

BREAKING BINARIES: RETHINKING GENDERED METAPHORS IN
TRANSLATION THEORY

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Abstract

In efforts to understand the complexity of translation, theorists have often turned to metaphor. As Lori Chamberlain (1988) shows, some of these metaphors have mirrored the androcentric hierarchy of Western society, subordinating women and translation. Since the 1980s, feminist translation theorists and translators have sought to dismantle this patriarchal view of translation using woman-centred metaphors. However, their understandings of womanhood and gender often exclude genderqueer and trans identities. In the past decade, translation studies research on queer and trans issues and representation has grown, though it has largely been written from white Western academic and literary perspectives. This thesis investigates the inclusivity of gendered metaphors of translation in feminist, queer, and trans translation theory. I suggest that if translation studies is to represent the diversity of gender identities that exist worldwide, attention must be paid to this work's accessibility, to intersections of oppression, and to marginalized understandings of gender.

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Introduction and Conceptual Background

As someone who has access to circles where trans and non-binary identities are accepted, if not commonplace, I have in the past few years found myself increasingly surprised when entering a space where the gender binary is alive and well. While I have been lucky to study with students and professors who are progressive and inclusive, I have at times felt that something was missing. My courses have all featured important and interesting feminist texts, both theoretical and otherwise, and I have been encouraged to think about certain works through a feminist lens. I have even been assigned readings that approach feminism and the idea of womanhood from a postcolonial perspective. However, as I neared the end of my MA coursework, I began to realize that there had been little discussion of the relationship between translation and gender where the understanding of gender extends beyond a cisnormative binary.

This is not to say that queer and trans approaches to Translation Studies do not exist. Keith Harvey's groundbreaking work on the relationship between translation and gay men's literature introduced TS scholars to the possibility of incorporating queer identities into their studies.¹ However, most of the work on queer/trans TS topics has been published since 2010 and amounts to a couple of anthologies, a handful of articles, and one or two books.² Brian James Baer and Klaus Kaindl address the current state of queer/trans translation studies, noting that "translation and interpreting studies scholars have reacted to queer theory with some delay, and research focusing of queer aspects of translation and interpreting have until only recently, been rare, rather uncoordinated, and often marred by conceptual confusion" (1). Their anthology

¹ For Harvey's work on translation and gay identity see *Intercultural Movements*, "Translating Camp Talk," "'Events' and 'Horizons'".

² Based on a library database search of "queer" OR "gender" AND "translation"

Queering Translation, Translating the Queer, is “the first full book-length publication” on queer translation and interpreting studies (“Queering Translation”).

Among queer TS texts, most focus on the relationship between translation and sexuality, while those that do tackle the topic of gender tend to concern themselves with the practical issues of translating non-normative genders to or from gendered languages. Few scholars consider the potential that trans and non-binary gender identities have to enrich translation theory or the importance of including these identities in our theory for the purposes of representing marginalized communities and individuals. As translation is the site of negotiations between cultures, each with different relationships to various concepts of gender, those who study and practice translation are responsible for representing the diversity of gender identities that exist in the world, in both theory and praxis. Theories that prioritize women and the feminine do only a portion of the work necessary for a rejection of the gender binary. My research aims to fill the aforementioned gaps and to further a reconsideration and a new approach to the use of gendered metaphors of translation that is more closely aligned with the lived experiences of all folks, in particular those who are queer and/or trans.

As scholars and theorists have struggled to pin down a description or understanding of translation, they have often turned to metaphors that allow them to explain translation through more familiar and comprehensible concepts. As Suzanne Jill Levine points out, “any essay on translation can become an infinite list of examples since theory must be subordinated to practice and since one metaphor inevitably leads to another!” (“Translation as (Sub)Version” 86). One category of metaphor that often recurs compares texts to people, with varying emphasis placed on subjecthood versus the body. The contexts in which translation theory has been and continues to be produced are subject to the dominant notion that people have gender, and as a consequence

these metaphors tend to involve the imposition of gender(s) on the different texts and agents at work in the translation process.

In her PhD dissertation, *Afterwords: Translation as Poetics in Postmodern Writing*, and later her article “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation,” Lori Chamberlain establishes a link between gendered representations of the agents and texts involved in the translation process and a negative, subordinate view of both women and translation. This metaphoric, she shows, has historically taken one of two forms. The first is that of a patriarchal structure in which the agents are typically male, while the texts and the concept of translation itself are female— anxieties about paternity (ownership) have led scholars to place the author at the top of the hierarchy, in the role of father, while the translator has typically taken on the role of a usurper out to steal the chastity of the author’s daughter, the original (Chamberlain, “Gender” 315). The second approach depicts translation as feminized, considered derivative in opposition to the masculine and creative undertaking of original writing (Chamberlain, “Gender” 315). The metaphor of *les belles infidèles* illustrates that just as men’s infidelity has historically been ignored while women have been punished for the same deeds, translators are often considered guilty of crimes that simply do not exist for the author (Chamberlain, *Afterwords* 12).

In analyzing the concept of mother tongues, Chamberlain asserts that Schleiermacher, whose work has been influential in translation studies, believes that it is “impossible to be fully bilingual, for in his schema, that would imply having two mothers. One might certainly write in two different languages, but it is an enterprise to be mistrusted” (Chamberlain, *Afterwords* 17). While in this instance the masculine is not explicitly dominant, the metaphor still fits within a patriarchal structure as it reinforces compulsory heteronormativity through the impossibility of having more than one mother.

Chamberlain, among others, has taken issue with this rigid, patriarchal view of translation, as it reinforces the misogynistic notion that femaleness and femininity are inferior to maleness and masculinity and positions translation lower on the literary ladder than original writing: “what appears as an abstract set of binary oppositions—original/secondary, writer/translator, truth/lies— in fact points to hierarchies with real implications” (*Afterwords* 35). She points out that the hierarchical positions in which women and translators find themselves and the “privileging of the power of the phallus as a logos provides the rationale for perpetuating a variety of sins” (Chamberlain, *Afterwords* 35-6). These structures allow those in power to justify treating both women and translators as less than. Her 1988 article ends with a call for a feminist approach to translation, which does away with these oppressive structures:

one of the challenges for feminist translators is to move beyond questions of the sex of the author or translator. Working within the conventional hierarchies we have already seen, the female translator of a female author’s text and the male translator of a male author’s text will be bound by the same power relations: what must be subverted is the process by which translation complies with gender constructs. In this sense, a feminist theory of translation will finally be utopic. (Chamberlain, “Gender” 327)

This utopia of translation is envisioned through the deconstructionist work of Jacques Derrida, in which, Chamberlain notes, “translation is both original and secondary, uncontaminated and transgressed or transgressive” (“Gender” 325). In this scheme, there is no hierarchy, nor an absolute distinction between texts and languages; Chamberlain points out that certain theories, such as “intertextuality, for example, make it difficult to determine the precise boundaries of a text” (“Gender” 324). In her feminist utopia, translation is no longer forced into rigid, artificial structures, but is allowed to exist as the complicated phenomenon that it is.

Chamberlain's text was written not only during the feminist turn in Translation Studies, but also during a pivotal moment in feminist thought. During the late 1970s and 80s, US feminism was heavily influenced by postmodernism and poststructuralism, a combination which eventually contributed to the birth of queer theory (Mann 211). The influence of poststructuralism is evident in Chamberlain's call for the dismantling of the gendered hierarchies present in metaphors of translation. Derrida, too, rejects the view that authorship and translation fit into a hierarchical structure, arguing that "[t]ranslation is writing; that is, it is not translation only in the sense of transcription. It is a productive writing called forth by the original text" (153). Here he not only dismantles the hierarchy of author/translator, original/translation, he also blurs the boundary between the two sides of each pair, implying a close relationship in which the difference between writing and translating is not clear cut.

Elizabeth Grosz, who concerns herself with the relationship between the female subject and the body, also calls for the deconstruction of traditional dualisms, as these, she argues are oppressive:

Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart. The subordinated term is merely the negation or denial, the absence or privation of the primary term, its fall from grace; the primary term defines itself by expelling its other and in this process establishes its own boundaries and borders to create an identity for itself. (Grosz 3)

In Chamberlain's work, the dualisms of author/translator, original/translation, man/woman result in the privileging of the initial terms, while the secondary terms (those associated with translation) are accorded less importance. However, while these dualisms are certainly harmful

in that they produce hierarchies, they also do damage by excluding all possibilities that do not fit into one of the two sides of the binary.

By the mid-1980s, feminism in North America had already seen two of its so-called “waves;” women had won the vote (privileged white cis women earlier than others), bras had been burned, and the sex wars³ had been raging for over a decade. In Translation Studies, however, the feminist turn was just beginning to take hold. Influenced by French and American writing movements, such as embodiment and *l'écriture féminine*, and seeking to disrupt patriarchal and misogynist views of women and translation, feminist translators and translation scholars began to establish their own translation practices and theories. Feminist translation theory was particularly prominent in Canada, where avant-garde feminist writers in Quebec, such as Nicole Brossard, were being translated by English-speaking Canadian feminists in order to circulate their ideas amongst a larger audience (Flotow, “Feminist Translation” 72). Anglophone and Francophone women who sought to narrow the linguistic divide between themselves began to organize conferences and establish publications.

These women formed a small group that came to be known as the Canadian School. Their aims were to dismantle the ways in which patriarchy imposes itself through traditional theory, as well as through language itself and engage in experimentation with the limits and possibilities of feminist translation by disrupting dominant discourse and appropriating phallogocentric language in order to write women’s experiences into popular discourse. With these goals in mind and in response to the misogynistic gendered metaphors so prevalent in translation theory, many feminist translation theorists began to write their own gendered metaphors. No longer was the

³ The Sex Wars refer to a split between feminists who are sex-positive, pro-sex work, and pro-ethical pornography, and those who believe that these industries demean and oppress women, even if entered into willingly. The latter are today often referred to as SWERFs (Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminists) by the former.

vertical, hierarchical structure of original/translation acceptable; instead, a more horizontal, reciprocal conception came into being. These feminist scholars also shifted the focus from heteronormativity and a whore-madonna dichotomy, to theories that prioritize inclusivity and sex positivity. Conversing with one another, responding to and collaborating on works both theoretical and otherwise, writers such as Barbara Godard, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, and Marlene Wildeman began to shape the world of feminist translation and translation studies. Contributions and criticisms were also made by scholars working outside of the School, such as Rosemary Arrojo and Carol Maier, as well as outside of translation studies, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

My own understanding of gender comes first and foremost from my experiences in queer circles, in which I have met folks with a range of gender identities, including trans, genderqueer, agender, and non-binary. Western society and popular culture have also begun to embrace, or at the very least tolerate, a greater diversity of queer and trans identities. The federal government of Canada, along with certain provincial governments, has recently provided the option for individuals to have neutral gender markers on their passports, government I.D. cards, and birth certificates. Non-binary and trans folks have gained visibility on popular television shows such as *Pose*, *Queer Eye*, and *Orange is the New Black*, and an ever-growing number of celebrities have begun to share that they are non-binary or genderfluid. As more and more folks come out as trans and non-binary, it becomes ever clearer that the gender binary is something that has been imposed, in particular within the positivist, capitalistic ideologies of Western society.

While it is evidence enough that there are individuals in the world whose experiences of gender fall outside of a cisnormative binary, there is also a wealth of theory and scholarly work to support this. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler theorizes that the gender binary is not

natural, but performative, emphasizing that it is not performed because it exists, but rather that it exists because it is performed. She further states that this binary does not express gender in its entirety, but simply the norms. Butler also points to the existence of intersex folks as evidence that biological sex itself is not binary, and that as traditionally gender has been understood as linked to sex, a view of gender as binary is not supportable.

Christine Delphy also emphasizes the idea that while we see gender as being based on sex, their relationship is perhaps more accurately understood in reverse, equating sex with a container in which gender is the content (3). She also points out that while feminists have fought against gender- and sex-based oppression, they have not always been keen to do away with the concepts of sex and gender themselves:

All feminists reject the sex/gender hierarchy, but very few are ready to admit that the logical consequence of this rejection is a refusal of sex roles, and the disappearance of gender. Feminists seem to want to abolish hierarchy and even sex roles, but not difference itself. They want to abolish the contents but not the container. (Delphy 6)

While this feminist approach does appear to fight injustice done to women, it does not recognize that “hierarchy forms the foundation for difference” and it does nothing to challenge norms surrounding biological sex or include those who fall outside the male/female binary (Delphy 6).

Evidence supporting the plurality of sex and gender has also been found outside the humanities, namely in scientific research. Biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling writes:

The idea that there are more than two biological sexes [...] emerged in the early 1990s after feminist critics of science joined forces with an intersex activist

movement. Their aim was to prevent reinforcement of the artificial two-sex construct by reforming the practice of surgical intervention [...]. These groups pointed out that science is not isolated from society: ideas that stimulate understanding travel into the lab from street activists, literature and varied scholarship, and move back out again. As a result of their efforts, research scientists were pushed into visualizing the previously invisible. (Fausto-Sterling 291)

This letter, which Fausto-Sterling wrote correcting an article in *Nature* magazine in 2015, is correct in pointing out that the idea of more than two sexes is not something new; however, it is also not an idea that emerged only in the 1990s. Humans have long known that intersex people exist, they simply either forget or label them as abnormal.

Though academia is not where I learned to accept and include non-binary and trans folks, nor is it where I learned anti-oppressive language or intersectionality, it is an area of life that has impacted and continues to impact the way in which I and other scholars think about the world; this is true of translation studies in particular, where the overlap between academic work and professional translation is significant. Translation has not only been infused with feminist—and later queer and trans—thought, it has also been a productive tool for thinking about gender itself. In a 2019 lecture entitled “Gender in Translation: Beyond Monolingualism,” Judith Butler describes translation as a crucial element of gendering:

Gender assignment operates according to translation, since the infant who is gendered, called into life as a boy or as a girl—although sometimes the box is left open—must undertake the work of translation from the adult world that is speaking, into the infant’s own universe of meanings. [...] if the infant is trying to figure out or make a translation

of this “it’s a boy, it’s a girl,” and all the ways that happens throughout life—being *boyed* and *girlled* actively through speech, then it turns out that one can *not* recognize gender or even appropriate gender except through an act of translation. Translation turns out to be a precondition of gender itself (4:47-6:10)

Butler creates a permanent bond between translation and gender, stating that *all* people are forced to translate gender norms through their bodies and actions. She goes on to assert that “If it turns out that gender is always a problem of translation, then the translator and the theorist may not be separate. They may be [...] the same, not only in fact but in principle. Indeed, we are with gender confronting both a theoretical problem for translation and a translation problem for theory” (9:55-10:20). Because translation forms such an integral part of the process of gendering, as well as the spread of gender theory and of queer and trans textual representation, it is essential that translators realize their responsibility as not only transmitters but also *creators* of theory.

My interest lies in how inclusive existing gendered translation theories and practices actually are. Second-wave feminism in particular has often been criticized for its narrow focus on (mainly white) ciswomen and their experiences, one result of which is the erasure of many feminine and non-binary identities. As cis members of this movement have sought increased recognition and equality for women, as well as fighting for reproductive rights, their voices have often drowned out queer and trans experiences of the body. An approach to embodiment that dichotomizes sex and gender as material and discursive, respectively, insists on the biological “maleness” of trans women and is apt to view them as reinforcing oppressive feminine stereotypes (Rodemeyer 104-5). This view of sex and gender allows TERFs (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists) to undermine trans women’s womanhood, as well as the experiences of other trans and non-binary folks, allowing for their violent erasure. This issue is far from being

resolved. Though trans folks have fought successfully for legal recognition in many countries, trans exclusion persists⁴.

It is also important to note that dominant binary concepts of gender, as well as normative views of sexuality, have significant origins in colonialism and Western hegemony. While Western society has traditionally upheld a binary, hierarchical conception of gender, other cultures have understood gender in very different ways, recognizing identities beyond man and woman. For example, two-spirit is a pan-indigenous term in North America that refers to individuals whose identities do not fall within the gender binary imposed by colonizers; they may be considered as belonging to a third or fourth gender, though some traditions recognize even more genders (“Who are Two Spirit People”). In India, Hijra and Kothi folks, who fall outside of the gender binary and are often considered “third gender,” have been recognized and documented for millennia (Monro 248-9). In fact, the Hindu belief in reincarnation supports the idea of sexual and gender pluralism, as “it includes those who incarnate in a variety of sexes/genders at different times” (Monro 247). The imposition of Western gender norms not only does injustice to trans and non-binary individuals, but also erases other cultures’ experiences and identities, as well as fails to take into consideration that even in the Western world, experiences of womanhood and gender vary greatly depending on an individual’s race, class, sexuality, etc.

