

## Empowering Translation: Gender and Voice Politics

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### Abstract

Traditionally, translation was valued to the extent that it created a subservient equivalence to the ideas and meanings of the original text; translation was deemed no more than impersonal, transparent activity. This status of subalternity was metaphorically emphasised through sexualised tropes invoking gender variable roles in a manner reflecting cultural values. Translation was depicted as secondary and derivative; hence, it was 'feminine.' Originality, creativity and authority, depicted 'masculine,' had patriarchal authority empowering them to relegate whatever was female to secondary roles. By deconstructing this perspective and eroticising translation, converting it into a semiotic sign representing femininity and subordination, this article proposes a discourse of empowerment that attempts to assert translation as a visible and creative process possessing an authoritative role and, thus, in a position of power. The concepts of gender and cultural identity are scrutinised to help explain power asymmetries and reveal the autonomous as well as communicative character of translated texts that are also indicative of the socio-political and cultural factors that grant any translated text a distinctive voice. Through reference to Judith Butler's notion of 'performativity,' Michelle Lazar's gender power asymmetries and Sherry Simon's perspective of gender and cultural identity, the article aspires to harbinger reconciliation between the process of gendering translation and the role of translator.

**Keywords:** gender, asymmetry, feminine, identity, empower

Translation is a decision-making process in which a translator 'at any moment of his work [is] translating a DECISION PROCESS: a series of a certain number of consecutive situations – moves, as in a game – situations imposing on the translator the necessity of

choosing among a certain (and very often exactly definable) number of alternatives' (Levý 1967, p. 1171). Based upon the fact that translation is essentially a process of communication, a translator's choices depend upon a host of factors that are determined by the dominant, not only linguistic but also socio-cultural discourse, to create a 'dynamic relationship' between the message and the receptor reflecting the same relationship 'which existed between the original receptors and the message' (Venuti 2008, p.129). Modern theories, however, have redefined translation as a 'cultural exchange with a profound awareness of cultural difference and linguistic boundaries' (Federici 2013, p. 3). The narrow linguistic aspect is refocused in favour of a 'discursive practice that forms and transforms gender identities and helps reconsider the notion of sexual difference' (p. 3). Through such discursive linguistic practice, translation forms a commentary on gender-biased socio-cultural exchanges.

Translation is now no longer a guarantee of innocuous transition from the original text to the translated text; critical praxis-oriented research has made of translation a vivid arena that 'does not apply only to words of different languages, but also to human beings and their most important properties' (Buden et al. 2009, p. 196). It extends to all the aspects of life to the extent that Sherry Simon could pronounce 'we all live in "translated" worlds' (Simon 1996, p. 135). Accordingly, translation research has as its main endeavour the laying out of a discourse of power that parodies actual socio-cultural situations. The new conceptualization of translation theory reflects a gender-biased stance that problematises and widens the gap between the original and the translation in a way that mimics 'the patrilineal kinship system where paternity – not maternity – legitimizes an offspring' (Chamberlain 1988, p. 455). Gender metaphors - that were also in many cases eroticised – stamped translation with femininity due to a historical trope which goes back centuries in western culture. Traditionally translation has been condemned to a secondary position in which reproduction is deprived of creativity and authority, and, thus, marked with subservience. Together the theories of Michelle Lazar, Sherry Simon and Judith Butler can be assembled to stage a reaction against these impositions, castrating imbalance in gender authority between the 'masculine' (the original) and the 'feminine' (the translation that is deemed to be derivative). Their notions combined help create from gender power asymmetries an instrument of empowerment.

Unequal power relations for Lazar are maintained by the naturalness and the 'taken-for-grantedness' of practices formed from particular perspectives that legitimise and give meaning to the required gender structure. Thus, the 'prevailing conception of gender is

understood as an ideological structure that divides people into two classes, men and women, based on a hierarchal relation of domination and subordination respectively.’ This ‘easy mapping’ of difference develops a gender structure that ‘imposes a social dichotomy of labour and human traits on women and men,’ taking into consideration that the archetypes of femininity and masculinity may vary according to ‘time and space’ (Lazar 2007, p. 147). According to Lazar the normative representation of the feminine informed by its relation to the masculine standard has idealised or demonised women on the basis of its fit with socially, undoubtedly patriarchal constructed concepts of femininity.

