative-based language of Empire. Benjamin also states:

> It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language. (2004, p. 261)

This "allow[s] his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue" (Benjamin 1997, p. 163). Here, I invite readers to consider poetry as the "foreign tongue" that can "powerfully affect" (Benjamin 1997, p. 163) the "decayed barriers" (Benjamin 2004, p. 261) of the language of Empire.

In this examination it has been particularly interesting to notice the parallels between the ways poetry and translation are discussed. Earlier, I mentioned the "common language" referred to by Hardt and Negri (2000) to respond to the need to facilitate communication across struggles, alongside Rich's (1991) focus on the common language within poetry. I also mentioned the echo between de Mesquita Silva and Silva-Reis's recognition that "no use of the word is neutral [therefore] the reading of texts (and later their translations) is a moment of utterance and voicing" (2019, p. 15) and Brand's poem titled *No Language Is Neutral* (1990). I would also suggest that other perspectives on translation align with understandings of what poetry does. Patricia Hill Collins's articulation that "individuals who serve as translators not only interpret the varying meanings across different intellectual, political, and social settings, they create knowledge in border spaces" (2000, p. xi) aligns with Brand's interest in following the "tradition of poets who think of poetry as a political act, who think about poetry as a kind of making new meaning in the world" (Brand in Bresge 2019, no pagination). Linguist and translator Michela Baldo's acknowledgement that translators create "new discourses" (2010, p. 34) and Judith Butler's understanding of translation as a process that "will constitute a loss, a disorientation, but one in which the human stands a chance of coming into being anew" (2004, p. 38) converse with Brand's articulation that poetry "can expose the heterogeneous qualities of a life, or of life, in an age when all efforts, both corporate and State, seem to make homogenous. […] Poetry has the capacity to blow oxygen on a stiff existence" (2017a, p. 72). Lastly, this project recognizes poetry as a form that can extend Benjamin's awareness of translation as standing "midway between poetry and doctrine" (1968, p. 77); scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's articulation of translation as both "necessary and impossible" (2018, audio recording); and poet Raul Zurita's understanding of poetry as "an X-ray, a history of human emotions, and a history of how individuals are affected by the real" (2014, no pagination).

### *3.2. Empires of the Everyday*

Following Gould and Tahmasebian's (2020) framing of translator as witness-bearer, explained above, the poems in *Empires of the Everyday* look at how a feminist praxis enables resistance though a translation of current affairs into poetry. The collection examines how imperialism is ever-present and often operates invisibly in the contemporary quotidian. In the poems, these

dynamics are examined through the feminist sociological lens of what sociologist Dorothy Smith calls "the everyday" (1987, p. 9), meaning both the particular local places where people live their lives and "a way of seeing, from where we actually live, into the power, processes, and relations that organize and determine the everyday context of that seeing" (Smith 1987, p. 9). The poetry collection also draws from Fanon's (1961) and Gramsci's (1971) work to attempt to uncover the imperial currents present in both explicit acts of racialized state violence as well as cultural meanings implicit within language, media, and technology and their impacts on ideology. To do so, the poems come after Louis Althusser's (2014) understanding of ideological state apparatuses as tools to maintain capitalism and enable the interpellation of people into social subjects – and therefore "political beings" always affected by the actions of the state, as per Ralph Miliband (2009, p. 1).

In the collection, the poems spar with an AI translator, the "I" of the poems, which is fed news and spits out text exposing the history and ongoing presence of Empire, colonialism, and state violence. This speaker observes and examines regimes of power as communicated through technologies and media, and embodies an antagonistic, if observational, stance towards the resulting violence. Following the works of Adrienne Rich (*Atlas of the Difficult World*), Dionne Brand (*Inventory*), C.D. Wright (*Rising, Falling, Hovering*), and other poets, the poems often address multiple, specific individuals ("you") of various subjectivities moving through the landscape of the poems ("the city") and confined within the context of Empire. The use of "the city" in the poems draws from Brand's understanding, as a place that "encapsulates life, captures life, makes life happen" (2021, audio recording). The collection is divided into five "episodes" (or scenes) plus a final episode: in episode one, the poems follow the "you" within the city, but with distant understanding of the impacts; in episode two, the "you" begins to feed the "I" theories from key thinkers, writers, and poets, alongside details of their life such that the "I" can translate the city; in episode three, the "I" translates the city for the "you"; in episode four, the "you", having gained an understanding of the city, attempts to resist it; episode five explores different possible ends for "you" and "I"; and a single contrapuntal poem in the *Final Episode* is read in three voices with different meanings. By peeling back the mundane to reveal the imperial within, the "I" of the poems engages in an explicit critique of Empire. The complexities of such a critique from technology, constructed by and within an imperial context, are explored by drawing from literary critic Edward Said's (1993) framing of the "imagination of empire" as well as the work of philosopher and poet Audre Lorde (1984).