Key to understanding these different experiences is the term intersectionality, which was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a leading figure in black feminist legal theory and civil rights law (“Kimberlé Crenshaw”). She defines this term as “a metaphor for understanding the ways that

⁴ The rise of “free speech” rhetoric and the alt-right has seen an increase in public attacks on trans rights; for example, the so-called bathroom bills in the United States, or the slew of talks given by Canadian TERF writer Megan Murphy, who recently testified against a bill that ultimately granted trans folks equal access to gendered spaces.

multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and they create obstacles that often are not understood within conventional ways of thinking about anti racism or feminism or whatever social justice advocacy structures we have” (“Kimberlé Crenshaw: What is Intersectionality?” 00:08-00:30). Intersectional feminism does not focus only on the challenges faced by white, cishet, educated women, but takes into consideration the ways in which race, class, gender, sexuality, education, and other aspects of identity interact with one another and affect individual experiences of privilege and oppression; it also strives not only for gender equality but also for other types of justice: racial, economic, migrant, etc.

Though Crenshaw introduced the term intersectionality in 1989, the knowledge that inequalities based on gender, race, class, etc. affect one another had already been a crucial part of black feminist thought in particular. Audre Lorde was vocal about the need to understand that a monolithic feminism is not useful to all women: “The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those differences. Nor do the reservoirs of our ancient power know these boundaries. To deal with one without even alluding to the other is to distort our commonality as well as our difference. For then beyond sisterhood is still racism” (70). She points out that much of white feminism has ignored these differences, failing to look beyond what white cis women need to attain equality and assuming that sisterhood and womanhood are homogenous. Turning specifically to academia, she writes that “it is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory without examining our many differences, and without a significant input from poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians” (110).

In *Feminist Theory: from Margin to Center*, bell hooks notes that though many privileged white women are often credited with launching the feminist movement, black women in

America, such as “Septima Clark, Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Ann Moody ...were challenging sexism within black civil rights movement” (hooks x). As we come to understand that intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and other forms of identity determine our privilege and our experiences, the common notion of the feminist movement as the struggle for equal rights begs the question: equal to whose rights? Hooks seeks not to answer this question but to set it aside in favour of a more productive approach and consequently she offers the following definitions of feminism: “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression”; “action to eliminate patriarchy” (hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody* viii, *Feminist Theory* xi). Though hooks’ focus is on race, class, and sexuality, this broad definition includes all individuals who fall outside of normative and privileged categories, including those who identify as trans and non-binary.

Ideology is a force that “interpellates individuals as subjects,” allowing them to be recognized by others, and thus it plays a vital role in feminist movement and theory (Althusser 143). When dominant ideologies fail to recognize certain individuals as human, these people are at risk of erasure and the loss of human rights. By removing these rights and denying peripheral ways of knowing, those in power effectively render those individuals who belong to the out-group subhuman. Deborah Cameron notes that a dialogic relationship exists between ideology and language; language is a vehicle for the expression and dissemination of ideology while also being shaped by ideological practices (Cameron 141). She writes that “ideas and beliefs [...] are not seen as either pre-social, innate ideas, or purely private and possibly idiosyncratic beliefs held by specific individuals. Rather they are culturally produced and collective” (Cameron 141-2). Because of this relationship, making a change to language—for example, centering the feminine instead of the masculine—is a means of changing ideology, and vice versa.

Feminism is a cluster of ideologies concerned with challenging the dominant ideology that insists on the superiority of men and the subordination of other gender identities. Within this cluster, black feminism, postcolonial feminism, and transfeminism, among others, focus on their own goals and strategies in order to fight for the recognition of black, postcolonial, and trans women, or other women and non-binary folks. Michelle Lazar advocates for an approach to research⁵ which would investigate the “complex workings of power and ideology in discourse in sustaining a (hierarchically) gendered social order” (1). In this feminist approach, she says, “our central concern is with critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order: that is, relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group” (Lazar 5). While Lazar’s approach to research challenges androcentric ideologies, it also conforms to binary gender ideologies; in order to analyze representation of the diversity of gender, this approach must consider the effects not only of ideological systems such as androcentrism, but also cisnormativity and gender binarism.

As discursive elements that influence the ways that we think about the world, metaphors are not simply linguistic features, but components of theory and vectors of ideology. They are an integral part of how we conceptualize reality and consequently how we interact with the world and the people in it (Lakoff and Johnson 3). In *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that all metaphors highlight certain aspects of a concept while hiding others (12-13). In Chamberlain’s work, when translation is equated with the feminine, “derivative” is highlighted, while “creative” is hidden. However, if we take a step backwards and think of translation as equated with “human,” we may argue that what has been highlighted is “feminine”

⁵ Lazar specifically suggests feminist critical discourse analysis (CDA). Though I do not use CDA itself, my analysis has been inspired by this approach’s goal of revealing ideology in discourse and its unabashed statement of its own ideological position.

and what has been hidden are other gender identities. This obscuring of identities is significant as the metaphors we use have real-world implications:

metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies. (Lakoff and Johnson 156)

When a gendered metaphor of translation is deployed within a binary understanding of gender, it both erases non-binary identities and reinforces the idea of translation as existing alongside authorship in a binary relationship. The interpretation of metaphors also depends on the receiver's own experiences and beliefs (Lakoff and Johnson 142). Therefore, a metaphor that privileges the feminine may make strides towards equality for a particular category of woman, but if it does not explicitly challenge the notion of binary gender, its reader may not be relied upon to interpret it as including non-binary and trans folks. However, as Lakoff and Johnson point out, "New metaphors have the power to create a new reality" (145). It is for this reason that this project is concerned with revealing exclusion and binary thinking in feminist metaphors of translation and with promoting new queer metaphors, which may help to create a reality in which translation and gender are both understood as complex and fluid.

In the chapters that follow, I track the development of gendered metaphors in translation studies since the feminist turn and explore how we might use this area of research as a means of mindfully incorporating marginalized gender identities into our field. Chapter One focuses on the ways in which the feminist turn in translation studies has changed the gendered metaphors of translation. I begin with an analysis of the gendered metaphors of translation in feminist texts, in particular those produced during the feminist turn in Canadian translation theory. My focus is

on binary and trans-exclusionary tendencies, which reveal an understanding of gender (and feminism) that privileges ciswomen and erases other identities. In order to determine the inclusivity of the gendered metaphors in these texts, I ask first whether or not the binary opposition between “man” and “woman” is challenged or reinforced. I then look for evidence of gender essentialism and trans exclusion. These characteristics may be communicated through the equation of gender with anatomy, including vaginal metaphors or an emphasis on birth and maternity. They may also be evident in the way that language is used, such as which pronouns are chosen to communicate neutrality.

The selection of texts is informed in part by what has occupied the “feminism” section of the syllabus in courses I have taken throughout my studies. I also examine texts referenced in Luise von Flotow’s entry “Gender & Sexuality” in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, including work by Barbara Godard, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Nicole Brossard, and von Flotow herself (Flotow “Gender & Sexuality”). Looking at these texts as a conversation among feminist theorists, I tease out common threads, such as themes of intimacy and desire, maternity, mother tongue, and community. I further examine the cases of two feminist concepts that have been adopted by TS scholars: *l’écriture féminine* and Bracha L. Ettinger’s metramorphics. I ask who the feminisms of these texts belong to and include, drawing upon contemporary criticism—produced in particular outside of the Canadian School, by scholars such as Rosemary Arrojo and Carol Maier—and highlighting exclusionary elements such as elitism and colonial thinking. Finally, I point out that while many of these woman-centred metaphors of translation exclude queer and trans genders, others leave the door open for identities beyond (man and) woman, foreshadowing the queer and trans turns in translation studies.

In Chapter Two, I track the changes in gendered metaphors in queer translation studies texts. These texts are selected from queer TS anthologies such as *Queering Translation*, *Translating the Queer*, as well as a special issue of *Transgender Studies Quarterly* on the topic of translation, Douglas Robinson's 2019 book *Transgender, Translation, Translingual Address*, and a handful of other TS articles. Also included are works by queer theorist Judith Butler and trans scholar Sandy Stone that deal either explicitly or indirectly with translation. I begin by considering how queer and trans are defined in these texts. Then, noting commonalities shared between queer and trans metaphors and feminist metaphors, I ask whether gender is portrayed as non-binary. I complete this analysis by noting any trends in the ways in which translation is metaphorized and practiced queerly, exploring recurring themes such as performativity, authenticity, and embodiment as they construct an image of translation as a "quintessentially queer career" (Parker 124).

Finally, Chapter Three consists in an attempt to build bridges between queer and trans theory and translation theory, as well as between academic and non-academic work. Building upon the discussion from previous chapters, I begin by exploring the relationship of cis- and heteronormative scholars to queer and trans scholarship, questioning whether they have the ability and/or the right to take a front seat in research and theory on these topics. I also invoke the instability of trans studies as a field and emphasize the ongoing difficulty of defining the limits and commonalities of queer and trans—and even feminist. In an effort to expand the range of queer texts used in translation studies, as well as challenge still-rampant binary and hierarchical understandings of gender, I explore how Paul B. Preciado's *Countersexual Manifesto* might be incorporated into the field. Finally, I also call for a rethinking of acceptable and productive source materials, drawing upon Jack Halberstam's "low theory" and advocating

for research that includes queer and trans texts from outside of mainstream Western patriarchal and LGBTQ2A+ cultures.

In the chapters that follow, I hope to show that though scholars have made strides in carving out space for marginalized identities in translation theory and practice, this work has not been given adequate priority and care. However, with attention to who is doing this work and how they understand and write about gender, translation studies has the potential to grow into a productive and mutually beneficial relationship with all gender identities.

Chapter One: Feminist Approaches to Gendered Metaphors in Translation Theory

This chapter explores the ways in which feminist translation theory constructs images of womanhood and translation through the use of metaphor. Drawing upon a variety of texts such as scholarly and literary articles, translators' prefaces, and fictional representations of translation, I highlight several themes in the depiction of women and the feminine. These themes include dialogue among women, lesbian intimacy, and experiences of the female body. In addition to metaphorical understandings of gender, I note any explicit definitions of womanhood, gender, and feminism given by the feminist writers whose texts I examine. While the majority of these texts come from the Canadian School, I also address the work of H  l  ne Cixous, a significant source for many of the themes in feminist translation theory. In addition, I survey English texts produced outside of Canada, in particular those that offer criticism of the School. I demonstrate that though some of the gendered metaphors of the feminist turn leave room for fluid understandings of gender, most subscribe to definitions that are incompatible with queer and trans identities.

1.1 Defining Women/Gender

One of the central challenges that feminism has faced since its early days is the question of what feminism really means. Disagreements over the term "feminist," whom the movement does and does not represent, are fed by contention over the definition of "woman" itself. In order to situate the feminist metaphors that follow within a particular understanding of womanhood, gender, and feminism, I offer some explicit definitions given by two of the writers whose metaphors of translation I later explore. My interest lies primarily in whether these definitions

are biologically based, whether they establish a gender binary, and whether any of these terms are used synonymously.

In “Daring Deeds: Translation as Lesbian Feminist Language Act,” Marlene Wildeman asserts that “although lesbians are women who are different from women as the term is commonly understood, for our purposes here let us assume that lesbians are included in this definition of feminism” (33). She goes on to define feminism as “an intense loyalty to that which is believed to be supremely worthwhile in women’s lives, and a vivid sense of cooperation with the forces that are working for its realization” (Wildeman 33). While these definitions include lesbians in feminism, they set them up as outsiders in relation to “normal” womanhood; this is not a good sign. Unsurprisingly, Wildeman’s definition of feminism then explicitly excludes from its purpose all those who do not identify as women.

Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood states explicitly that “Sex is biological: human beings and most animals are physiologically female or male. Gender is socially constructed [...] The gender construct is expressed in terms of feminine for females and masculine for males” (*Rebelle* 100). Her understanding of sex fails to recognize reproductive anatomy as a spectrum, on which male and female are norms but intersex bodies also exist. While the translator recognizes that gender is not natural, she also defines it in terms of a binary. Lotbinière-Harwood goes on to say that while sex and gender are not inherently linked, gender depends on sex. It also, in her opinion, affects the ways in which the subject participates in society and, on a smaller scale, the ways in which they translate. While this may be true to some extent, this definition assumes that once gender has been assigned and learned to a certain point, it is unchangeable. It also assumes that gender construction always works and that everyone ends up identifying with the gender they are assigned.

It should be noted that most of the works don't offer explicit definitions, and so their understandings of these concepts must be inferred. As I will show later in this chapter, some feminist TS theorists leave room for non-binary gender identities. However, as the feminist texts that follow all participate in the same conversation about womanhood and gender, those that do not explicitly disagree with these binary, biologically determined definitions allow them to prevail.

1.2 Women in Conversation, Community

One of the fundamental components of early feminist movement was effort to increase communication between women. Women had long been exposed to patriarchal ideas through their fathers, husbands, and other men in their lives, but had not been encouraged to speak to each other about politics and societal issues. Consciousness-raising was a revolutionary effort to open up dialogues between women "organized in groups to talk together about the issue of sexism and male domination" (hooks, *Feminism* 7). As bell hooks explains, these groups served a dual function. The first was therapeutic in nature, providing a safe space in which women could express their frustration and anger at being oppressed; the second was to spread awareness about feminist goals and develop strategies to accomplish them (hooks *Feminism*). As the feminist movement grew, the conversation expanded beyond these groups and into print publications that could reach a larger audience. The idea of communication and conversation among women also took hold in translation studies and, in turn, in feminist metaphors of translation.

In "Deux mots pour chaque chose," Lotbinière-Harwood describes women as having been asleep, dreaming individually of liberation, but now collectively awakening to the possibilities of a feminist society and the "désir d'une langue commune," a language which would finally allow them to write their experiences (25). Wildeman expresses a similar desire to

unite women and feminists, dreaming of “a collective, women and lesbians together in feminism, cracking codes that hold us all powerless” (“Daring Deeds” 32). Both translators seek equality for women by bringing them together, giving them a space for dialogue and a language with which they can express themselves.

Barbara Godard describes women’s writing as dialogue, that is discourse that is always in conversation with other women’s discourse (“Theorizing” 44). Feminist discourse becomes a choir of voices, or polyphony, reflecting the collectivity of women. Together they produce new works from old, not starting from scratch, but creating, as Godard suggests, a palimpsest (Godard, “Theorizing” 47). These metaphors highlight the collaborative, discursive nature of feminist writing and translation. In the preface to her translation of Brossard’s *Lovhers*, Godard emphasizes again the conversational nature of feminist writing; Brossard’s text, she notes, is full of “loving allusions to women writers—Virginia Woolf, Colette—shared vocabulary and quotations institute a feminist intertextuality, a matrilineal literary tradition” (Preface 9). Godard points out that here, “translation theory rejoins feminist textual theory,” as both are concerned with the multiplicity of voices in translated texts (“Theorizing” 48-49). The translator is at first a reader and then becomes a (re)writer. Just as the author begins their work building upon what they have already read, the translator takes inspiration from the original and produces their own contribution to the conversation.

As feminist translators and translation theorists established their own conferences and journals and contributed to feminist discourse in the field, they saw parallels between their identities as women talking to women and as translators in conversation with authors. Godard explains that “framed as a transfer from one language to another, feminist discourse involves the transfer of a cultural reality into a new context” (“Theorizing” 45). Translation, she points out,

became a trope in feminist writing, used as a metaphor for women's struggle to express their silenced thoughts and experiences in fundamentally masculine language. Ultimately, feminist writers who were not translators also contributed to theory and metaphors of translation.

One of the most significant sources of feminist translation theory comes not from academic writing, but from the fiction of Nicole Brossard. Published in 1987, *Mauve Desert* relates the experience of a young girl on the brink of womanhood and her relationships with the women in her life and with the horizon towards which she often drives. However, this book differs from much contemporary feminist fiction in that Brossard also weaves her own theory of translation into the plot of the novel. The text is composed of three parts: the first a short novel written by the fictional author⁶ Laure Angestelle, the third its intralingual translation by Maude Laures (also fictional). Between these two parts, Laures chronicles her experience reading and translating the text and breaks it down into various components, such as scenes, characters, and even imagined dialogues.

In one of these sections, Laures imagines herself and Angestelle sitting in a café and, though “both like dealing with silence,” they engage in a debate about the rights of the translator to work creatively, Laures lobbying for the freedom to change the fate of one of the characters (Brossard 131). Brossard arranges the author and translator non-hierarchically, facing each other. Throughout this scene and the fictional novel, she suggests that they are speaking to each from either side of a parted curtain, a threshold, a horizon. This emphasis on women's interactions and communication is echoed in the fictional novel itself; nearly all of the dialogue is between women and the sole male character appears in public only to silence (lethally) a female one.

⁶ Lotbinière-Harwood uses the word “auther,” spelled with an *e* so that it includes the word “her,” to translate Brossard's feminised “auteure.” I use this spelling solely in my discussion of *Mauve Desert*.

This challenges the traditional hierarchy that places authorship above translation, breaking down the patriarchal, dominance-based relationship and imagining it instead as a conversation between women.