Translation is not a mere ‘linguistic, scientific transfer from something to the present’ but an ‘operation of thought’ and ‘a translation of ourselves into the thought of the other language’ (Gentzler 2001, p.155). Translation reflects social trends and practices, including gender roles, because ‘[g]ender is an omni-relevant category in most social practices’ (Lazar 2005, p. 3). At any juncture of the process of translation, there is interplay between gender and translation. Sherry Simon investigates the imposed femininity, and, hence, subservience and lack of authority of translation through delving deep into the persistent historical trope that relegates women and translators to an equal position of discursive inferiority and thus a heritage of double inferiority. ‘Translators and women,’ Simon contends, ‘have historically been the weaker figure in their respective hierarchies: translators are handmaidens to authors, women inferior to men’ (Simon 1996, p. 1). Translators and translation are condemned as lacking creativity because they are deemed necessarily ‘defective’; this rationale stamped all translations as ‘reputed females’ (p. 1). Instead of slipping into the pit of contentment with a degrading position, feminism and translation theory attempt to canonise and redefine the status of subservience in the Deleuzian-Guattarian sense in which they follow the politics of the minor making of the margins a territory of power in which a new centre is formed (see Deleuze and Guattari 1986; 1987). They are thus able to ‘create the opposite dream’ as they know ‘how to create a becoming minor’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p. 27). In an attempt to redefine translation and feminism by turning them into a ‘becoming,’ Susan de Lotbinière-Harwood maintains: ‘I am a translation because I am a woman’ (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1991, p. 95). The process of reterritorialising translation from a gender-wise perspective takes gender power asymmetries as a prop to the politics of gender and authority by questioning the concepts of gender and identity in a context of culture.

Judith Butler's approach underscores the notion that hegemonic gender ideology and the naturalness of 'sex' are 'socially constructed' because bodies are only gendered from the beginning of their social existence not the moment of birth. The 'natural body' to Butler does not exist. She believes that '(n)obody is born one gender or the other [...] We act and walk and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman' (Miller 2011). To Butler, gender is only something that one *does* not something one *is*; gender is 'an act, or more precisely a consequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a "doing" rather than "being"' (Butler 2002, p. 25). Butler holds neither to the view that sex determines gender, nor the one confirming that once the sex is determined all the other characteristics of a person are revealed because the sex cannot tell whether somebody is straight, gay, lesbian or butch, and also can never determine the weak or the strong. Echoing Butler, Michael Cronin argues that this cultural shorthand is radically insufficient. '[T]he cultural categorization of society as made of recognizable types designated by labels, "dyslexic", "epileptic", "Paddy", "gay", "Muslim" reduces the multidimensional complexity of humans to one defining trait' (Cronin 2009, p. 218). Depriving a character of the privilege of multidimensionality renders it transparent and, hence, invisible. Accordingly, defying labelling is an attempt to restore multidimensional and complex status in society that has put an end to naturalness and given rise to visibility conducive to authority.

Butler's is an activist perspective that makes of the politics of gender an instrument to destroy the rigid regulatory stylisation of the body. 'A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and count for those acts within the compulsory frames set by various forces that police the social appearance of gender' (Butler 2002, p. 25). The politics of gender undermine the importance of sex and, as a consequence, the importance of social categorisation that divides sexes into the dominating, authoritative male and subservient female. Hélène Cixous expressed the same perspective parodying an approach of in-betweenness in which a feminist writer would obtain authority when claiming a space between the two socially antithetical roles of the feminine and masculine. '[W]riting', says Cixous, 'is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and the other without which nothing can live, undoing the work of death – to admit this is first to want the two, as well as both, the ensemble of and the other.' Such a strategy of in-betweenness should be 'infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another' (1975, p. 881). In this sense, authority is

to be located in a place in between the two poles of the original text, depicted as male, and transition, deemed as female. Butler's stance adds to Cixous' approach and extends to the practice of translation that was originally deemed feminine, and, historically, was feminine practice based upon the fact that 'in some historical periods women were allowed to translate precisely because it was defined as a secondary activity' (Simon 1996, p. 326).