Moving from the understanding of translation explained herein and the recognition that Empire attempts to prevent us from seeing itself and so requires a translatory process, the project traces the "you" of the poems. This

begins with an initial position of presence within Empire, what the poems call "the city", but a distant engagement with its impacts, because of not yet having access to this translator. The collection opens with the following poem:

> ***To the City in Translation***[9]
>
> At twelve, you awake each morning evaporating
> your public faith limits you, your ears inessential
> to the symphony, your uncertainty crawls the cold
> avenues of your clavicle, you siphon your blood
>
> to an anaemic language, by twenty-one, you are steeped
> within a suspended city, the operator says there is no fare
> to pay today, beyond the subway's static walls of each
> other's unknown whereabouts, in this prolific silence
>
> the city always veers from, in this ultimatum to every nation:
> With us. Against us. You stand with an x-ray of the real,
> its massacres difficult to decipher, your own struggles written
> in an impossible language, a necessary one, you parse
>
> the city's wires, at the threshold of doctrine you form
> to be on another tongue, you concrete a common thing.

This first poem of the collection attempts to situate the collection within the theoretical frameworks that are critical to the ideas explored in the poem (as mentioned in the associated footnote). For example, the second line ("your public faith limits you, your ears inessential / to the symphony") both draws from Benjamin's discussion of the role of the audience in art (specifically "no symphony [is intended] for the listener") and, by placing the words "to the symphony" on a separate line, attempts to draw attention to its meaning. In this use of enjambment, the poem creates an opportunity to look more closely at this terminology than might be enabled through prose, raising questions of

[9] Following is an abridged version of the endnote associated with this poem in the collection. The parts that are included here are those that are relevant to the current discussion. In *The Translator's Task*, Walter Benjamin (1997) writes, "no poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener" (p. 89), frames translation as standing "midway between poetry and doctrine" (p. 94), and states that "the poet's intention is spontaneous, primary, concrete, whereas the translator's is derivative, final, ideal" (94). Arundhati Roy (2016), in *Come September*, explains the "with us" frame, writing, "we are being asked to believe that the U.S. marines are actually on a feminist mission". Brand (2017b, audio recording), in her talk *Writing Against Tyranny and Toward Liberation*, says, "Canada is no less imperialist or oppressive [than the United States] but I fool myself into parsing the difference, this [the US] being the center the imperialism and where I live [Canada] a kind of subdivision".

what the symphony is, who is creating the contemporary symphony, and what its role is in the current moment.

In bringing together the thinking of Benjamin, Arundhati Roy, Brand, and others, the poem attempts to explore what happens when these thinkers' ideas exist in proximity to one another – how together they create a specific lens through which we might gain access to a deeper understanding. This poem attempts to show how poetry, as a form, creates rich opportunity for such overlaying of different ideas, and the work of different thinkers, to show how their ideas and words might exist in relationship to one another. In this way, the poetic form can be an opportunity to witness the co-existence of different ideas as they build on each other and collectively contribute to understandings. This ongoing movement away from linearity and towards making a different sense and meaning is attempted in the collection of poetry as the "you" awakens to Empire and engages the "I" in translating the city by giving both their details to this machine "I", alongside other language and texts that assist the translation process. In this way, and as discussed above, other thinkers contributed to the translation, as did I, the poet.

The following poem, which is the first in the second episode, introduces the concept of the machine ("the neural machine") translating life in the city into something more comprehensible through being fed current events, the texts of critical thinkers, and details of life of the "you" of the poems.