1.3 “The Dream of a Common Language”

In his seminal work “The Task of the Translator,” Walter Benjamin suggests that translation ought to strive towards what he calls “pure language.” This language is found underneath all human languages and represents the essential meaning or intention that they attempt to express. This yearning for a single language, for simplified communication without misinterpretation, is a recurring theme in translation theory, traceable back to the myth of the Tower of Babel where this common language was lost and discord sown between men. In feminist theory, however, the idea of a “common language” takes on a different meaning. Hélène Cixous describes this language lovingly: “There is a language that I speak or that speaks (to) me in all tongues. [...] And this language I know, I don’t need to enter it, it surges from me, it flows, it is the milk of love, the honey of my unconscious. The language that women speak when no one is there to correct them” (“Coming to Writing” 21). What Cixous imagines is a Promised Land for feminist writers and translators, a language that allows women to speak freely, alone or together, outside of the phallogocentric codes created by and for men.

According to Lotbinière-Harwood, the feminist movement and feminist turn in TS comes as women, having dreamed individually of liberation, collectively awoken to its possibilities. Evoking Adrienne Rich’s poetry collection, *The Dream of a Common Language*, Lotbinière-Harwood suggests that one of the movement’s main desires is the “*désir d’une langue commune*” (“Deux mots” 25). According to Gayatri Spivak, what must be accessed in order to satisfy this desire is the selvedge, the place where language frays and “slippages” allow a glimpse at pure

meaning (“The Politics of Translation”). In the effort to find this space “the translator’s whole body is in constant e-motion between novels & languages” (Lotbinière-Harwood, “Translating” 25). Thus, the pursuit of pure language is not only the act of seeking the ability to write the body, but an embodied act itself.

1.4 (Lesbian) Intimacy and Desire

Translation is the most intimate act of reading. I surrender to the text when I translate.

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “The Politics of Translation”

Though dialogue plays an important role in the feminist movement and in the metaphors of the feminist turn in TS, talking is not the only thing these women were doing together. Lesbian representation was a driving force in the movement, as a class of women emerged who could imagine themselves more clearly outside of patriarchal roles and who needed to create a society that worked for them. As bell hooks indicates, “it’s hard to know which came first, the movement for women’s liberation or sexual liberation—for some activists they happened at the same time, blending into one another” (*Feminism* 93). Lesbian radical thinkers and activists helped create a reality in which all women could exist freely, without being defined by their relationship to a man. Feminist translation and translation studies, with its roots in avant-garde Quebecois feminist writing, reflects the importance of lesbian involvement in the feminist movement. Sexuality had already been explored as a way to describe the connection between translator and author, with writers such as George Steiner using metaphors of penetration and rape to describe the translator’s actions (Chamberlain, “Gender” 320); lesbian activism has allowed feminist thinkers of all sexual orientations to envision a woman-centred version of this relationship, one where men are unwanted and unneeded, and where deeply ingrained ideas of male sexual dominance may be escaped.

Hélène Cixous expresses a deep physical longing that impels her to read and write. Her urge to put pen to paper is erotic: “Writing to touch with letters, with lips, with breath, to caress with the tongue, to lick with the soul, to taste the blood of the beloved body, of life in its remoteness; to saturate the distance with desire; in order to keep it from reading you” (“Coming to Writing” 4). She imagines the text as a body, the body as a text, and feels a sense of desire towards it. This image is mirrored in Carol Maier’s description of her urge to translate. In the process of translating poetry written by a man (Armand), she begins to think more critically of her work but is still eager to undertake it: “my antagonism is not turning me from Armand’s work but freeing me in relation to it; I am still attracted to its body, its tantalizing plays, but I take issue with some of its premises and I want to answer back” (Maier, “A Woman in Translation” 7). Maier’s attraction is complicated by the fact that the object of her desire is masculine, but she is liberated by her criticism, free to desire the text but not be subject to the author’s wishes. In this way, Maier is able to engage with the masculine but simultaneously escape subordination to a man, that is both the real male author and the metaphorical author-as-father.

Marlene Wildeman explores the idea of translation as a “Lesbian Feminist Language Act,” recounting her experience of translating *La lettre aérienne*, a collection of a decade’s worth of work by Nicole Brossard on the topic of writing. The translator notes her excitement at the opportunity to work on this book as it deals with an issue with which she had personally struggled:

the false dichotomy of wanting to write fiction yet needing to be active politically as a lesbian feminist. Choosing one always seemed to mean, in practical terms, abandoning the other. The here was Brossard’s *Lettre*, daring to speak to all

feminists from within lesbian difference, and it clicked into place as lesbian feminist theory and practice of writing. (Wildeman 31)

Wildeman sees Brossard's text as a way to explore translation and writing from the position of a lesbian feminist with the "desire to write/act" (32), bridging the gaping divide between theory and praxis. The translation of feminist literature allows her to engage in feminist writing without the guilt associated with spending time on impractical pursuits.

Wildeman draws parallels between the experience of writing and of translating, which she views as a form of writing itself, and lesbian experience, presenting them as instances of becoming or, at least, desiring to become. Writing, she says, is a way of "inscribing one's vision of the world in language [...] in response to an inner necessity [...] 'becoming'" (Wildeman 32). She seeks, through her project, to "write [...] desire in translation," referring to both erotic lesbian desire and the desire to become (Wildeman 32). On a physical level, lesbian desire allows women to carve out their existence outside of a patriarchal paradigm, ungoverned by dominance and submission, while writing and language itself offer a means of inscribing women's bodies and experiences in a less tangible, more theoretical way.

Translation is a way to facilitate the transfer of this knowledge and power across languages. The ultimate aim of Wildeman's work is the merging of author, reader, and translator. On the one hand this refers to the fact that she herself becomes not only translator, but simultaneously reader and author as well, "becom[ing] one with the text" (Wildeman 33); on the other hand, she implies that as she "speak[s] to all feminists from within lesbian difference," using language to convey female desire, she aims to impress upon the reader some sense of kinship, of a universal female experience (Wildeman 31, 33). While Wildeman does note her belief that "lesbians are women who are different from women as the term is commonly

understood,” unnecessarily othering lesbians, she proceeds from the (incorrect) assumption that all women, straight or otherwise, must identify with female/feminine experience.

Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, too, imagines feminist translation as an intimate encounter between women. In “Translating through the Body,” an account of her experience translating *Mauve Desert*, Lotbinière-Harwood exults in the opportunity to slip from one language to another. She describes translation as *jouissance*, meaning simply pleasure, but with heavy sexual connotations. As she escapes the identity imposed upon her by her native language, she writes, “Moving through a literary utopia I will describe as a space where discourse is not physically damaging to women, my translating body becomes aroused” (Lotbinière-Harwood, “Translating” 25).

In *Re-Belle et Infidèle*, sandwiched between the French and English versions of her autobiographical exploration of bilingualism and translation, sits a chapter titled “Deux mots pour chaque chose⁷.” Writing in a combination of both French and English, Lotbinière-Harwood begins by describing herself as a translation, a body that houses two words for everything (*Re-Belle* 75). This embodied writing quickly turns erotic as another woman enters the scene. The passages that follow, describing the translator’s struggle to translate the French “*cyprine*,” which has no English equivalent, brim with sexual imagery:

mes lèvres se posent sur tes lips. Le jour se lève, je me reveille visitée par ta chaleur
though you are far away [...]. Dans l’espace d’une bouche à l’autre se pose la question
de(s) langue(s) [...]. Let us read, in a ‘common language’, the inter-sexual dream we are
wa(l)king into. Call it Aphrodite’s foam, gynergic secretions, yoni juice. ‘Fabriquons un

⁷ This chapter shares a title and some content with Lotbinière-Harwood’s article “Deux mots pour chaque chose” published in *Tessera*, but the two are not identical.

mot pour (se) le dire’, redisent mes lèvres dilatées. [...] the translator deletes the *e muet mutant*, silent like the dream of two mouths meeting, and delivers the word “cyprin” into the lexical gap of the English tongue. (Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-Belle* 75-6)

Here, translation is imagined as an intimate dream, in which Lotbinière-Harwood simultaneously senses the author and knows she is not physically present. She is in search of a “common language,” one that will allow her to bridge the distance between herself and the author, as well as the author and the reader, a distance which exists both due to the Anglo-Francophone divide, but also due to the muted language of women. Just as lesbian desire must be envisioned outside of patriarchal paradigms, so too must the language that describes this desire; as the translator searches for a word to capture the intimate, “silken” nature of “*cyprine*,” she suggests that it must be created.

This sexual imagery also focuses on writing the female body into language. Lotbinière-Harwood speaks with “lèvres dilatées,” referring not only to lips but also to labia. The common language, as metonym for “*cyprine*,” is described as vaginal fluids secreted during arousal. This emphasis on genitalia draws a strong connection between sexual intimacy, translation, and womanhood. However, by equating vaginas with womanhood, Lotbinière-Harwood does not address a universal feminine experience—in fact, she does quite the opposite; this metaphor centres cis women’s bodies and removes the possibility of many trans women and genderqueer folks being able to identify with it. Pushing the metaphor even further, Lotbinière-Harwood describes her ultimate creation of the word “cyprin” using the word “delivers,” suggesting the idea of translation as giving birth to a text. This further narrows the field of people who may identify with this metaphor, excluding those for whom pregnancy and birth are not part of being a woman, whether by their own choice or due to anatomical impossibility.

1.5 Translation and Maternity

Setting the stage for many feminist writers to come, Hélène Cixous emphasizes a deep connection between writing and the body. When she feels the need to write it is all-consuming, something wells up within her and forces its way out: “What’s come over her? A child! Paper! Intoxications! I’m brimming over! My breasts are overflowing! Milk ink. Nursing time. And me? I’m hungry, too. The milky taste of ink!” (Cixous “Coming to Writing” 31). Comparing writing to birth and maternity, Cixous is both mother breastfeeding her infant-text and child herself, eager to be sated by the act of writing. This metaphor of writing as giving birth, which figures heavily in feminist writing of the 1980s, also extends to translation theory as translators and theorists begin to envision translation itself as a form of (re)writing.

In 2009 and, later, in 2014 along with Carolyn Shread, Luise von Flotow suggests matrixial theory and metramorphics as potentially productive for translation studies. Introduced by psychoanalytical theorist Bracha L. Ettinger, these ideas are presented as an alternative to the primacy of the phallic paradigm, which posits (sexual) difference as a lack and consequently subordinates women. As Flotow explains, the word “metramorphosis” combines “mater” (“mother”), “matrice” (“womb”), and “matrix,” with the word “morpheus,” a Greek word which evokes the idea of changing form (“Contested Gender” par. 22). Ettinger’s metramorphosis turns attention away from the phallus and towards the womb, specifically in the late stages of pregnancy. The relationship between fetus and mother is one in which there is mutual dependency and which simultaneously recognizes and welcomes difference.

Flotow sees this as a useful addition to the psychoanalytical theory already established in translation studies, as it allows one to reckon with the relationship to the unknown or the Other (“Contested Gender” 21). In metramorphosis, as in translation “*several* comes before the one,”

and the relationship is one of mutual transformation, where material is exchanged through a permeable membrane, rather than negotiated at a border (Flotow, “Contested Gender” 26; Flotow and Shread 593). Flotow and Shread’s goal is to adapt translation paradigms to fit their feminist views, which they do “by reclaiming the materiality and experiential knowledge of the female body” (593). The theorists appear to realize the exclusivity that this implies, as they state that “while women have privileged access to metamorphic processes during the late prenatal stage [...] this feminine space is shared by everyone” (Flotow and Shread 593); however, they fail to elaborate on just how women and people who do not give birth might access these processes, with the result that their theory remains focused on the experiences of select few.

1.6 (M)other tongue⁸

Beyond its role in metamorphic theory, maternity figures into the metaphors of translation by way of a common idiom: mother tongue. Used colloquially to refer to one’s first language, a language learned most often from the mother, this term takes on new meaning in feminist translation theory. Feminist translation theorists both expand upon and problematize the concept of the mother tongue, revealing its role in perpetuating dominant discourse at the same time as they celebrate it.

When Hélène Cixous writes about her mother tongue, she refers to it with affection. For the French writer, her mother tongue is literally the language of her mother (German), but it can also be found in the language of women: “In the language I speak, the mother tongue resonates, tongue of my mother, less language than music” (Cixous, “Coming to Writing” 21). This language is a constant undercurrent in all she thinks and feels, and this relationship is

⁸ This spelling is borrowed from Pamela Banting’s article “S(m)other Tongue.”

strengthened by the fact that it is a language that for a long time she knew only orally. Cixous identifies the moment she learned that German is not only spoken but also written as a moment of horror, equating the idea of grammar and orthography with violence: “To suddenly sheath it, corset it, lace it, spell it” (“Coming to Writing” 22). Her mother tongue is as a woman subject to the oppression of the masculine, ordered world, deprived of her power as she is forced into a corset. The word “sheath” translates the original French “gainer,” meaning also “to girdle” (Cixous “La Venue” 32), emphasizing the physical restrictions placed on women by patriarchy; however, it also recalls a sword sheath, the original meaning of the Latin *vagina*, linking feminine difference and oppression with the anatomy that men see as empty space or lack.

Pamela Banting defines the “(m)other tongue” not as one’s first spoken language, but as women’s language, “a simultaneous translation between language and body, between the already spoken and unspeakable” (85). In fact, she emphasizes that it is *not* anyone’s mother tongue in the traditional sense and that it only exists as a result of learning another language (Banting 85). Banting terms this tongue an “interlanguage,” defining it as “a separate, yet intermediate linguistic system situated between a source language and a target language” (85). To her, then, this interlanguage is what happens when one translates, whether between English and French, women’s internal language and dominant discourse, or, as is the case in this article, academic discourse and vernacular. Banting’s spelling of “(m)other” suggests the idea of the Other, highlighting the foreignness of this interlanguage. At the same time, it harks back to the psychoanalytic notion of sexual difference; the mother in this paradigm is a stranger, tied to the encounter with the Other.

Many of the translators who write about mother tongue express a certain feeling of alienation. Suzanne Jill Levine suggests that this term “is a deceptive metaphor: mother may be

the first to teach the infant speech, but she is only passing onto him or her the father-tongue” (89). In her autobiographical writing on bilingualism, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood echoes this sentiment. While she can translate well into her first language (French), she more often works in the other direction, a conscious choice based on her greater feeling of freedom in English. This has nothing to do with the nature of the languages themselves; Lotbinière-Harwood recognizes that English, like French, is a *man*-made, phallogocentric language. However, drawing upon psychoanalytic theory, the translator suggests that English allows her to think herself outside of the social structures that she rejects: “my superego wasn’t shaped by English,” “in French my voice always goes back to trying to win an argument with my father” (Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-Belle et Infidèle* 90-1). To frame it more theoretically: “In patriarchal socialization, the power to formulate sentences coincides developmentally with a recognition of the power of the father” (Hunter 474). French, then reinforces her subordinate position as a woman, while English sets her free and allows her to disrupt dominant discourse.

Further exploring this link with psychoanalysis, Lotbinière-Harwood compares herself to Anna O. (real name Bertha Pappenheim), a patient of Dr. Josef Breuer who was written about by Freud. Pappenheim was diagnosed with hysteria after exhibiting multiple symptoms, including aphasia (the inability to speak). Lotbinière-Harwood notes that when Pappenheim regained her ability to speak during hysterical episodes, she did not use her mother tongue, German, but other languages (*Re-Belle* 90-1). This, she suggests, was a strategy (whether conscious or not) to reject an identity that she did not wish to claim. In this respect, Lotbinière-Harwood identifies with Pappenheim: “What the hysteric cannot say with words, she translates into another language, using her body and/or a foreign tongue. Like the hysteric, the translator into other tongue is also using her other language to express parts of her self that would otherwise remain muted” (*Re-*

Belle 91). Lotbinière-Harwood reclaims hysteria, a disease that was diagnosed almost entirely in women and reinforced stereotypes of women as unstable, nervous, and weak, using it instead as a symbol of a proto-feminist act.

While metaphors of maternity, birth, and mother tongue may be fruitful, they also emphasize an aspect of womanhood with which not all women can identify. As stated previously, the equation of womanhood with having a uterus is trans-exclusionary and ignores the existence of folks with a uterus who do not identify as women. On top of this, not all cis women can see themselves in these metaphors; some women do not want to have children or physically cannot. Some may have their uterus removed for medical reasons, such as endometriosis. Luise von Flotow and Carolyn Shread argue that “while women have privileged access to metamorphic processes during the late prenatal stage [...] this feminine space is shared by everyone,” but they do not actively carve out a place for everyone in their theory (593). Their failure to do so makes this assertion ring hollow.