This socio-cultural regulatory frame of translation is re-assessed by Butler's rationale because it is neither the gender of the translator nor the nature of the practice of the translation that would judge a translation to be subservient or unauthoritative. Gendering the practice of translation problematises the relation of power and dominance between the original text and translation because it renders translation a subservient feminine practice marked with secondariness. This discursive constitution of gender reproduces and negotiates the relations of power against the representatives of social practices that are based upon what Lazar defines as 'gender relationality'. Lazar contends: 'Gender relationality entails a focus on two kinds of relationships. The first focus is on discursive construction of ways of doing and being a woman and a man in particular communities of practice. The concern is not with women in isolation but vis-à-vis men within particular gender orders' (Lazar 2007, p. 150). Compared to Butler, Lazar raises the question of social and personal identities (Lazar 2000) that create social representatives and relationships. She undermines authority entailing binaries of control/subservience and domination/oppression by switching the focus to social transformation of structures of gender oppression. She believes that relational power structures within society are significant. They give rise to the concept of 'doing gender' in which there is 'on-going, iterative, active accomplishment of gender and other social transformation of structures of gender oppression' as well as 'awareness and attitudinal change by both men and women' (Lazar 2007, p.151).

In her analysis of the interplay between gender and translation, Simon, echoing Butler, confirms that gender 'is never a primary identity emerging out of the depth of the self, but a discursive construction enunciated at multiple sites' (Simon 1996, p. 6). Butler's troubling of gender has had a positive influence upon the critique of gender by asserting that "'female" no longer appears to be a stable notion' and that 'its meaning is as troubled and unfixed as "woman"' (Butler 2002, p. xi). In this sense, secondariness no longer stigmatises femininity but is investigated in order to be 'defined and canonized,' to explain the affinities and politics of both feminism and translation as forms of

representation, knowing that representations do not ‘simply “mirror” reality’ but ‘contribute to it’ (Simon 1996, p. 8). Simon and Butler coincide in viewing gender, including the translation project, as a discursive structure that requires practice. Simon has expressed this stance in many instances and has underlined ‘the importance for all social and human sciences of a critical reframing of gender, identity and subject positions within language’ (p. ix). Similar to de Lotbinière, Simon considers translation a writing or ‘re-writing’ project in which gender plays a significant role. ‘The entry of gender into translation theory has a lot to do with the renewed prestige of translation as “re-writing” and as a bulwark against the unbridled forces of generalization’ (p. ix). A form of ‘re-writing’ as it is, translation is reflexive of all social and cultural trends in which gender is performative.

Butler, Lazar and Simon coincide in condemning the dominant trend of taking gender as a cultural aspect though it is principally determined through the dynamic interplay between a human/text and the defined manner of acting; a process through which a human/text gains voice and social identity (of her/his gender) proclaiming as a concomitant the definitive gender matching the acts. ‘Gender proves to be performance,’ asserts Butler, ‘that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, although not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed’ (2002, p. 25). In this sense, a subject is not assigned or free to choose a gender since to enact as gender is already pre-determined. Butler, for who gender is not a matter of performance, but performativity, has in many instances distinguished between the two. In an interview in 2011, she asserts: ‘When we say gender is performed we usually mean we’ve taken a role or we’re acting in some way and that our acting or our role playing is a crucial to the gender that we are and the gender that we present to the world’ (Miller 2011). In this sense, gender is rendered like a costume, referring to Butler’s metaphor of a wardrobe, where the wardrobe is a regulatory frame, yet has a limited number of costumes that constrain the gender style. Nonetheless, the performative is a matter of interplay between gender and society. To Butler, ‘performative means it produces a series of effects. We act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman’ (Miller 2011). Butler also emphasises the importance of the distinction between performance and performativity. She plainly states, ‘Whereas performance presupposes a preexisting subject, performativity contests the very notion of the subject’ (Butler 1994, p. 33). She means that a subject performs to assert what she/he believes to be her or his innate internal reality; whereas performativity blows apart the