***Introductions***[10]

to I: Amidst cranes, copper stripped, coiled
vibrations of your voice, amidst highways,
you inject your dry knowing of zeros,
of ones, of heaving catastrophes, small

plywood shelters the city demolishes
in pandemic winters, the violence of daily
minutia, then also di Prima, Césaire, Lorde,
Maracle, Glissant, Gramsci, Simone, Fanon

and more into me, a neural machine,
to rotate an atlas of language, angle the spectacle
of the city to your eye, utter and even
undo a renovated grammar, but only this

misses the immediacy of today's asymmetric

[10] This poem follows the film *Seven Prisoners* (2021), specifically regarding the reference to copper for use in the city's transmitters, and Catherine Porter's (2021) *New York Times* article titled *The Carpenter Who Built Tiny Homes for Toronto's Homeless*.

> mimicry, so into me you embed: your life.

This poem attempts to explore the ways that poetry, differently from journalism, can navigate the nuances of current events (and so the ways it contributes a specific insight into the process of translating Empire). Specifically, the lines "heaving catastrophes, / small // plywood shelters the city demolishes / in pandemic winters, the violence of daily / minutia" attempt to focus attention on the event of plywood structures being torn down by the City of Toronto during the winter of 2021 (as outlined in the *New York Times* article cited in the footnote) and also bring awareness to the ways this plays out as a part of the everyday lived violence of Empire (Fanon 1961) in the city. The juxtaposition of these two components – the reporting of the current event alongside the understanding of the daily violence of life in the city – allows for a specific documentation of the current moment. This follows professor of contemporary writing at Northumbria University Katy Shaw's understanding, as quoted by freelance journalist Donna Ferguson (2019), of current attempts to repurpose poetry

> as this really dynamic and vital form that can capture, in a very condensed way, the turbulent nature of contemporary society – and give us the space to struggle with our desire to understand and negotiate a lot of what is going on at the moment. (Ferguson 2019, no pagination)

Ferguson further quotes Shaw as saying:

> Poetry as a form can capture the immediate responses of people to divisive and controversial current events. Writing poetry and sharing it in this context is a radical event, an act of resistance to encourage other people to come round to your perspective. (Ferguson 2019, no pagination)

The poems attempt to explore the outcome of this relationship of the "you" with the machine translator and the information that the machine conveys about these current events – communicated differently than would be possible through journalism, as explained above. As these relationships develop, so too does the experience of the "you". This occurs against the backdrop of both Gramsci's uncovering of, as Femia (1981, p. 35) writes, the "process of internalization of bourgeois relations and the consequent diminution of revolutionary possibilities" and Brand's focus on the work of poetry as it is "reflecting, intuiting, making sense of, and undoing the times we live in" (2017b, audio recording), mentioned earlier. The collection shows curiosity about that experience of the "you", which shifts from internalized hegemony towards an engagement with an undoing of the times, as well as the tension between this engagement and the ongoing interest of Empire preventing those living within its borders from seeing its imagination.

While the above poem, *To the City in Translation*, uses line breaks to

draw attention to a specific set of words (i.e., "to the symphony") and the poem directly above (*Introductions*) juxtaposes words from different sources (news reporting and theory) to contribute to a depth of understanding, the following poem uses enjambment[11] to provide multiple meanings and even experiences.

***The City's Geography of Eyelids***

Behind your stalactite eyelids, the city burns
your vitreous humour then warns you to calm
your colic, your children, each midnight,
your cochlear fluid is the city's wide vowels:

*I'm so glad you can repay the sleep we gave you*
*with the details of your body, your inertia goes*
*so well with the colour of your eyes*, the city floods
its devotion to ceremony, barbs its benches

again tonight, drills in you a toothless
critique, you reach into your antiseptic
sockets for the city's fluent backlog
of pendulous concern, the city says:

*I'm so glad we know what you love, what you*
*love, we see, we remember, we remember, we know.*