1.7 Feminist Practice



(@erickschmerick)

At this point the question remains: why does it matter whether these metaphors centre cis women’s experiences? Is there not room for individual women to write their own bodies, their

own ideas of how their womanhood relates to their being a translator? The answer to these questions is complicated. It is, of course, important that feminists, including cis women, have the opportunity to write about their personal experiences. One of the things that distinguishes feminist writing is that it pushes back against the “objectivity” and detachment so highly valued by positivist, patriarchal institutions and allows writers to situate themselves and their lives within theory and criticism, writing themselves into the discourse.

The development of autotheory is evidence of this emphasis on personal experience and has helped legitimize more interpretive modes of knowing. A movement that has taken hold especially in third and fourth wave feminism, texts “in the genre of autotheory takes one’s embodied experiences as a primary text or raw material through which to theorize, process, and reiterate theory to feminist effects” (Fournier 644). However, in speaking from a personal point of view, one of the traps that feminist writers must consciously avoid is the temptation to universalize and essentialize.

In 1997, Luise von Flotow notes that recent feminist translation studies has been changing to avoid essentializing and to attend to differences between women. She suggests that “contemporary feminist scholarship in English purposely stresses the relative nature of its approach” through the inclusion of introductions that situate the author in terms of privilege and oppression (Flotow, “Dis-Unity 9). This caveat does the work of acknowledging the privileged positions of many feminist scholars, but it does not in and of itself remedy lack of diversity in the field, nor does it neutralize exclusionary theory or allow the author to say whatever they like without consequence. If not backed by truly inclusive ideas, it is nothing but performative allyship. In the case of gendered metaphors of translation, by anchoring the idea of womanhood in cis women’s experiences and bodies, feminist translation theorists have precluded the

possibility of trans women and genderqueer folks seeing themselves in these metaphors, whether or not they preface their ideas with an acknowledgement of their position.

As translation is a discipline in which theory and praxis are closely connected—individual translators and scholars often engage with both—these cissexist metaphors have implications for translation practice as well. Feminist translation theory both draws upon and reinforces the practice of *l'écriture féminine*, which Sherry Simon describes as “a deliberate affirmation of the femininity often occulted in language” (Preface 8). Feminist translators, in their efforts to make women visible in writing, have often taken the approach of feminizing language through strategic use of she/her pronouns, feminine affixes, and vocabulary that recalls womanhood. However, these strategies, while certainly making cis women more visible, often have the side effect of reinforcing the gender binary and more definitively excluding trans and genderqueer folks where before they may have been able to find space for themselves.

Lotbinière-Harwood explicitly argues against the feminist discursive practices of neutralization and desexization⁹ on the grounds that they often fail or backfire. She contends that neutralization is fundamentally impossible, as readers have had androcentric views ingrained in their practices and, as such, will automatically continue to think of generic language as male by default (Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-Belle* 114). She advocates writing “she/he” rather than “he/she”—and never the generic pronoun “he”—in order to privilege the feminine and avoid risking its subordination to the masculine. However, in doing so she simply reinforces a binary understanding of gender—in fact, she explicitly states that “[t]here is no such thing as gender-neutral, in language or in reality,” removing the possibility of the singular “they” from her

⁹ de Lotbinière-Harwood’s examples of these strategies: “*neutralization* (i.e., replacing ‘stewardess’ by ‘flight attendant’) and *desexization* (i.e., using ‘he/she’ instead of the generic ‘he’ only)” (*Re-belle* 113).

practice and excluding the many non-binary individuals who now use this pronoun (Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-Belle* 100).

When it comes to desexization, Lotbinière-Harwood advocates for the entirely opposite approach: “resexization,” which to her means feminization. As an example of this practice, she describes the challenge of rendering “*l’histoire des femmes*” in English. As she notes, the word “herstory” exists in English and would serve as a suitable translation, but, thinking this term stale and seeking to avoid “the binary opposites (his/her) mode of feminist word creation,” the translator opts instead for a more creative word: “hystory,” which combines “history” with *hyst-*, the root of the Greek word for “uterus” (Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-Belle* 120-21). This, like the metaphors in her work, makes a direct connection between womanhood and anatomy, resulting in the exclusion of trans folks from her definition of “woman”.

Rosemary Arrojo is critical of such strategies, noting that while feminist translators condemn the violence of non-feminist translation, in particular towards the source text and culture, they themselves are guilty of the same betrayal. Using Levine as an example, she shows how “womanhandling” the text is no better than the aggressive strategies used by a male translator: “both [translators] consciously ‘invade’ and interfere with the texts they translate and make them suit their own ideological interests and perspectives at the same time that they disguise their ‘subversion’ under the mask of some form of respect to the ‘original’” (Arrojo, “Fidelity” 154). When feminists take authorial power and alter the text to fit their agenda, they commit the same infidelity that they decry when it is done by a man. At work here is the same “double standard” that Chamberlain wants to eradicate, with a view to establishing gender equality in the field (Arrojo, “Fidelity” 154). However, Arrojo suggests rethinking to whom a translator must be faithful; in feminist translation, a translator may choose fidelity to the

community that produces and validates them rather than the author of the original (“Fidelity” 154). What is critical is that feminist translators acknowledge their allegiances and avoid the hypocritical assertion that they do not inflict violence on a text as men do.

1.8 Who Are These Feminisms For?

Apart from the female body, one of the most striking images in feminist translation theory is the horizon. Spreading from *Mauve Desert* to Anglophone scholarship, the horizon represents both the liminality of the translator and a shift in power structures. No longer is the vertical author-as-father structure acceptable; instead feminists have celebrated a new reciprocal, *horizontal* relationship between author and translator, specifically an intimate, feminine one. In this scheme, the author remains at one end of the horizon, while the translator moves back and forth between poles. However, while they reject a patriarchal metaphors of translation, these translators and theorists still define the agents of the translation process in terms of gender.

If feminist translation theory’s understanding of gender shifts from a hierarchy to a horizon, it recognizes the problem in male domination and allows for fluid identity. However, a horizontal line implies some degree of continuity; if man and woman—or male/masculine and female/feminine, depending on who you’re reading—are points on a spectrum, then other gender identities must fall between or beyond them. This fails to account for the full complexity of gender. Non-binary identities are not simply between the norms of man and woman, rather they reject these norms, as non-binary folks may be as masculine or feminine as any cis person—some express their gender in hypermasculine and -feminine presentation (e.g. high femme). Trans folks may identify as one of the traditional binary genders, but they have not simply moved far enough in one direction on the gender spectrum and their gender presentation, like that of cis and non-binary folks, varies. While feminist translation theorists may have done away

with gendered metaphors that oppress women, they have not, as Lori Chamberlain hoped, been able to “consider the acts of authoring, creating, or legitimizing a text outside of the gender binar[y]” (“Gender” 327).

1.8.1 Elitism

As feminism moved from underground meetings to the wider circulation of women’s press publications to the academic world, it gained greater traction. Women’s studies departments provided young scholars with the opportunity to learn about and explore feminist thought in greater depth and it helped to spread the feminist message. However, soon high theory began to pull focus and academic feminist thought became less and less accessible to the general public. Bell hooks notes that it was “as if a large body of feminist thinkers banded together to form an elite group writing theory that could be understood only by an ‘in’ crowd” (*Feminism* 22). As focus on non-academic audiences lessens, the gap between theory and praxis is bound to grow wider. This has consequences for the public, who no longer has access to a great deal of feminist theory, but also for the academic work itself, as its reach becomes smaller and smaller (hooks, *Feminism* 22).

Perhaps due to their strong roots in French philosophy and psychoanalysis, two Eurocentric and esoteric traditions, feminist translation and translation studies has been markedly guilty of this elitism. Much of the translation of experimental feminist writing, in particular that of Nicole Brossard, seeks to borrow French feminist avant-garde strategies and establish them in English. Robyn Gillam is critical of this approach, taking as example Godard’s translation of Brossard’s *Amantes*. Godard attempts to recreate the effects of Brossard’s style by privileging not only meaning but also sound, with the result that many of the English poems are “literally

mistranslations” (Gillam 9). Gillam cites cultural and literary differences between French and English-speaking Canada as a source of complication:

because the relationship of English Canadians to their language is so different, the replication of the process of Brossard’s feminist writing into English does not seem to find an audience outside a tiny cultural elite. Gail Scott’s complaint that anyone who doesn’t understand such experimental, formalistic writing thinks like a white heterosexual male (*Spaces Like Stairs*, 42) misses the point. Without particular social and cultural opportunities, most people don’t have the equipment to think any other way. (12)

Gillam points out that since Anglophone Canadians are not familiar with the tradition to which Brossard’s writing belongs, they are not equipped to understand the significance of Godard’s approach. As a result, they are able to access neither the original French text, nor its meaning in English. The only readers who can fully appreciate this translation strategy are those who speak both English and French, and therefore could have read the original anyways.

This conflict also plays out in the history of *Tessera*, a bilingual Canadian feminist literary journal that published work by Barbara Godard, Marlene Wildeman, and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, among others. In the call for papers for the issue on “Traduction au féminin/Translating Women,” the editors write that ““All forms of writing are welcome: essays, poems, fictions, translations. Academic discourse is discouraged”” (qtd in Banting 81). This statement produced split reactions; Jane Casey, in an letter to the editor applauds this move towards accessible language, while Pamela Banting rushes to the defense of academic discourse. Casey sees this as a way to narrow the divide between theory and praxis and to increase the journal’s potential audience by avoiding “highly specialized language [that] precludes the

possibility for dialogue among a wide base of feminist readers” (8). If language is a tool for rethinking gender and for fighting oppression, everyone should have access to it.

Banting, on the other hand, defends theoretical feminist discourse. Some ideas and experiments, she says, cannot be translated into a vernacular without significant loss (Banting 82). In reaction to Casey’s opinion that academic discourse excludes many women from engaging with feminist ideas, Banting suggests that the simplification of theoretical language removes opportunities for these readers to learn; if they never encounter unknown vocabulary or concepts, she says, they will never think to look them up in a dictionary or attempt to learn about them (Banting 82). She further contends that academic theory exists and may be understood outside of academic institutions and that it is not always as opaque and elitist as Casey implies. “The aim of feminism,” Banting says, “is not only to create one common language of, by and for women, but to multiply the linguistic potentialities, competencies and occasions in which women can speak, write, perform, analyse, and celebrate their difference(s)” (87). This aspect of her reply has merit; it is important that marginalized folks have the opportunity to express their individual experiences however is right for them. However, while her defense of academic discourse rings true in this sense, Banting ignores the repercussions of its spread into a non-academic literary journal. Some academic discourse is more readily understood by non-specialists, to be sure, but that is not the kind of work that is being discouraged.

If the goal of feminist translation and of creating a bilingual Canadian feminist journal is to disseminate feminist thought to a broader audience, then jargon-laden texts and translations that can only be understood by an in-group of bilingual readers are obstacles to be avoided. As for the suggestion that inaccessible texts push readers to learn new words and concepts, this clearly indicates an obliviousness to the realities of women’s lives outside the educated white

middle class. Banting seems not to grasp that not all women have the time or resources to do the learning required to understand these texts, nor do they have the academic or peer support to discuss them. This is especially true of women of colour and other marginalized folks. Her position does not allow those most oppressed by patriarchy to access ideas that could help improve their situation, but instead privileges those who have a head start in the struggle for equality. In addition, she ignores the fact that as a scholar she has other avenues in which to explore academic, theoretical ideas; she does not need this journal for that, but others may not have publication options for their non-academic work. As Spivak asserts, real feminist solidarity requires recognition that not all women are similar, that what is accessible to the target language reader may not be accessible to a woman in the source culture or the author herself, that not all women can even read (407-8).

1.8.2 Are All Women “Colonized”?

This disregard for intersections of oppression—race and class in particular—rears its ugly head in a metaphor evoked repeatedly in feminist translation theory. Chamberlain points out that metaphors of translation as colonization are closely connected to gendered metaphors, as “the politics of colonialism overlap significantly with the politics of gender” (“Gender” 318); translation, colonization, and gender roles were all conceived of as civic duty. Just as translation has been described in terms of penetration and capture, essentially a sexual assault of the original, so too does colonization both figuratively and literally evoke images of rape.

Just as they appropriated gendered metaphors of translation, feminist translation theorists took up the colonization metaphor and used it to explain their relationship with language. Godard, analyzing Madeleine Gagnon, notes a parallel between Quebec Francophones and women, as both must express themselves through the dominant language, which is not their

native language (“Theorizing” 43). Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood agrees, repeatedly drawing comparisons between women and French Canadians as “colonized” people. Both, she says, are forced into silence, muted by their oppressors and by the language of the patriarchy/colonizer:

how do I love thee, “language of our oppressors” (A. Rich)? which voice is speaking here? my Québécois-e voice, in which “our” means we French-speaking people of Québec and the oppressor’s language is English, agent of British colonization then, of U.S. imperialism now? or my Québécoise voice, where “our” means women and the oppressor, as Rich means it, is any “man-made language” [...] *femmes du Québec*: d-double colonization. (Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-Belle* 83-4)

Because of the imposition of non-native languages on Francophone women in Quebec, these women are oppressed from two directions: patriarchy and English hegemony. Flotow points out that the sensed state of linguistic peril in Quebec in the mid-late 20th century spurred a movement of modernist and emphatically Quebecois writing. The years that followed, “a period of rampant social changes and burgeoning experimental discourses,” following the nationalism of the Quiet Revolution, saw the rise of feminist avant-garde writing in the province (Flotow, *Quebec Feminist Writing* 9) However, this comparison reveals yet another fundamental misunderstanding of privilege and oppression. While Francophone Canadians have indeed been subject to discrimination and the threat of language loss, the notion of Québécoise women as colonized seems to forget the role of the French in colonizing Canada. For white settler feminists to dub themselves “colonized” is to minimize the horrific acts perpetrated by colonial powers against indigenous folks as well as ongoing institutional racism and genocide, one of the

consequences of which has been the erasure and persecution of two-spirit folks and their rejection within indigenous communities themselves.

In their attempts to further their own agenda, white Western feminists have also been guilty of appropriating the work of authors who write in peripheral languages. Building on her argument that where asymmetrical power dynamics are at play, even “feminist” translation strategies may actually take a violent “masculine” approach, Arrojo investigates Hélène Cixous’ appropriation of the work of Brazilian author Clarice Lispector. While Cixous has been credited with bringing international attention to Lispector’s work and makes a point of proclaiming her love and fidelity to the author, the relationship between them, Arrojo shows, is a dominating—even abusive—one. Though she claims that “reading is [...] an act of listening to the text’s otherness” and advocates a “careful ‘word for word’ translation strategy,” Cixous handles Lispector’s text in such a way as to make it fit her own purposes and ultimately reduces Lispector to a mere sign (Arrojo, “Interpretation” 146, 148, 154):

Cixous’s alleged ‘extreme fidelity’ to Lispector’s otherness cannot stand even the most superficial exam. This peculiar brand of ‘fidelity’ turns out to be a true intervention, a rewriting, in which what belongs to the author and to the reader is literally shaded by omissions and misquotations, and in which Lispector’s Portuguese is often disregarded or taken to be a perfect translation of French. (Arrojo, “Interpretation” 151)

Rather than love, this relationship is marked by dominance; Cixous, as a celebrated French writer and thinker, has complete power over how and to what extent Lispector’s work circulates in Western academia. Arrojo also notes that as Lispector was no longer alive at the time of Cixous’ translations, she literally has no voice to speak against this appropriation (“Interpretation” 154). Comparing Cixous’ “discovery” of Lispector to Columbus’ “discovery” of the Americas, Arrojo

says “Cixous’s reading of Lispector is also a form of ‘colonization’, in which whatever or whoever is subject to foreign domination not only has to adopt the interests of the colonizer but also comes under the latter’s complete control” (“Interpretation” 156). If feminist translation theory is genuinely concerned with the relationship between gender and colonization, it must also pay attention to the ways in which colonialism has imposed Western binary concepts of gender as well as appropriated the work of peripheral authors under the guise of feminist action.

1.8.3 Room to Claim Space?

Though cissexist, woman-centred metaphors are found in the bulk of feminist translation theory, especially from the 1980s and 90s, some of the theory manages a certain amount of inclusivity when it comes to understanding gender. Barbara Godard, Françoise Massardier-Kenney, and Carol Maier all approach their writing from an understanding of gender that leaves room for non-binary and trans identities, whether intentionally or not.

In “Towards a Redefinition of Feminist Translation Practice,” Françoise Massardier-Kenney defines woman as “devalued difference” (56) and asks how translation may be used in a way that benefits this “devalued feminine.” This term, she notes, is socially and culturally constructed and is merely a privileged marker; other categories of identity, such as race and class, are inextricably tied up in the idea and lived experience of “woman.” Massardier-Kenney is critical of her colleagues, in particular Godard, Brossard, and de Lotbinière-Harwood, as in their attempts to take greater visibility for women, they essentialize and universalize, assuming one common experience and definition.

Godard reinforces many of the metaphors previously examined, such as women’s language and translation as doubled, as rewriting; however, she also introduces yet another metaphor into the conversation. Godard theorizes translation as “*trans(dance)form, comme*

transformation et performance” (“Theorizing” 42). Feminist translation, she believes, is an act that not only alters a text (and its translator) but also produces. It is mimesis, a repetition which “redoubles as it crosses back and forth through the mirror” (Godard, “Theorizing” 47). For Godard, this signifies that transformation is performance, a dance between two points, and that translation embodies all of this.

The notion of performance is also key in discussions of gender that were happening around the same time as the publication of this article. Judith Butler, just months earlier, had published an article in *Theatre Journal* titled “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” In this article, Butler begins to explore some of the ideas that will later appear in *Gender Trouble*, specifically the notion of gender as performative. She rejects the idea of gender as an inherent form of identity which is the basis of an individual’s actions:

rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler, “Performative Acts” 519)

Gender then, does not lead an individual to the way that they act in the world, so much as it is constituted by the ongoing existence and accumulation of gendered acts throughout one’s life. This means that one’s gender identity is not biologically determined, nor is it fixed from the moment of assignment, but rather it is a pattern that leaves room for deviation, for changes in direction, for fluidity.

Applying Butler's theory to translation, Maier says that performativity "implies an ambivalent position [...] in which a practitioner—in this case a translator—offers an interpretation or performance that is inevitably contingent on many factors, not the least of which is the translator's own notion of 'identity'" ("Issues" 103). Inspired by the protagonist of *Gaudí Afternoon*, who describes herself as neither man nor woman, but simply a translator, Maier thinks of translation as an activity in which the translator must take off their own gender and slip into the one associated with the author ("Issues" 100-2). She also encourages translators to interrogate the temptation to use gender as the privileged marker of an author and to consider other aspects of their identity that may be more crucial to how they see and present themselves.

This approach is supported in "Gender and/in Literary Translation," an article written by Maier with Françoise Massardier-Kenney. They advocate for translators and authors to work closely where possible, in "activist collaboration" (Maier and Massardier-Kenney 227). Facilitating this partnership is the translator's effort to put aside their own identity in favour of the author's: "Translation becomes a question of presenting, as in representing or interpreting, not a fixed, "seamless" identity, but what Judith Butler has defined as something 'one becomes' [...] To achieve that representation, although a translator may identify him or herself with a given gender definition, it will be necessary for that definition to be set aside" (Maier and Massardier-Kenney 230-1). By invoking the notion of performativity and becoming, these theories strengthen the connection between translation and gender. They destabilize the notion of woman and leave room for the translator to engage with gender identity in *all* its fluidity and variations.

1.9 Conclusions

While feminist metaphors of translation have made great strides in the representation of women's language and translation, as well as the legitimization of new, more creative translation strategies and theories, they have also followed some of the more negative paths of the feminist movement. Feminist translation theory, in its efforts to centre women's experiences, falls into the common trap of exclusionary feminism. Emphasis on the female body as a fundamental component of womanhood excludes intersex, trans, and non-binary folks. And while some postcolonial and critical race theory has had an impact on feminist translation studies, the majority of feminist translation theorists, particularly in the Canadian School, have been educated white cis women. Accusations of elitism, though effective to a certain extent, have at times been met with defensive reactions that affirm the authors' right to engage in highly theoretical work without acknowledging that this work fundamentally excludes many from its audience. Further, white settler feminist authors, particularly in Quebec, are guilty of appropriating the language of the colonized in order to express their relationship to English hegemony.

What the feminist turn has failed to realize is that a diversity of voices allows for a diversity of understandings of gender, womanhood, and translation. Exclusionary feminism thinks of women as *the* oppressed and fights, for their rights and equality, but fails to recognize that though women are not on the top rung of the ladder, neither are they at the bottom. As Olga Castro points out, feminists have recognized that "failing to consciously subscribe to one particular ideology in translation implies unconsciously adhering to the dominant (patriarchal) ideology," but what they appear oblivious to is the fact that their own ideology also adheres to dominant ideas of race, gender, class, as it does not explicitly reject them ("(Re)-examining" 3).

In the years that have followed the feminist turn, there have been strides towards understanding translation and gender through an intersectional lens. However, feminist translation studies proper has not necessarily been at the forefront of these advances. Instead, other disciplines such as postcolonial studies have entered the field, and the new subfields of queer and trans translation studies, with beginnings in the late 90s and early 00s, have brought more complex understandings of gender and translation to the fore.

Chapter Two: Gender, Troubled: Queer and Trans Metaphors in Translation Theory

In *Transgender, Translation, Translingual Address*, Douglas Robinson suggests that translation studies is on the cusp of the fourth stage in an exploration of translation and, for lack of a more accurate term, gender/sexual identity. The four stages so far, as he sees it, have concentrated on the relationships between translation and the following categories: gender (read: women/feminism), gay and lesbian identities, queer, and transgender. In this chapter, I focus on the two most recent of Robinson's stages, analysing the metaphorical connections that scholars have made between translation, queerness, and transgender experience¹⁰. Noting the influences of feminist translation theory, I explore themes such as performativity, the genderqueer translator, and the body-text relationship as they arise in queer and trans TS. I show that while queer and trans TS have expanded the range of gendered metaphors to include identities outside the man/woman and hetero/homo colonial binaries, they are still experiencing growing pains.

2.1 Defining Queer and Trans

Just as it is important to consider how feminist authors define womanhood, it bears considering how authors define queer and trans. If the term "woman," regarded as relatively definable, has produced unstable and wildly varying definitions, how difficult is it to pin down the meanings of queer and trans? The following are explicit definitions of these and related terms as offered by the authors of the texts examined in this chapter.

¹⁰ While gay and lesbian identities have been important in the destabilization of heteronormative, binary gender categories, they are now properly understood as describing sexuality rather than gender identity or performance. For this reason, I do not include them in my analysis of queer and trans gendered metaphors.

In “Bridging the Genders?,” Mirko Casagrande notes that the term “transgender” originally indicated a trans person who refused surgery, but has come to mean “every individual who questions and does not conform to gender norms” (114). While this explanation of the evolution of “transgender” is helpful in remembering that these terms all exist differently according to time and place, the current definition that Casagrande offers leaves perhaps too much space. Given this definition, transgender could include cis folks who present in a non-normative way. Casagrande also asserts that *trans* has the ability to move back and forth on the “gender continuum,” a common conception of the diversity of gender identities, but one that reinforces the idea that there are two poles, man and woman, and that other identities must exist in relation to, not fully external to these norms.

Robinson stresses the multiplicity of transgender communities and defines transgender not as an attempt to exist outside identity categories, but to “place themselves in the way of particular forms of recognition” (49). Thus, his definition falls not within the traditional idea of trans as crossing over the gender divide from one side to the other, but within an understanding of trans as plural, non-binary, and, some might say, queer. Discussing his own connection to gender, he admits to believing that while we may be born binary—here he forgets intersex folks—and be socialized within that binary, we all end up realizing, to a certain extent, that we are non-binary (xxvii). While this definition leaves room for most identities, Robinson fails to appreciate that there are certainly people in this world who are content living their lives within a binary that they never question.

Emily Rose states that “Nobody is born masculine or feminine; we all learn our gender roles as children and they are reinforced by society over time” (“Revealing and Concealing” 37). She avoids contributing to such external reinforcement by refusing to commit to any one label

for the characters in her works: “Choisy’s cross-dressing should not be singularly categorized as it comprises many different elements, including drag, transvestism and transgender experience” (Rose, “Revealing and Concealing” 41). This highlights an important issue in the analysis of texts, especially those that predate or were produced external to current popular Western understandings and expressions of queer and trans gender identities. While Rose uses a variety of terms to explain Choisy’s relationship to gender, it is not possible to apply present-day concepts to this text and ensure any degree of accuracy.

What these definitions point to is a lack of consensus on what queer and trans truly mean. This is due to the fact that they are difficult to define, as, like translation, they are complex and elusive concepts. While these definitions may differ, however, what they have in common is an understanding of gender that is fluid and non-binary.

2.2 Performativity

As shown in the previous chapter, one of the ways in which feminist translation theory opened up space for non-binary and non-cisnormative gender identities was through the concept of performativity. While Barbara Godard and Carol Maier may have been writing about cis women, given this concept’s connection to Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity, it seems inevitable that it should have ended up in queer TS. With her theory, Butler opened up a world of queer possibilities both within academia and without. The idea that gender is constructed and performed leaves room for infinite variations of identity, as individuals realize that their gender performance may be molded for a better fit, the only barriers being those that are socially constructed. This concept has been critical in queer activist and social movements, as more and more people declare their non-binary identities, including celebrities in highly visible

positions. In translation studies, the idea of performativity has given rise to metaphors that link translation with gender as imagined outside of a hierarchy or binary.

Taking inspiration from Godard's theory of translation as *transformance*, Sandra Bermann investigates the link between the performative natures of translation and gender. She explains Derrida's assertion that language is iterable and citational, that is, that "for something to be a sign, it must be able to be cited and repeated in all sorts of circumstances, including 'nonserious' ones" (Bermann 289). This, she points out, leaves space between the original writer or speaker's intention and what is communicated, as well as how it is received, creating a break where meaning may (or must?) be altered (Bermann 290). Translation is one such break.

Bermann compares the citational nature of a translation project to that of gender. Borrowing from Butler, she notes that though one may be assigned a gender, one never truly carries out the assignment, even if one wants to. The norms of man and woman, that is to say the "original" genders, are simply cited by those who perform them, not copied exactly; they are subject to the same break that occurs in language and translation. However, this also means that there is room for resistance. Bermann suggests a comparison between translation and drag, as both are "theatrical repetition and questioning of social and historical norms" (293). Translation repeats the original while altering it, whether a little or a lot, intentionally or unintentionally. Drag, meanwhile, is a performance that subverts the assumed relationship between gender and the body, showing simultaneously that genitalia \neq identity and that gender performance may be altered, to a certain extent, at will.

In "Queer Translation as Performative and Affective Undoing," Michela Baldo takes up the idea of performativity as she investigates how Butler's *Undoing Gender*, has been translated

into Italian. Beginning with the idea of undoing, she explains that this concept has two sides to it, one negative and one positive:

The negative part refers to the feeling by the queer subject of being ‘undone’ by their non-conforming to dominant gender and sexuality norms, of not being fully recognizable given that ‘the terms by which they are recognized make their life unliveable’ (Butler 2004c : 3). The positive part, however, refers to the possibilities opened up by this undoing. (Baldo 191)

Like Bermann’s “break,” undoing offers the queer person (or the translator) the opportunity to take advantage of this space of freedom and to resist or “transform” (Baldo 191). Gender, she points out, is always done for someone external to oneself, even if that someone is an imaginary spectator, as we as gendered subjects only imagine ourselves and our gender identity in relation to others (Baldo 191). Baldo carries this sense of relationality over to the idea of translation, suggesting that “Thinking about gender as something we *do* and *undo* together with others provides interesting insights for a discussion of [...] translation in general—on the one hand, because it makes us think of translation as constant circular movements of ‘to and fro,’ and on the other, because it invokes the idea that translation is a dialogic activity” (192). Thus the writer, translator, and reader are all involved in constructing both the translated text and the original.

Considering the fact that both gender and translation are things that are done and undone with other people, Baldo asserts that both have multiple authors. Recalling feminist metaphors of translation as conversation, she positions the writer of the original and the translator as equally creative authors. Baldo further troubles the division between author and translator by asserting that, like gender, “translation is a copy of an original that does not exist, and thus originality and

authorship become illusions” (192). Though, as Bermann points out, norms function as the original templates for masculine and feminine gender performance, each iteration deviates to some extent, meaning that the originals never truly exist. Translation, too, is always a performance of an “original” that is itself a copy of something else.

2.3 Cross-dressing

In the pursuit of troubling both binary gender and “the original,” Emily Rose explores the idea of translation as textual cross-dressing. Rose begins by noting that this metaphor of translation as linguistic clothing has already been suggested in translation studies (see Van Wyke; St André) but she aims to develop and apply a *queer* version through the translation of *Mémoires de l’abbé de Choisy habillé en femme*. In this text, Choisy, the author, describes in two separate chapters the experiences of dressing as a man in drag and of being disguised as a woman (Rose, “Revealing” 37). Drawing parallels between Choisy’s cross-dressing and her own translation strategies—examined in further detail later in this chapter—Rose suggests that just as “a cross-dresser covers and conceals their physical body with clothing [...] a translation covers and conceals the original textual body with a new text” (“Revealing” 37). She queers the text not only through her translation of gendered words, but also by using strategies that arrest the reader and allow them to think outside binary gender (Rose, “Revealing” 40). Recalling Butler, as well as TS scholars Bermann and Baldo, Rose asserts that “Gender is a performance of repeated acts which are covered up, just as every translation is a performance of repeated words covered up by a cloak of originality” (“Revealing” 47). Footnoting and other visible translation practices “reveal translation’s performance” just as dressing as the “opposite” gender reveals that gender is not fixed or natural (Rose, “Revealing” 42). In this way, cross-dressing, textual or textile,

becomes proof of the instability and constructedness of the “original” and of binary gender, as well as a means for subversion.

2.4 The Translator as Genderqueer

One of the first contributions to the idea of translation and the queer, published half a decade before queer TS really began to establish itself¹¹, Emma Parker’s “Lost in Translation” follows the figure of the translator through two queer fictional texts. Focusing on metaphors of transubstantiation, including “translation, transvestism and transsexuality” in Barbara Wilson’s *Gaudí Afternoon* and Jeannette Winterson’s *Written on the Body*, she posits that “translation is a quintessentially queer career” (Parker 118, 124). Both texts feature a translator as protagonist and both are concerned with “transformations in gender and sexual identity,” using translation as a trope that challenges sex/gender binaries as “fact” (Parker 118).

Both Cassandra Reilly, protagonist of *Gaudí Afternoon* and the unnamed narrator of *Written on the Body* display fluid, unstable, and ambiguous identities. Cassandra is often perceived relative to who she is with, so that when she is with her butch friend Ben she is seen as a woman, while on her own, her short haircut causes strangers to mistake her for a man (Parker 119). The narrator of *Written on the Body*, on the other hand, is never referred to in a way that would indicate their sex or gender. In this way, says Parker, the author “explores how bodies are ‘read’ (that is, interpreted) [...] presents the body explicitly as text” (121). Cassandra and the narrator are thus not only translators, “but also subjects who constantly undergo translation” (Parker 122). Parker’s view of translation is non-hierarchical, one in which both texts and bodies

¹¹ I situate the establishment of queer TS circa 2010, when the majority of research on queer topics began to circulate in translation studies, through special issues of journals, conference panels, and books dedicated to queer TS. There had been a few isolated articles on queer topics published before this date, including Parker’s “Lost in Translation”; however, this text was published not in a TS publication, but in a book on the topic of transubstantiation in English and European culture.

are copies or parodies of “originals” (which themselves are merely copies). While her study incorporates some of the same materials referenced in feminist translation theory, she notes that a queer reading of these texts produces an entirely different view of translation, one in which translation is not seen as a woman’s burden:

whereas the act of linguistic and cultural translation is the product of disenfranchisement and associated with pain in much feminist theory, postmodern queer fiction embraces and celebrates the joyous and potentially subversive potential of translation. The translator becomes an emblem of the multiplicity of meaning and an embodiment of the postmodern proliferation of identities. In *Gaudí Afternoon* and *Written on the Body*, what is lost in translation is the oppressive confines of a binary sex-gender system, and this loss is experienced as liberation. (Parker 124-5)

While feminist translation theorists used translation as a metaphor for their experiences navigating between dominant phallogocentric language and their internal language, this queer approach to translation and the translator does not focus on translation as an obligatory and oppressive part of everyday life, but rather as a site of potential resistance and infinite possibility. Rather than lamenting what is “lost in translation,” Parker celebrates the potential to gain endlessly different meanings in translation. Just as each queer individual adds their own unique interpretation to the array of existing genders, each translator gives us a unique interpretation of the source language and text.

Nearly ten years after Parker, Daniela Beuren adds to the discussion on gender and translation in *Gaudí Afternoon*. In “Neither is a Translator, Unless They’re Transauthors,” Beuren points out that the ambiguous identities of characters in the novel confuse the reader in much the same way that an original may confuse the translator upon their initial reading (315). In

addition to queer and trans secondary characters, the protagonist translator Cassandra Reilly demonstrates the instability of gender. According to Beuren, when Cassandra states that she is a translator rather than a man or woman, this is not, as Maier suggests, an indication that she takes off her own gender and puts on the gender of the author. Rather, her reply indicates that “instead of ‘doing gender’ (West & Zimmerman 1987) she is ‘doing translation’” and that in this text “translator” is theorized not simply as a performance *similar* to gender, but as a queer alternative to binary gender identities (Beuren 317). In this way, the translator is reimagined as genderqueer. In order to reflect this in language, Beuren recommends a *re-gendering* of language, so as to be inclusive and simultaneously avoid being “neutralised by language” (323). Where the translator-writer might be referred to as a “transauthor” or, in feminist texts, a “transauther,” a genderqueer substitute, such as “transauth_r” ought to be employed. The underscore removes the gendered suffixes of the original terms while establishing both a presence and a space of possibility.