Here, I want to focus on the lines "your inertia goes / so well with the colour of your eyes". The poem, by using a break between the word "goes" and the word "so well", creates an opportunity for multiple readings, and in doing so attempts to draw attention to both the promises and the reality made by "the city". The line "your inertia goes" could be understood as a promise by the city that the inertia experienced by the "you" in the poems will leave, creating a sense of possibility and activity beyond the confines of the apathy that comes with inertia. When the poem is read further, it reveals the fuller meaning of what the city is communicating: "Your inertia goes / so well with the colour of your eyes". As shown in this reading, the city makes no such promise to lift the inertia. Instead, the inertia, the apathy, and lack of resistance by the "you" in the poem is important to the city – and its ability to maintain the daily violence explored in the previous poem – and, as such, the city seeks to convince the "you" that the presence of that inertia is in harmony with their very being, their very way of seeing the world, their eyes.

[11] Enjambment is "the running-over of a sentence or phrase from one poetic line to the next, without terminal punctuation" (Poetry Foundation 2023, no pagination).

This project, in its relationship to the city, but also in its approach more broadly, follows Brand's approach to engaging with the city. Brand (2018a, audio recording) explains: "I've felt in my work, my poems and novels, the odd sensation of writing the city into being, though that city that I imagine, and that city that is possible, is yet unfinished". I suggest that projects such as this one can be attempts to understand "the imagination of empire" (Said 1993, p. 12) with the goal of being able to resist it, subvert it, and even engage in a liberatory process when faced with its violence, the violence of the everyday of Empire. As articulated above, I would suggest that translatory activism through poetry is a critical component of this resistance, subversion, and liberation.

The following poem, through its use of a volta,[12] explores one attempt to understand "the imagination of empire":

***On the Fumes of the City***

Of course, as days begin, a rage follows
you into a vacant circulation, within
each sieved ambiguity of evenings,
you could have betrayed and have not

yet, these tools, clear of fumes,
resist static, stagnation, here on the edge
of mechanical needs, you are barely
scratching yourself to the fullest:

the city palliates its sea-lanes in this
uniquely bleak time to come of age,
you say: *I watched the city gather its discarded*
*teeth, its intestines*, the city congeals around

your mourning, you understand its arms,
its armature, its accidents, as never before.

This volta, which in the above poem occurs between the twelfth and thirteenth lines, follows the explanation provided by poets.org (2023, no pagination): "The volta marks a shift from the main narrative or idea of the poem and awakens readers to a different meaning or to a reveal in the conclusion of the poem". While the focus on the first twelve lines of this poem is on what is being done to and by the "you" of the poem, the final couplet directs attention to the understanding the "you" is experiencing. As the final poem in the episode (and the penultimate poem in the collection),

[12] "In a sonnet, the volta is the turn of thought or argument" (Poetry Foundation. *Volta*, 2023, no pagination).

this shift towards greater understanding – which is the critical interest of the collection – attempts to focus the reader's eye on the undercurrent of meaning of the poems and even their possible conclusion. In this way, this project attempts to understand the dystopian elements of current everyday through the degree to which they are, even we are, unknown to ourselves. It does this with the goal of drawing closer to an understanding of what is possible within the everyday. I would suggest that this volta provides a unique opportunity for this shift in main ideas, the juxtaposition of which creates opportunity for insight and revelation.

The possibilities I see in projects such as these, in translation processes such as that offered by the "I" in these poems, and perhaps in poetry more generally, are the ways that "reflecting, intuiting, making sense of, and undoing" (Brand, 2017b, audio recording) Empire might push us towards a collective – or towards Hardt and Negri's framing of the multitude as an "active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common" (Hardt, Negri 2004, p. 100). This article also leans into a curiosity about the ways that Empire might "offer new possibilities to the forces of liberation" (Hardt, Negri 2000, p. xv). At the same time, the project follows Gramsci's thinking, as articulated by Femia (1981, p. 52), that "the march of industry […] leads not to certain revolution but to the integration of the masses into the capitalist system, as the agencies of socialization become more and more sophisticated and ubiquitous". Femia, following Gramsci, continues:

> What is needed in such circumstances is a 'war of position' on the cultural front. This strategy requires steady penetration and subversion of the complex and multiple mechanisms of ideological diffusion. The point of the struggle is to conquer one after another all the agencies of civil society. […] In modern capitalist society a 'reversal of hegemony' is a precondition of successful revolution. But it is not simply a matter of substituting one hegemony for another. The principle of hegemony must itself be transformed – from a principle that mystifies the social situation to one that exposes exploitation and supersedes it. (Femia 1981, pp. 52-53)

These perceptions are in alignment with approaches to translation as a "collective praxis", which as Nagar *et al.* (2017, p. 132) explain, is "a translation process that hungers for ethical engagement through collective agitation [that] can be deeply satisfying precisely because it does not believe in easy resolutions or closures, or in transparent rendering of meanings". This also aligns with Butler's understanding of the practice of translation as "a way of producing – performatively – another kind of 'we,' [so as] to negotiate the right to speak […] to expose and resist its daily violence, and to find the language to which to lay claim to rights to which one is not yet entitled" (Butler 2009, p. x). I posit that this understanding of Empire, this

understanding of translation, and translations of Empire that draw from the possibilities of poetry, are critical components of moving towards collective action. A collective action that can be read, in the context of this collection of poetry, as a poem in three voices. A contrapuntal poem[13] that can be read in multiple ways.

The following poem, *A Final Episode*, also the final in the collection, draws from Said's understanding of contrapuntal analysis. Said explains that reading and understanding contrapuntally involves "a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominant discourse acts" (Said 1993, p. 51). Said continues: "Contrapuntal reading must take into account both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it" (p. 66). While Said's focus is on "extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly removed" (pp. 66-67), I would suggest the same can be said of contrapuntal writing, which happens explicitly, though not exclusively, within contrapuntal poems.

***A Final Episode***

Today they are
the shredded edges
of algorithms

tracking us.
Today they are
determining deliverables
our individual lives
they are
eye in us
compile solutions before
the question called
tomorrow
the fires burn,
a Great Grey Owl pivots
from extinction. Today
Teck is cutting
its own neck. Today
we outsize musculature
they pick up
we pick up
what we left off
what we are:
our bones
Today they are

[13] Contrapuntal is "a poetic form that interweaves two or more poems to create a single poem that can be read in multiple ways, depending on how the poem is designed on the page" (poets.org, *Contrapuntal*, 2023, no pagination).

looking in
our curtains
they shut off
unfinished as the city.

The above contrapuntal poem can be read vertically in three columns or horizontally across the page. Either way, the poem is written as though read in three voices, with one voice reading each column, either taking turns (as in the case of reading vertically down the page) or interspersing the reading (as in the case of reading horizontally across the page).

In following this technique of contrapuntal poetry, the poem attempts to explore the possibilities that lie within multiple readings. The first reading is articulated as the voice of imperialism, made explicit when the poem is read horizontally, with the concluding lines: "Today they are / looking in / our curtains / they shut off / unfinished as the city". This reading attempts to show how the "they", as imperial forces, retain control of their surveillance of individual lives and of shutting down the possibilities for liberation that exist in the city (articulated as "unfinished" in the poem). The second reading is articulated in the voice of resistance, made explicit when the poem is read vertically, with the concluding lines: "Today / we outside musculature / we pick up / what we are: / unfinished as the city". This reading, in contrast, attempts to explore the possibilities that exist in the city of extending beyond the confines of the city, to return to Brand's explanation of "writing the city into being […] a city that is possible, [a city that] is yet unfinished" (2018a, audio recording). In these multiple readings, most explicitly in *The Final Episode*, but throughout the collection, I attempt to explore these multiple voices of resistance that exist within Empire, the unfinished landscapes, and the possibilities therein. I would suggest poetry more broadly, through "reflecting, intuiting, making sense of, and undoing the times we live in" (Brand, 2017b, audio recording), creates unique and important opportunities to explore these possibilities – and has real liberatory potential.