Beuren’s desire for vocabulary that reflects the genderqueer nature of certain translation is shared by Arielle Concilio, who coins the term “translatxrsation.” The word consists in a substitution of the masculine *o* with a neutral *x*, instilling the word with gender neutrality and, at the same time, undermining the dominance of English with a practice that stems from Spanish language. The *s*, says Concilio, recalls the word “translation” and, in “coembodiment” with the genderqueer *x*, signifies “plurality and polyvocality” (467). These concepts, as well as the adoption of a Spanish practice, are meant to remind us of the fact that translation, like gender, exists differently outside of the Anglo-American context. Concilio seeks to undo the author/translator binary imposed under Western hegemony and thus brings to the surface the “translatxrs’ fluidity, [which] signals a genderqueer embodiment/subjectivity that defies the norm of a stable, gender-conforming subject” (465). In addition, the line between translatxr and

text are blurred during the translation process: “the translator leaves multiple bodily-textual ‘traces’ within the body-text and that also compose the body-text, and therefore blurs the distinctions between author/translator, original/translation, and translator/translation” (467). The translator, existing in myriad variations according to their linguistic and cultural context, always affecting and affected by embodied contact with the text, cannot be fit into a binary or hierarchy and thus, escapes being gendered altogether. However, Concilio, unlike Beuren and Parker, imagines this figure not only as genderqueer, but also, perhaps controversially, as trans.

2.5 Trans²lation

Research topics in trans TS, like queer TS, have until recently been overlooked. However, in the past decade, a handful of scholars have begun to explore the relationship between trans identity and translation, particularly in practice, but also in theory. In some cases this research has overlapped with queer TS, as the limits of trans and queer are neither solid nor fixed. Indeed, there has been debate outside of academia as to whether trans belongs within queer or, taken one step further, alongside the rest of LGBTQ2A+. What is at work here are two competing definitions of trans: one necessitates a certain degree of physical and social transition and encourages a straightforward “crossing over” within the heterocolonial binary; the other requires none of these things and simply refers to identities that differ from those assigned at birth, thus encompassing genderqueer in addition to binary trans identities. On top of this, the latter definition of the term *trans* or *trans**, signifies not a single category, but a constellation of identities. It emphasizes the multiplicity of trans experiences and relationships to transition, encouraging us to think beyond the idea of medical transition as a legitimizing force. *Trans* thus includes *transgender* and (the rather outdated) *transsexual* and tells us it is none of our business where any individual falls within these groups.

Because of the difficulty of establishing a single definition of trans, one that may or may not overlap with queer, there has been a range of approaches to the topic within translation studies. Scholars have theorized relationships between translation and different aspects of trans identity, from medical transition and reassignment surgery to authenticity and passing. Others have focused on practical translation issues, turning theory into ideas for responsible and affirming praxis. While the distinction between queer and trans TS may not be clear cut, the texts that follow deal explicitly with some form of trans identity.

2.6 Passing and/on Producing

Within the heteropatriarchal capitalist system of the West, the worth of people is measured by their ability to fit into the system in gendered roles that produce or reproduce. Trans people are no exception. As Sandy Stone explains in her foundational text “*The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto*,” early gender clinics aimed to produce bodies that would continue to contribute to the system, having simply transitioned out of one role and into the other in the gender binary, with no room to inhabit an ambiguous space in between. Candidates for surgery were selected based on their ability to perform their post-op gender, which led to some trans folks adopting specific performances in order to qualify and which flattened the plural experiences of being trans into a singular white Western ideal (Stone 227-9). An essential part of this process was also the construction of a “*plausible history*,” that is, a fictional account of one’s life before surgery that would allow one to pass as cis and to be accepted into society (Stone 230). Stone criticizes this practice in which “[t]he highest purpose of the transsexual is to erase him/herself, to fade into the ‘normal’ population as soon as possible” (230). Obligatory passing not only reinforces the idea that there are only two valid identities—man/woman, producer/reproducer—but also makes it more difficult for trans people to recognize one another,

to form communities, and to resist the system that oppresses them. As Robinson points out, “[t]he dominant culture doesn’t just restrict and constrain the outward behaviour of [...] minorities; it restricts and constrains *what they know*, and *how they know* and *whether they are able to process and articulate what they themselves experience*” resulting in epistemicide (18).

Stone wants her readers to look at trans folks¹² as text themselves. She encourages an understanding of “transsexuals not as a class or problematic ‘third gender,’ but rather as a *genre*—a set of embodied texts whose potential for *productive* disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored” (Stone 231). She sees the trans body-text as one filled with “*intertextual* possibilities,” referring to the polyphony of multiple bodies and identities, defined by unstable, porous boundaries. In order to realize this potential and to gain recognition, Stone asks trans folks to “forgo passing, to be consciously ‘read,’ to read oneself aloud—and by this troubling and productive reading, to begin to *write oneself* into the discourses by which one has been written” (232). In other words, in order to gain recognition, trans folks must make themselves visible in writing, a sentiment which recalls both the goals of *l’écriture féminine* and Lawrence Venuti’s call for translators’ visibility through the use of foreignization (see Venuti *The Translator’s Invisibility*).

Referring in part to Stone’s work, Arielle Concilio illuminates the parallels between translation and trans studies and identity. Both trans studies and literary translation have historically been marginalized within (and without) academia—as have trans people, to be sure—and both deal with issues of authenticity and originality; just as trans people are seen as “inauthentic” if they fail to pass as cis, translations are subject to criticism when they fail to pass

¹² In her article Stone deals specifically with transsexuality, that is, she focuses on trans people who have undergone medical transition.

for the “original” (Concilio 463). Translators, like trans people, must render themselves invisible in order to appease their readers. Concilio does note that “[t]his parallel is not to equate the violence and invisibility that trans* individuals have suffered and continue to suffer with the invisibility of translators, but instead, to think productively about how translation may be understood as a non-binary or genderqueer embodied practice, when translating a text by trans* writers or one that illuminates trans* lives and histories” (463). Like Stone, Concilio aspires to a definition of trans, as well as of translation, that is not confined to a violent binary system.

Concilio also suggests that both translation and trans identities have the potential to be a site of resistance. The dominant systems restrict and punish trans and translation because they rely on universal compliance in order to present themselves as valid or “natural”: “Just as the regime of monolingualism relies upon the supposed biological authenticity of a ‘mother tongue’ to produce the source/target language and the author/translator binaries, cis heteronormativity relies upon a biological authenticity of sex and gender that produces the trans/cis and homo/hetero binaries” (Concilio 464). Monolingualism is counted upon to reinforce the validity and the borders of the nation state, while cis heteronormativity reinforces the nuclear family and patriarchal system (Concilio 464). As both trans and translation not only cross borders but also *inscribe* them, they thus have the opportunity to chip away at these boundaries.

2.7 The Trans Body-Text

If the body may be considered a text, it may also be productive for translation studies to invert this relationship and to consider the text as a body; Mirko Casagrande explores the idea of the translated text itself as a trans body. Dealing specifically with texts that subvert binary oppositions through the representation of trans characters and the use of ambiguously gendered language, he studies how they are translated between relatively neutral languages, such as

English, and languages that gender abundantly, such as Italian or French. Where difficulties arise in translating this gender ambiguity into highly gendered languages, translators may opt for an easy solution and resort to re-gendering the text; Casagrande refers to this as “‘renaming gender in translation’, i.e. a practice of surgical translation that manipulates the gender identity of the characters and hijacks the gender discourse of the source text” (“Renaming” 44). By invoking the idea of surgery, Casagrande compares the regendering of a text in translation to obligatory sex reassignment surgery, with the translator playing the role of surgeon. Both of these practices reinforce the heteronormative gender binary by erasing bodies that exist outside of its bounds; thus, both practices violently erase the multiplicity and infinite possibility of trans identity.

While the titles of Casagrande’s texts explicitly name transgender as their topic, these texts also include intersex in the discussion of surgery, as intersex folks are often subject to non-consensual sex reassignment surgery at birth and are pressured to conform to binary gender roles. However, the inclusion of intersex folks in the LGBTQ2A+ community is highly debated, with individuals noting that this community is based around non-normative genders and sexualities, neither of which applies to intersex. Casagrande also uses a problematic term to refer to intersex folks and to ambiguously gendered texts: “novels such as *Middlesex* and *Self* are like sleeping hermaphrodites that are waiting to be unveiled in order to show their complexity and their polycentric nature” (“Trans/Gendering Translations” 214). Besides using the now outdated and derogatory word “hermaphrodite,” this sentiment also recalls the idea of intersex folks as curiosities to be put on display and marvelled at by the public. Though this theory of reassignment surgery may be productive when applied to intersex as well as trans embodiment, it is a topic to be approached carefully, and the conflation of intersex and trans is something that would best be avoided.

Emily Rose is also interested in how texts that represent non-normative gender may prove theoretically productive for translation studies. In “Keeping the Trans in Translation,” Rose asks the inverse of Casagrande’s question: when gender vacillates between masculine and feminine in grammatically gendered languages such as Spanish and French, how might this be relayed in English translations (486)? Working this time with two early modern trans memoirs, Rose again ties varied pronoun use to the practice of cross-dressing. She shows that just as changing clothes does not equal changing genders, neither does changing pronouns. Comparing the translated text itself to the transgender body, Rose asserts that:

Just as these texts are revealed to have been (and as being) produced by multiple players, but then retrospectively labeled ‘original’ (Foucault [1969], 1979), gender is concurrently revealed as a social product only retrospectively considered ‘original’ or ‘biological.’ Transgender and queer approaches to translation demonstrate how there is no single ‘body’ underneath a person’s vestments, no ‘truth’ to uncover underneath a translation. (“Keeping the Trans in Translation” 488)

The memoirs—one of which has been translated from a transcription, not the original¹³—show that texts and bodies are not produced alone, but by all the other texts and bodies with which they come into contact. This recalls Baldo’s theory that translation, like gender, is always (un)done with the involvement of others. Rose rejects the common reductive approach to trans embodiment which focuses on anatomy and instead understands the trans body through the queer experience of having a body and a gender that do not share a causal relationship.

¹³ Rose notes that while one of the memoirs was originally either written or dictated by its author, Catalina de Erauso, this version no longer exists. Instead Rose works with a transcription of the original from 1784 and two published versions based on the transcription, one of which makes changes and “corrections” to the text. She points out that this troubles the idea of the original and of sole authorship (Rose, “Keeping the Trans in Translation” 488).

2.8 Translingual Address

Robinson's *Transgender, Translation, Translingual Address* is one of the first books published by a single author on the topic of transgender and translation studies. While it technically focuses not on "*transgender* but *conversations about transgender*," it bears thinking about how Robinson sees transgender and translation as connected (xxix). In this work, Robinson explains that he sees both transgender and translation as forms of translingual address, that is, a regime in which the "subject-in-transit" is able to switch between at least two cultures or codes thanks to their exposure to and empathic experience of both/all. In four dense and complex chapters, he supports this theory with examples from everything from Finnish literature to Deleuzian theory to Kate Bornstein's *Gender Outlaw*. Though much of the work does not explicitly address translation, Robinson sets the two concepts up as analogues, both producing subjects-in-transit, in states of *becoming* rather than being. He illustrates that both may be thought of as "*continuity in discontinuity*," as phenomena that hold together enough to be identifiable while also displaying heterogeneity (e.g. genderqueerness, mtf/ftm binaries) which disrupts dominant continuities (e.g. normative assigned gender) (Sakai 13; Robinson xiv).

Translingual address is defined in contrast to heterolingual and homolingual address, concepts that Robinson borrows from Sakai Naoki. He explains that "homolinguality is the *dominant* and *normative* belief that it is 'natural' and easy and automatic to communicate with other native speakers of one's own language, and impossible to communicate with foreigners, and heterolinguality is the *dissident* position [...] according to which we are all foreigners to each other (and ourselves), and therefore our 'communication' is always translation" (xii). Robinson notes that the prefixes "hetero" and "homo" recall hetero- and homosexuality, and though at first glance the dominant-dissident relationship between them seems to be reverse,

“Sakai’s linguistic binary replicates the sexual-orientation binary” (xii); specifically, they favor their own position and exclude the other. What is left out of both sides of these binaries is “transgender, translation, and translingual address” (xii). Robinson seeks to use this book to explore these three normally overlooked topics. However, though he is correct in suggesting that they all have erasure in common, by setting transgender up as the analog of translingual address, he suggests that it be considered in relation to homo- and heterosexuality. While these identities may all be a part of *queer* and *LGBTQ2A+* (depending on who you ask), transgender deals, as the name indicates, with gender identity, while homo- and heterosexuality are terms relating to sexual orientation. Transgender may in some cases trouble the homo-hetero binary, particularly when considering non-binary trans identities, but to place it in a cluster with sexual orientations is to ignore those trans people who identify themselves as homo- or heterosexual.

2.9 Queer and Trans TS Praxis

One of the aspects of Robinson’s book that stands out is the decision to use *ze/zir* pronouns for virtually every person, fictional or real, who is mentioned in the book. Robinson first points this out in his introduction, explaining that when translating from Finnish, which has only a neutral third person pronoun, translators often use the English “she” or “he” depending on the gender of the character (xxii). In order to reflect not only the ungendered nature of the language but also to “make trouble,” Robinson uses *ze/zir* even when a character is clearly cis. In doing so he disrupts English-speakers’ experience of the story and forces them to consider not only differently gendered language, but also a differently gendered reality. This extreme translation tactic is reminiscent of feminist translation approaches in that it deliberately changes or augments the gender ideology of the original text in order to provide greater representation of queer and trans conceptions of gender.

Like some of the feminist strategies we saw in the previous chapter, Robinson's approach has pros and cons; while his own agenda of disrupting cisnormative ideas of gender is certainly fulfilled, Robinson is also guilty of engaging in friendly fire. Responding to C. Jacob Hale's lament that language requires stability and cannot adequately represent the instability of both his pre- and post-transition identities, Robinson asserts that there are ways of doing this outside of "standard" English:

[W]hen I refer to Hale and zir father with ze/zir pronouns I am in fact using grammatical structures that "are available" in English. I didn't invent them. Inside the normative binary gender territory in English they are, of course, "weird"; presumably it would have been difficult for Hale to get zir father to use them. I like them, because I like weird things—but I don't use them outside this book, and even inside the book they were difficult to get used to. (Robinson 168)

Robinson is not incorrect, but he does miss an important point: for many people, in particular trans and genderqueer people whose identities are constantly questioned by external forces, pronouns can play an important part in affirming their gender. While the generic use of *ze* has historical precedent in queer literature—being used to normalize the use of gender-neutral pronouns and to disrupt normative pronoun use, and by extension normative binary gender—this practice feels outdated. Queer communities and organizations typically use *they/them* as gender neutral/inclusive pronouns, but always prioritize using the pronouns that an individual has chosen for themselves, when available.

Robinson's use differs from that of Rose, for example, who makes use of *ze/hir* when discussing the ambiguously gendered narrators she translates. Rose, unlike Robinson, only applies this practice to figures who lived before the time of *ze/hir* but who vacillate between

masculine and feminine pronouns in their writing. Where she has a compelling reason to believe that a writer uses *he* or *she*, she respects that. The insistent attribution of *ze/zir* pronouns contrary to a person's own wishes or indications, amounts to a potentially dysphoria-producing microaggression—specifically, forced misgendering—which, to take inspiration from Casagrande, is part of the same violent oppression and erasure that forces surgery upon trans bodies. This is easily fixed: while the some authors' pronouns may be more difficult to find than others', the majority have biographies available online or alongside their publications. Where they cannot be verified, an exciting challenge appears: an exercise in writing without gendering, à la *Written on the Body*.

Casagrande focuses on protecting texts from what he refers to as “surgical translation,” that is, practices that ignore or erase ambiguous and fluid gender in a manner reminiscent of sex reassignment operations. Whether these practices are adopted due to conflicting understandings of gender or because they simplify an otherwise challenging exercise, Casagrande believes that they are violent and that they force dominant understandings of gender onto trans and queer texts (“Renaming Gender”). For this reason, he believes it is imperative that translators take it upon themselves to translate gender exactly, even if it means engaging in some linguistic gymnastics. He advocates for the use of words that share the same gender as the original, forcing translators to at times silence their native-speaker intuition and think up other, more “faithful” options.

Taking a different tack from Casagrande, when translating the memoirs of Choisy, Rose adopts two bold and distinct strategies in order to reflect the narrator's different relationships to gender in each chapter. The first half, in which Choisy is in drag, is marked by varying gender, which Rose seeks to reveal in her English translation. In order to make this fluidity visible, she uses a modified font, where certain letters in gendered words display the defining appendages of

the Venus and Mars symbols. In addition to this, Rose draws inspiration directly from Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, creating gendered neologisms through the use of wordplay (e.g. “I LA(d)Y down”) (Rose, “Revealing” 40). This strategy illustrates how the binary-affirming practice of de Lotbinière-Harwood may be appropriated in queer and trans translation and used to represent queer and trans identities in writing.