**Bionote:** Anna Lee-Popham is a writer, instructor, and editor in Toronto. Her poetry collection, *Empires of the Everyday* (McClelland and Stewart) was a finalist for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph and is a graduate of Simon Fraser University's Writer's Studio and University of Toronto's School of Continuing Education Creative Writing Certificate, where she received the Janice Colbert Poetry Award. Her writing was first runner-up in *PRISM international*'s Pacific Poetry Prize, shortlisted for *The Fiddlehead* Creative Nonfiction Contest and *Room*'s Poetry Contest, longlisted for CBC's nonfiction prize, and published in *Arc, Brick, Canthius*, *Riddle Fence*, *Autostraddle*, *Lingue e Linguaggi*, and others. Anna teaches creative writing at the University of Guelph and the University of Toronto.

**Author's address:** aleepoph@uoguelph.ca

**Acknowledgements**: the author would like to thank Dionne Brand, Canisia Lubrin, and Charlene Sinclair for their thinking and words, which open landscapes and language.

## References


Althusser L. 2014, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Verso Books, London.

Baldo M. 2020, *Activist Translation, Alliances, and Performativity: Translating Judith Butler's Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly into Italian*, in Gould R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London, pp. 30-48.

Benjamin W. 1968, *The Task of the Translator*, transl. by Zohn H. and Arendt H. (eds.), *Illuminations*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, pp. 69-82.

Benjamin W. 1997, *The Translator's Task, Walter Benjamin (Translation)*, transl. by Rendall S., in "TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction" 10 [2], pp. 151-165.

Benjamin W. 2004, *Selected Writings: Volume 1 1913-1926*, in Bullock M.B. and William M. (eds.), Belknap/Cambridge, MA.

Berman A. 2000, *Translation and the Trials of the Foreign*, in Venuti L. (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*, Routledge, London, pp. 284-297.

Brand D. 1990, *No Language Is Neutral*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto.

Brand D. 2006, *Inventory*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto.

Brand D. 2017a, *An Ars Poetica from the Blue Clerk*, in "The Black Scholar" 47 [1], pp. 58-77.

Brand D. 2017b, *Writing Against Tyranny and Toward Liberation*, Barnard College, Aug. 20. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ychlzoeeIm0 (10.9.2023).

Brand D. 2018a, *Poet, Writer, Activist and U of T Alumna Dionne Brand Receives Honorary Degree*, in "U of T News". https://www.utoronto.ca/news/poet-writer-activist-and-u-t-alumna-dionne-brand-receives-honorary-degree (6.5.2023).

Brand D. 2018b, *The Shape of Language*, Graham Foundation. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_HdOZIFEl0 (4.2.2023).

Brand D. 2021, *Windham-Campbell Festival (Yale)*, Nov. 9. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZ63Z1CB4KE (5.6.2023)

Brand D. 2023, *Between the Covers Podcast: Dionne Brand: Nomenclature – New and Collected Poems.* https://tinhouse.com/podcast/dionne-brand-nomenclature-new-and-collected-poems/ (10.9.2023).

Bresge A. 2019, *Dionne Brand on that which Goes Unwritten:* "*What is Withheld Multiplies*", in "The Canadian Press" June 5. https://toronto.citynews.ca/2019/06/05/dionne-brand-on-that-which-goes-unwritten-what-is-withheld-multiplies/ (5.6.2023).

Butler J. 2004, *Undoing Gender*, Routledge, New York.

Butler J. 2009, *Performativity, Precarity and Sexual Politics*, in "AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana" 4 [3], pp. i–xiii.

Choi D. M. 2020, *DMZ Colony*, Wave Books, Seattle.

Combahee River Collective 1977, *Combahee River Collective Statement.* https://combaheerivercollective.weebly.com/the-combahee-river-collective-statement.html\ (10.9.2023).

Corio A. 2013, *The Living and the Poetic Intention: Glissant's Biopolitics of Literature*, in "Callaloo" 36 [4], pp. 916-931.

de Mesquita S. and Silva-Reis D. 2019, *Translation Studies and Black Women in the Light of Feminism*, in "Revista Ártemis" XXVII [1], pp. 14-24.

Drabinski J. 2019, *Frantz Fanon*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/frantz-fanon/ (5.6.2023).