The second section, in which Choisy is *disguised* as a woman, sees Rose attempt to de-gender her translation altogether. She opts to use the epicene pronoun *ze/hir* for all characters and, as the account is written in the first person, to distance Choisy from masculinity by eschewing the dominant, subjective “I” in favour of the neutral “one.” Rose states that “Removing gender from my translation queers the text and gives it the potential to re-imagine gender norms and standard values. The epicene pronouns challenge the reader’s view of the world as always divided” (“Revealing” 44). Thus, though it is the complete opposite approach of the one taken in the previous chapter, Rose shows how a non-traditional and arguably unfaithful practice may offer more opportunity to communicate non-binary gender.

It is important to note that Rose and Casagrande’s approaches appear to be at odds with one another. One seeks, like feminist translators before, to take control of the text, either making gender(s) more visible in language or removing them from the equation; the other emphasizes the importance of fidelity in preserving the author’s gendering of the text. However, while they may disagree on the approach, both have in mind the same goal. To ensure that queer, fluid, and trans identities and understandings of gender are not lost in translation, as they so often have been in the past.

2.10 Criticism

The fluctuating and disparate relationships between and within queer and trans—and, as a result, queer and trans TS—have so far meant that, unlike in feminist translation theory, there are not really any clusters of theorists with a unified approach. This, coupled with the fact that these theories are relatively recent additions to the field, means that there has as yet been little criticism. Though there are a handful of book reviews that focus or touch on some of the texts in this chapter, the majority of them simply applaud the authors for contributing to these growing areas of research and express their excitement at the potential for future scholarship. Where there has been criticism, it has focused on the somewhat limited views of queer and trans communicated by many of the texts on these topics.

In a review of three recent books, including *Transgender, Translation, Translingual Address*, Remy Attig is critical of the tendency of queer TS to centre lesbian and gay identities while ignoring the other identities represented in LGBTQ2A+ (8). It is this focus that is responsible for the small pool of resources available on translation and non-binary gender. Attig also notes the discrepancies between “how queer scholarship is defined within academia and how Queer¹⁴ identity is constructed by politically active Queer communities outside the ivory tower,” communities that he notes are “anti-assimilationist,” “intersectional,” “anti-racist and anti-capitalist,” and that have rarely been represented in TS scholarship (9). In order to rectify these issues, Attig suggests focusing on the queer translator’s subjectivity and on Queer communities outside of academic and literary spheres:

A deeper analysis of Queer communities’ relationship to translation, particularly of

¹⁴ Attig uses Queer (capitalized) to refer to its use as a label of identity, as opposed to the lowercase queer as a catch-all term for non-normative gender and sexuality (8).

multilingual and language-contact communities, user-created content, zines, community support literature, and other non-traditionally published works would push the limits of current Queer Theory approaches to Translation Studies and, in my view, would bring academia into a more robust conversation with the communities that it seeks to study.

(10)

I, personally, am inclined to agree with Attig. While researching queer and trans metaphors, I felt an inescapable sense of distance between the very compelling and productive theory available through recent scholarship, and my own experience of how LGBTQ2A+ communities exist and express themselves. Part of the issue lies in the fact that few of the source texts used by the scholars in this chapter were written in the past five to ten years and virtually all of them have been produced through dominant modes of publication and dissemination. While queer and trans identities have been gaining exposure and acceptance in more popular media, the texts that feel to me most representative of queer communities are the ones that are not widely circulated, that are self-published, that remain, as queer and trans people do, somewhat hidden. By expanding where we look for queer and trans representation, we may find better and more current expressions.

2.11 Conclusions

In the past decade, translation studies has seen a slow influx of theory from queer and trans studies. In some ways influenced by feminist metaphors and theory, the gendered metaphors of translation have begun to expand to include an array of identities beyond the binaries of man/woman, masculine/feminine, and hetero/homo. Themes such as authenticity, production vs. reproduction, and performativity no longer deal exclusively with the experiences of women. Instead, some theorists now metaphorize translation and the translator as genderqueer

and trans, referring to figures such as the transsexual and practices such as cross-dressing and their relationships to translation. Scholars and translators have also begun to establish writing and translation practices aimed at ensuring visibility and fair representation of queer and trans folks; however, despite their best intentions, they have not always shown an informed understanding of queer and trans community practices regarding inclusivity and gender affirmation. As these topics of study are relatively new to translation studies, there has so far been a lack of criticism addressing recurrent research issues. As such, my next chapter will attend to some of these problems.

Chapter Three: Rethinking Gender and Translation

As I have attempted to show throughout this project, there have been significant changes in the gendered metaphors of translation since Lori Chamberlain's groundbreaking work and the feminist turn in the field. However, while feminist, queer, and trans metaphors have expanded our understanding of the relationship between gender and translation, they have also introduced exclusionary and reductive ideas to translation theory. In addition, the scholars who have contributed these metaphors have failed to clearly define the terms feminist, queer, and trans. In this chapter, I identify some of the recurring problems with the gendered metaphors of translation and, drawing upon existing queer and trans scholarship, I suggest possible ways forward. I ask that we think critically about who is tackling these topics and what they are bringing into the field.

3.1 Cis/het Scholars and Queer/Trans Studies

Transgender, Translation, Translingual Address opens with a call for cisnormative scholars to pay attention to trans studies. Robinson's reasons for this exhortation boil down to the following: because trans studies are already being done, including within translation studies; because paying attention to something makes it real; because knowledge-as-emancipation centres indigenous and other marginalized epistemologies that have been delegitimized by knowledge-as-regulation; because this delegitimization results in epistemicide (1-33); and because trans poetics offer "translingual platforms for empathy and connection" (33). I agree with Robinson on all five points and would extend his argument to include queer identities as well. This is an important topic given the ongoing need for adequate representation of queer and trans folks in academia and in literature, film, and any other texts that may be translated. However, my question is, in addition to caring, do cisnormative scholars also need to *do* queer and trans TS? In

the introduction to *Transgender, Translation, Translingual Address*, Robinson himself confesses to feeling in some ways non-binary, detached from the masculine identity he was assigned at birth, but ultimately declares that he is *not* trans and considers whether he is the right person to undertake this work, whether he has the “empathic experience” required (xi). Given the fact that this book exists, the answer he settles on is obviously “Yes.”

My intention is not to suggest that we police the identities of researchers and theorists; the only person who can name one’s identity is that person themselves and it certainly should not be a requirement to risk one’s safety and come out in order to prove the legitimacy of a theory. But I do want to suggest that cisnormative scholars take the time to consider their position in relation to this work and why they wish to undertake it—is it real allyship or is it an appetite for new and productive theory? excitement about a trendy topic? We must consider this especially within translation studies, which conveniently shares a prefix with trans studies¹⁵ and is therefore subject to even greater temptation. I have no doubt that cisnormative scholars will continue to write scholarship on trans studies regardless of their motivations, but this type of work must be done with sufficient deference and the ceding of space to those who identify as trans and queer.

In order to ensure a positive and thoughtful contribution, all those who are new to trans and queer communities, especially allies, need to take the time to learn from the people who have been immersed in them and who understand how to moderate their movement within the community in a manner appreciative of the stakes involved. Jacob Hale offers a list of “Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans,” which may also be useful for “non-transgendered researchers writing

¹⁵ NB: in English only.

about transgender, as well as to trans-folk writing across trans-trans differences.” I would like to highlight a few of these rules:

1. Approach your topic with a sense of humility: you are not the experts about transsexuals, transsexuality, transsexualism, or trans _____. Transsexuals are.
2. Interrogate your own subject position: the ways in which you have power that we don't [...]
5. Be aware that our words are very often part of conversations we're having within our communities and that we may be participating in overlapping conversations within multiple communities [...]
12. Ask yourself if you can travel in our trans worlds. If not, you probably don't get what we're talking about. Remember that we live most of our lives in non-transsexual worlds, so we probably do get what you're talking about. (Hale)

These rules are a useful and important guide for anyone undertaking research in trans studies, and indeed they can easily be adapted for research on most marginalized communities. However, as Stone points out in her “Posttranssexual Manifesto,” “[t]he people who have no voice in this theorizing are the transsexuals themselves. As with males theorizing about women from the beginning of time, theorists of gender have seen transsexuals as possessing something less than agency” (229).

Many queer and trans folks, including scholars, would agree that there has historically been far too much cis/het involvement in queer/trans lives and scholarship. Paul Preciado uses Deleuze as an example of this, problematizing the French theorist's belief that “it is possible to think or write about a phenomenon transversally without going through the material experience, in the same way that it is possible to travel without changing places” (145). Preciado notes that

Deleuze was guilty of mining homosexuality for its theoretical potential without ever experiencing the abject reality of being homosexual, failing to recognize “the very different stakes involved in claiming the space of homosexuality or transsexuality rather than just invoking its abstract form of critique” (Halberstam, “Foreword” xi). While queer and trans theory have in some ways reclaimed Deleuzian concepts, such as *becoming* (see Robinson for an entire chapter on this topic), the fact remains that Deleuze had no experience of any of the associated identities and was therefore not equipped to write about them. Cis(het) scholars are merely tourists in queer and trans studies, able to gain cultural capital for their work without having to live with the violence and oppression that queer and trans folks face¹⁶.

The issue of who does queer and trans research is obviously critical in determining who is afforded power and representation, but it is also important for ensuring that the work being done is innovative and unhindered by misunderstanding or fear of overstepping. Considering the future of trans studies as a discipline, Emmett Harsin Drager says:

I think it’s potentially at a very exciting crossroads. I think that some of the most cited texts about trans people and in trans studies have been the work of non-trans (i.e., cis) scholars recycling the same citations, concepts, and metaphors. What cis scholar is going to intervene and say, “Hey, I think we have this concept of dysphoria all wrong”? That’s just not going to happen. Instead we get the same arguments for bodily autonomy, the radical potential of body modification or even worse, arguments from cis folks as to why

¹⁶ Cis/het scholars may experience other forms of oppression based on gender, race, class etc. but these experiences cannot be substituted for one another. Being queer does not mean one automatically understands what it is to experience racism and vice versa.

social transition is as meaningful and transformative as medical transition. (Chu and Drager 104)

Without a real, not “transversal,” understanding of trans and queer experience, cis and straight TS scholars are liable to end up introducing theory and practices that are reductive, tired and safe. If cis/het theorists are concerned with being good allies and they fear overstepping—as they should—they are unlikely to make any truly groundbreaking statements that challenge current theory. Thus, while cis/heteronormative scholars should care about queer and trans theory, when considering whether or not they should *do* it, part of the question ought to be: why do we need them to? In order to ensure true inclusivity and representation, as well as innovative and interesting research, the best possible way for non-trans and non-queer scholars to engage with trans scholarship will always be to take a step back, support trans and queer students and colleagues, and let them do the talking.

3.2 If It's Not a Hierarchy, What Is It?

Though Robinson suggests queer and transgender as the third and fourth steps, respectively, in a process, his definition, along with definitions (both explicit and implicit) from other scholars, troubles this distinction. Most of the writers who talk about trans also mention queer—though the inverse is not necessarily true—indicating that these two terms are conceptually linked. Though the non-reciprocal relation between terms would seem to suggest that trans may be a subcategory of queer, it is important to avoid this line of thinking. In developing theory related to queer and trans identities, we must be mindful of how we apply these terms: *not all trans folks identify as queer* and, in fact, some find traditional binary labels more affirming. Similarly, not all queer folks fit the definition of, or wish to use the term *trans*. Debates within queer and trans communities, academic and otherwise, do not provide any easy

answers to this dilemma. Butler advocates for acceptance of the multiplicity of identities, including those that reinscribe themselves within a binary framework: “some find life and breath by escaping the terms by which recognition is conferred and others find life and breath through finally feeling recognized by existing terms or by crafted terms” (“Gender in Translation” 44:42-44:55). A more radical stance, however, is that the gender binary should be dispensed with altogether, regardless of individuals with binary identities.

So what is the relationship between queer and trans studies, and how should we approach it in translation studies? Are we really at the beginning of Robinson’s fourth step or should we be moving away from this idea of progression? Before we come to any semblance of a conclusion, let us consider Andrea Long Chu’s assertion in “After Trans Studies,” a dialogue with Drager published in early 2019:

Let’s face it: Trans studies is over. If it isn’t, it should be. Thus far, trans studies has largely failed to establish a robust, compelling set of theories, methods, and concepts that would distinguish itself from gender studies or queer studies. Susan Stryker (2004) once wrote that trans studies was ‘queer theory’s evil twin.’ She was wrong: Trans studies is the twin that queer studies ate in the womb. (The womb, as usual, was feminism.). (Chu and Drager 103)

This sentiment does in some ways tread dangerously close to internalized and horizontal transphobia; as a white, educated (binary) trans woman Chu is in a privileged position over trans women of colour and non-binary trans folks, especially those who do not have access to academic circles. However, Chu also makes an important point: trans studies—like translation studies, though to a greater extreme—has struggled to define itself and to take hold in academia. As Robinson points out, no one working in trans studies actually has a degree in that subject; it

hasn't existed long enough and there are virtually no graduate degrees offered that aren't simply specializations within larger programs (2).

The reason for this is, to be sure, lack of recognition of a marginalized group. However, Chu suggests that it is also due to the fact that though *trans* has been taken up as a metaphor and method in the last 20-odd years, it encompasses little that queer does not:

The basic idea is that transgender people, as a narrow identity group, can be a methodological stepping stone for thinking more expansively about boundary crossings of all sorts: not just transgender, but also transnational, transracial, transspecies—you get the picture. And so the editors [of *Women's Studies Quarterly*] gift us with *transing*, queering's unasked-for sequel [...] Do we seriously imagine that any graduate student from 1998—plucked, by the power of imaginative thinking, from the windowless basement cubicle where she takes refuge from the male professors who stand too close to her at holiday parties—[...] having been asked to describe what it means to “queer” something, would reply, ‘Oh, it’s about *firm boundaries*, and *stability*, and also *fixedness*.’ (Chu and Drager 105)

Chu further asserts that “the transsexual is the only thing that *trans* can describe that *queer* can't. The transsexual is not queer; this is the best thing about her” (Chu and Drager 107). While it is important to maintain a distinction between the two identities, as not all trans folks identify as queer and vice versa, it does bear considering that between the two theoretical traditions there is a lot of overlap.

If translation studies wants to adopt trans studies, it is important to consider the relative instability of the field, its relationship to queer studies, and how we might acknowledge both commonality and difference. If what comes after trans studies is, as Chu suggests “transsexual theory,” how can TS scholars and translators approach this topic without reducing trans people to anatomy and transition? It seems to me that there is no easy answer to any of these problems; the relationship between queer and trans will continue to be as messy in scholarship as it is outside of academia. This, then, is where it becomes even more crucial that the people writing this theory are people who have “empathic understanding” of this identity through direct personal experience and who can best untangle these knotted terms.

While we are thinking about the distinction between queer and trans, I suggest we rethink “feminist” as a discrete category as well. Queer people have always been an integral part of the feminist movement. Trans women, too, are women just like any others; however, they are too often left out of historical feminist movement narratives. In “Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s,” Finn Enke criticizes the tendency to focus only on white feminist and TERF narratives in 1970s second-wave feminism, pointing out that this ignores the important contributions of trans women—particularly trans women of colour—and the strength of transfeminism at the time (10). Pointing to one cause, they ask why we are more interested in narratives of exclusion than any other.

The easy way out here is to point out that there is not much scholarship by or about self-identified trans women within translation studies and the historical oppression and erasure of these women can at times make them difficult to find. As Stone explains, many sources on or by trans women have historically conformed to popular narratives, been written by medical institutions, or been discarded because they were unscientific and therefore “unreliable”; as a

result, much trans literature has not been visible in libraries and similar institutions (224). Not only does this mean the erasure of trans women from historical feminist movement, it may also result in irresponsible scholarship, specifically in which researchers, activists, and other people who are young or new to trans culture assume that certain phenomena are recent because they are not aware of trans history. Amy Marvin illustrates this problem in her tongue-in-cheek poem “The First Trans Poem”:

Every two years a trans person
who came out two years ago
declares herself an old school
transsexual. Every trans elder is

like so old now, in their thirties or
even late twenties. Every rich
trans person who just came out
is a new hope for trans people, the

one to really get this right. Every
trans person who got a media job
invented gender fluidity a year ago.
Every trans person who came out

after getting tenure is the leading
intellectual. Every trans person speaks

for every trans person, which is to say
there is only one trans person. (Marvin)

Marvin's poem points out the common mistake of cis folks, and sometimes trans folks themselves, interpreting actions and events involving trans people as the first of their kind, largely due to the fact that the history of trans folks has been suppressed and is not often common knowledge. In order to ensure a nuanced understanding of trans identity, writers and researchers approaching these topics must avoid assuming that they are groundbreaking or unique until this can be proven. One way to make this easier is to increase education and the dissemination of trans history and identity.

It is important to note that from a meta-research approach, trans women may appear not to have been a part of feminist TS and translation theory; in fact, they have been systematically excluded from much of it by cis women. However, this is an easy way out of a difficult problem; there have certainly been trans women in whose lives translation and multilingualism has played a role, it is simply a matter of unearthing their stories. Transfeminism is feminism, and feminism that does not fight for trans rights does not deserve its title; therefore, it is time for translation studies to actively seek out and add transfeminist narratives to its feminist theory.

While feminist, queer, and trans may be useful terms for describing the turns that translation studies has seen, they also create artificial boundaries between these concepts. In order for queer and trans people to be included in feminist TS, we need to change the meaning of this last term, perhaps, as I suggested in my introduction, taking inspiration from bell hooks: "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression"; "action to eliminate patriarchy" (hooks *Feminism* viii, *Feminist Theory* xi). Transfeminist approaches, Enke says, can help us understand the complexity of "movements that were thoroughly imbricated with queerness and

transness, while also attending to the coalescences and ruptures that changed people and moved movements” (26).

So where do we go from here? If we are to understand queer and trans as simultaneously a part of and distinct from feminist translation and translation theory, and trans as related to but not the same as queer, how can we account for that in our naming? I suggest that we already have part of the answer: the first step in Robinson’s process is translation and *gender*. While the connotation of “gender” in this context is that it refers to cis women and sexual difference, it may be appropriated to refer to gender in general. We can appreciate that Robinson’s model represents the chronological order of gender turns in translation studies, but we can also remove the evolutionary aspect and flatten it, creating a cluster of subtopics that move freely, floating in and out of one another.

3.3 Countersexual Translation

Originally published in 2000, Paul B. Preciado’s *Countersexual Manifesto* offers another way of looking at gender, sex, sexuality, and the body that is not unconstrained by Western, heteropatriarchal capitalism. Preciado explains that under the current regime, bodies are sexed and gendered according to their ability to produce or reproduce; because of this sexual economy, those bodies that cannot or will not conform to the role they are assigned are considered abject. In order to dismantle this oppressive system, Preciado dreams of an alternative, which he calls “countersexuality”:

Countersexuality is not the creation of a new nature but rather the end of nature as an order that legitimizes the subjection of some bodies to others. First, countersexuality is a critical analysis of gender and sexual difference, the product of the heterocentric social contract, the normative performativities of which have been inscribed onto our bodies as

biological truths. Second, countersexuality aims to replace this social contract we refer to as nature with a countersexual contract. Within the framework of the countersexual contract, bodies recognize themselves and others not as men or women but as living bodies. (20)

If, as Preciado hopes, we can learn to disconnect sexuality and pleasure from reproduction, bodies will not be commodified on the basis of their abilities to (re)produce and thus no bodies will be considered abject (35-9).

One of the ways that Preciado describes countersexuality is by linking it conceptually to language and translation. Sex and gender are imagined as technologies with which bodies are written and performed:

The sex/gender system is a biowriting system. It writes with blood, sperm, milk, water, sound, ink, oil, coil, uranium, capital, light, electricity, and radiation. The body is a living, constructed text, an organic archive of human history as the history of sexual production-reproduction [...].

Countersexuality's task is to identify the erroneous spaces, the biotext's structural flaw (intersex bodies, transgender and transsexual bodies, queens, diesel dykes, faggots, butches, the hysterical, the horny and the frigid, the sexually disabled and the mentally ill, hermaphrodykes, etc.) and to bolster the power of deviating and drifting from the heterocentric biowriting machine (25)

“Sexualities,” says Preciado, “are like languages: they are complex systems of communication and reproduction of life” (8). The heterocapitalist patriarchy trains and enforces monolingualism, rewarding heterosexual monogamy as a contract to (re)produce, and punishing identities that

undermine its “naturalness.” However, just as linguistic monolingualism is not absolute or indeed representative of much of the world’s speaking inhabitants, so too is sexual monolingualism. Both may be subverted by learning to speak or write in other/multiple (sexual) languages.

This does not mean simply privileging feminine or neutral pronouns or using inclusive language, but challenging how bodies are *written* (Preciado 26). Preciado describes this project as “an attempt to become foreign to your own sexuality and to lose yourself in sexual translation” (8). This concept of the body as a text, which is written and which may be translated, recalls feminist, queer, and trans metaphors of translation and practically begs for countersexuality to be applied to translation.

At the core of Preciado’s countersexuality is the dildo. A “plastic prosthesis” that is neither penis nor the symbolic phallus, the dildo comes before the penis and retroactively produces it, “simultaneously and paradoxically the exact copy of and the farthest thing from the organ” (Preciado 67-8). Replace “dildo” with “translation” and “penis” with “original” and you have an equally true statement, one that fits easily into Benjaminian understandings of translation as the “afterlife” to which the original owes its status (Benjamin). As the dildo is to the penis, translation is the condition of existence of the “original”. In addition to this, the dildo troubles “the idea that the limits of the flesh coincide with the limits of the body” (Preciado 73). Applying this to translation, we can assert that texts are not confined to their originals, but rather are intertextually linked to other texts and utterance in the source and target languages, as well as technologies used to produce them. Finally, by seeing the dildo as a technology that is at once separate from and part of the body, Preciado challenges the binary of technology and nature;

thus, his theory falls into alignment with the idea that writing and translating, original and translation, are not two sides of a binary, but instead two elements of a dialogic relationship.

Preciado's text also allows us to think outside of traditional binaries and hierarchies of gender, sex, and sexuality. In the dominant system, "The body becomes human only when it has been sexed; a sexless body, like a disabled body, is considered monstrous, nonhuman. According to this logic, only a visually identifiable penis or vagina can be considered a human-producing organ" (Preciado 107). By their existence, queer and trans bodies problematize the binary of what is "natural" and what is "monstrous," allowing us to think bodies differently, not based on what they can or cannot do in a system based on (re)production. It is these bodies that we must pay attention to in order to implement a countersexual regime:

The invention of new bodies will be possible only through the assemblage and hybridization of experiences from the border of what are traditionally understood as proper identities: organs, functions, and bodies are reshaped at the threshold of homosexuality and heterosexuality, trans and bio, disabled and abled, animal and human, white and non-white. (Preciado 15)

The current heterocapitalist regime will never truly value these bodies and it is for this reason that Preciado thinks countersexuality must be *against* LGBTQ2A+ integration and *for* emancipation and autonomy (Preciado 14).

Preciado's countersexuality, which removes "masculine" and "feminine" as designations, but allows them to be applied to *any* body, allows us to think outside of current binary and hierarchical understandings of gender—whether the hierarchy places man above woman or binary above non-binary and trans—and begin to implement a fluid, genderqueer system where

bodies are just bodies (32). It also offers the possibility of considering translation theoretically as a technology that, like the dildo, inscribes originality but has the latent potential to subvert it.

3.4 (De)colonizing Translation

In his foreword to *Countersexual Manifesto*, Jack Halberstam points out an issue that runs rampant in academic discourse and that has affected the dissemination of Preciado's ideas:

[T]he fact that this small, dangerous, propulsive book was written nearly twenty years ago does not lessen its impact now. In fact, its publication in English now calls attention to the coloniality of the academic world in which English is the lingua franca and scholars writing in other languages (even other colonial languages like French and Spanish) must wait to be translated before their work has the impact it deserves.

(Halberstam, "Foreword" xv)

In translation studies, as in most other academic disciplines and interdisciplines, the publication and distribution of work is governed by the hegemony of the English language. Karen Bennett claims that this systematic delegitimization and rejection of other discourses amounts to epistemicide: "Knowledges that are grounded on an ideology that is radically different from the dominant one [...] will by and large be silenced completely. They will be starved of funding, if the hegemonic power controls that aspect [...] they will remain unpublished" (154). Though Bennett is referring specifically to English Academic Discourse (EAD), this is also true in general of works produced in other languages under different ideologies and epistemologies—in this case ideologies and epistemologies of gender.

As discussed in Chapter One, much of the theory produced by feminist scholars and translators has come from privileged white cis women. It has been guilty of appropriating the

work of women from marginalized communities and women who write in peripheral languages, as well as appropriating the experience of colonization itself. Since this time, the postcolonial turn in translation studies has brought about the inclusion of indigenous and non-Western scholarship and epistemologies. In his review of *Queer in Translation*, an anthology in which Emily Rose's work is included, Attig notes that the book displays "a strong connection between queer theories and postcolonial (or neocolonial) theories," as well as "a range of applications of queer theories to texts, time periods, and genres from around the world" (4, 6). However, while this may also be true of queer translation studies in general, the majority of these approaches to queerness have so far focused on sexuality, not on gender.

Scholars writing recently on translation and gender have largely failed to account for intersections of class, race, ethnicity, etc. and have therefore ignored the diverse experiences of queer/trans black, indigenous, and other racialized folks. In fact, this issue is common in trans studies itself, a fact that Elías Krell attributes to the "radicality" of "trans": "the implicit radicality of terms like 'queer' and 'trans' produces the very elision of race, class, ability, and other vectors of power that those terms presumably meant to include. Racial modifiers often reproduce the very structural elisions they are supposed to critique" (63). Of the texts analysed in Chapter Two—and these are most of the texts published so far on queer and trans genders in TS—virtually all have been written by white Western academics about texts by other white Western writers and they lack a nuanced analysis of race and other intersections of power and oppression. The exception to this trend is Concilio, who theorizes translaxrsation through the work of Chilean *loca*¹⁷ poet Pedro Lemebel. By writing in English about *loca* and *travesti* identities, Concilio brings to the Anglophone audience's attention the ways that gender exists

¹⁷ "'effeminate' homosexual men," "gender-nonconforming homosexual people born as men" (Gonzalez 123)

differently in different parts of the world. This is a disruption of the Western binary understanding of gender as well as of the English language.

While this project is limited in its space and scope—I confess to only speaking two languages, both of which are colonial—there are infinite possibilities for the incorporation of indigenous and non-Western epistemologies and theories of gender, as well as for taking other intersections of oppression into account. Besides prioritizing the work of scholars from other cultures, Attig suggests some possible avenues for future research:

The field is ripe for the picking for those interested in exploring the role that Queer translators have played in the development of transnational Queer solidarity and counter-culture movements that strive for intersectional and anti-establishment approaches to justice and equity. Furthermore, in a sign language context, much remains to be understood about the ways in which the interpreter's sexuality, gender, and race influence how hearing and Deaf users interact in Queer intersectional spaces such as Black Lives Matter. (10)

In order for translation and gender to be truly inclusive and reflective of the multiplicity of identities worldwide, we need theory that pays attention to these other ways of understanding and doing gender.

3.5 Low Theory and Accessibility

Academic discourse has the tendency to be elitist and, as we have seen, much of feminist translation theory has been guilty of this. While queer and trans TS have avoided fully replicating this issue, in part due to the disunity of researchers and translators working on these topics, not all of the research produced has been accessible. That is to say, these texts may be

understood by those with a background in psychoanalysis and various theories—Derridean, Deleuzian, Irigarayan—but they will not be easily accessed by the general population outside of academia; this—due to lack of opportunity rather than lack of interest or ability, though the rejection of institutional learning no doubt plays a role as well—is where the vast majority of queer, trans, and other marginalized communities remain.

In addition to the problem of elitism/accessibility, this divide has meant that representations of queer and trans folks in translation studies have primarily come from more mainstream or historical sources and not from contemporary, non-literary contexts. The texts I examined in Chapter Two use as their sources, among others: Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Judith Butler, Sandy Stone, *Gaudí Afternoon* and *Written on the Body*—both Lambda award winners written by cis women, the former of which was adapted into a film of the same name—and *Middlesex* and *Self*—novels featuring intersex and trans protagonists, respectively, written by cis men who do not have firsthand experience of these identities. Though some of these texts may represent queer and trans identities better than others, they are all relatively dated and have been published through traditional avenues, not in spaces where less mainstream versions of queer and trans hang out.

In order to encourage the accessible approaches already in use in TS and to attempt to bridge the yawning gap between academia and the rest of the world, I suggest we draw upon a concept introduced by Jack Halberstam in *The Queer Art of Failure: low theory*. Halberstam advocates using “low culture” sources “to think about ways of being and knowing that stand outside of conventional understandings of success” (*The Queer Art of Failure 2*). He encourages his readers to push back against the regulatory and disciplinary nature of the university; the desire to be taken seriously by these institutions confines people to traditional, approved ways of

knowing and stifles innovation, at the expense of “subjugated knowledges,” that is, knowledges that have not been forgotten, but “disqualified” (Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* 6-7, 11). By thinking outside of academic tradition, we may not only gain valuable understandings of gender identity, but also challenge the hierarchy of academic and non-academic thought.

Low theory also prioritizes accessibility as it “flies below the radar [...] assembled from eccentric texts and examples [and] refuses to conform to the hierarchies of knowing that maintain the *high* in high theory” (Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* 16). This is particularly important in studying queer and trans theory because, as mentioned previously, a higher proportion of these folks do not have access to or circulate their ideas within academic or “high culture” contexts. Closing the introduction to his book, Halberstam urges his readers “to take more chances, more risks in thinking, to turn away from the quarrels that seem so important to the discipline and to engage the ideas that circulate widely in other communities” (*The Queer Art of Failure* 24).

If we apply this to queer and trans translation studies, this means looking for sources that live in the margins. Zines are a significant mode of expression in many queer and trans communities, as are social media platforms such as Tumblr and Twitter. While they are not traditional forms of literary production, they are accessible—physically, financially, socially—and are therefore endless sources of queer and trans expression both from small, local communities and from global ones. These are only a few possible ways of approaching queer and trans TS from a low theory perspective. If we as scholars can expand our notions of what is and is not an acceptable source, we will be met with endless materials through which to study gender.

Conclusion

Feminist metaphors of translation mirror the feminist movement. Communication among women is a recurring theme both in feminist translation practice and in feminist theories of translation; feminist translation is imagined as conversation among women, described as intertextuality or dialogue and facilitated by a utopic common language. Lesbian representation and its importance in imagining women outside of a masculine, dominance-based concept of sexual and familial structure, too, has made its way into translation theory, as translation has been reimagined as intimate encounter between women. This has also allowed non-lesbian women to engage with sexuality in a non-patriarchal, liberated way. The complex issue of maternity, its beautiful, creative, yet oppressive nature, manifests itself in anxieties about mother tongue and responsibility for the translated text. The emphasis on normalizing and celebrating the female body may be seen in many of these metaphors and is closely tied to efforts to create and validate women's language. Through their woman-oriented translation practices and theories, these feminists have won increased recognition for women. Though some have left room for genders other than man and woman, they have often neglected to account for identities outside of the traditional gender binary. In addition, they have largely failed to include perspectives from a variety of women with different intersections of race, class, etc.

As LGBTQ2A+ folks gained wider attention and recognition around the turn of the millennium, queer and trans understandings of identity began to spread through academia, politics, and popular media. In translation studies, this movement has been slower to take hold, but it can be argued that since 2010 the field has seen a queer turn, and it may be on the cusp of a trans turn as well. Translators and translation theorists have so far incorporated themes from queer and trans studies into translation studies, exploring topics such as cross-dressing,

embodiment, and performativity. Under the influence of trans theory, the subject themselves is considered a text that may be read and (re)written. Though queer and trans metaphors of translation share several themes with feminist translation metaphors, they also move away from the view of translation as burden or loss and instead imagine it as a site of resistance and possibility. However, due to the relative newness of this area of TS, there have been few publications on these topics and even fewer critical responses.

If feminist, queer, and trans metaphors and theories of translation are to move forward, they must confront their recurrent issues. In order to ensure not only innovative, but also thoughtful and authentic approaches to queer and trans TS in particular, those scholars and translators who do not identify as trans and/or queer must assess their relationship to these topics and their motivations for choosing them. More space must be given to scholars and translators who do have direct experience of what it means to be queer and/or trans. Translation studies must also consider how these topics relate to one another, as definitions of feminist, queer, and trans differ but also overlap. In addition to thinking about them separately, we ought to consider them in dialogue with one another, particularly with an aim to including queer and trans folks in feminist theory. We may also find the incorporation of less-canonical works of queer and trans theory, such as the *Countersexual Manifesto* productive in terms of reimagining gender and its relationship to translation. Finally, in order to include a wide variety of perspectives on gender, especially queer and trans, there must be a conscious effort to amplify voices that have so far not been heard. This includes looking to sources from outside of Western Anglophone discourse as well as from “low culture.” As we find ourselves on the threshold of a new turn in translation studies, we have the opportunity to ensure that a mindful, inclusive foundation be laid for future

research. I have no doubt that scholarship on queer and trans genders and translation is only just beginning.

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