Eco U. 1979, *A Theory of Semiotics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
Fanon F. 1961, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin, London.
Femia J. 1981, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
Ferguson D. 2019, *Poetry Sales Soar as Political Millennials Search for Clarity*, in "The Guardian" Jan. 21. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jan/21/poetry-sales-soar-as-political-millennials-search-for-clarity (5.6.2023).
Glissant E. 1997, *Poetics of Relation*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.
Gould R.R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.) 2020, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London.
Gramsci A. 1971, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, International Publishers, New York.
Gramsci A. [1995] 1999, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, transl. by Boothman D., Lawrence and Wishart, London.
Haines C.P. 2017, *The Impersonal Is Political: Adrienne Rich's The Dream of a Common Language, Feminism, and the Art of Biopolitics*, in "Cultural Critique" 96, pp. 178-215.
Hardt M. and Negri A. 2000, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Harvard.
Hardt M. and Negri A. 2004, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin Press, New York.
Hill Collins P. 2017, *Preface: On Translation and Intellectual Activism*, in Castro O. and Ergun E. (eds.), *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, New York, pp. 1-2.
International Phonetic Association (IPA) 1999, *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association: A Guide to the Use of the International Phonetic Alphabet*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Leary J.P. 2018, *Keywords: The New Language of Capitalism*, Haymarket Books, Chicago.
Lee-Popham A. 2024, *Empires of the Everyday*, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto.
Lorde A. 1984, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press, Freedom, CA.
Miliband R. 2009, *The State in Capitalist Society*, Merlin Press, London.
Moratto A. (writer and director) 2021, *Seven Prisoners*, Netflix.
Mourad H. 2000, *Resistance, Activism and Marronage in Paul Bowles's Translations of the Oval Stories of Tangier*, in Gould R.R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London, pp. 165-179.
Nagar R., Davis K., Butler J., Keating A.L., de Lima Costa C., Alvarez S. E., Gül Altınay A., Ergun E. and Castro O. 2017, *A Cross-disciplinary Roundtable on the Feminist Politics of Translation*, in Castro O. and Ergun E (eds.), *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, London, pp. 111-136.
O'Halloran K.L., Tan S. and Wignell P. 2016, *Intersemiotic Translation as Resemiotisation: A Multimodal Perspective*, in "Signata: Annals of Semiotics" 6, pp. 199-229.
Poets.org. 2023, *Contrapuntal*. https://poets.org/glossary/contrapuntal (4.2.2023).
Poets.org. 2023, *Volta*. https://poets.org/glossary/volta (4.2.2023).
Poetry Foundation, The. 2023, *Enjambment*. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/enjambment (4.2.2023).
Poetry Foundation, The. 2023, *Volta*. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/volta (4.2.2023).
Porter C. 2021, *The Carpenter Who Built Tiny Homes for Toronto's Homeless*, in "The New York Times" April 16.

Rich A. 1991, *An Atlas of the Difficult World*, W.W. Norton and Co., New York.
Roy A. 2016, *Come September*, in *The End of Imagination*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, pp. 237-252.
Said E. 1993, *Culture and Imperialism*, Knopf, New York.
Smith D. 1987, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
Spivak G.C. 2018, *Necessary and Impossible: Culture as Translation.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBvYS1bwy2U (4.2.2023).
Thiong'o N. 2023, *The Language of Languages: Reflections on Translation*, Seagull Books, Kolkata.
Tissot D. 2017, *Transnational Feminist Solidarities and the Ethics of Translation*, in Castro O. and Ergun E. *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*, Routledge, New York, pp. 29-41.
Williams G.W. 1960, *Egemonia in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci: Some Notes on Interpretation*, in "Journal of The History of Ideas" 21 [4], pp. 586-599.
Williams R. 1985, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
Wright C.D. 2009, *Rising, Falling, Hovering*, Copper Canyon Press, Washington.
Wróblewska M.N. 2000, *Theory, Practice, Activism: Gramsci as a Translation Theorist*, in Gould R.R. and Tahmasebian K. (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, Routledge, London, pp. 13-29.
Zurita R. 2014, *Today or a Million Years Ago: An Interview with Raúl Zurita* by Daniel Borzutzky. Poetry Foundation. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2015/03/today-or-a-million-years-ago-an-interview-with-raul-zurita (5.6.2023).