very notion of gender as an internal reality. She hoards the conviction that nobody is born with a definitive gender. Lately, she has expressed this viewpoint in intelligible and less confusing terms. 'We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or something that is simply true about us, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time, so as to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a gender from the start' (Miller 2011). Butler has obviously established her approach on Simone de Beauvoir's famous notion: 'One is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one' (de Beauvoir 1975, p. 1). She has developed de Beauvoir's treatise to enfold the becoming of a man or a woman in a male or female embodiment respectively, as it is inadequate to define gender on terms of biological functioning. Thus, one's gender is 'performatively constituted in the same way, that one's choice of clothes is curtailed, perhaps even predetermined, by the society, context, economy, etc. within which one is situated' (Salih 2002, p. 56). Performativity is the effect that is produced by acts that are formulated in accordance with the surrounding milieu.

Furthermore, when gender is performative, it is brought into being through acts of 'feminine' women and 'masculine' men; noting that it is language that constitutes gender and not the contrary. There is no 'I' outside language because it is not an identity that 'does' discourse or language but language and discourse 'do'. As discussed earlier, identity is a signifying practice and culturally intelligible subjects are the effects rather than the causes of discourses that conceal their acts (Butler 2002, p. 145). In this sense, gender becomes performative. Similarly, Michelle Lazar confirms the performativity of gender through language and discourse. She goes further when she gives examples of sensitive 'new age' fathers who bear signifiers conventionally associated with motherhood (Lazar 2000, 2005). She argues: 'The masculinization of talk by women in power, and the feminization of forms of masculinity in the home [. . .] may appear to redefine conventional gender norms for women and men in particular communities.' Yet, she also warns that this 'gender crossing index [...] perpetuate[s] the underlying dualism of gender structure – the behaviour of the masculine woman and feminine men gets read against the expected behavioural norm of the other.' This situation suggests that 'deviations from gender appropriate norms are policed and constrained in the presence of the prevailing discourse of heteronormativity' (Lazar 2007, p. 148). Accordingly, sex is no longer definitive of gender, and, as Butler proposes, the modern 'prevailing discourse of heteronormativity' made such acts acceptable in society. This situation adds to the significance of Butler's approach that gender is performativity.

Sherry Simon's position also coincides with Butler's troubling of gender; she believes that gender 'is never a primary identity emerging out of the depth of the self, but a discursive construction enunciated at multiple sites' (Simon 1996, p. 2). Furthermore, variable discourses of gender should be considered and underlined. In the realm of translation, the issue of gender is effective in two antithetical and, yet, complementary dimensions. It is gender that defines positions of authority and subalternity because it instigates these troubling binaries and, in the realm of translation, original/derivative are binaries which are defined according to gender roles. Notably, 'much attention has been paid to investigating how gender roles are discursively constructed through language and translation – both are understood as social practices *per se*' (Castro 2013, p. 5). Through language and translation social positions could be radically changed as both are tools for 'legitimizing the *status quo* or for subverting it; tools for gender oppression or liberation' (p. 6). It also may be added that they promote both a discourse of heteronormativity and feminine voice. Gendered translation is therefore a platform on which women from all social strata could make their voices heard. However, gendered translations are not considered feminist because the feminist translations give a wider reign for women; and thus, a translation turns into a form of social activism (see von Flotow 2011).

For Simon, feminism and translation are similar practices. 'Both feminism and translation are concerned by the way "secondariness comes to be defined and canonized"; both are tools for a critical understanding of difference as it is represented in language' (Simon 1996, p. 8). Simon connects translations to the prevailing socio-discourse at the time of translation as it influences both the manner in which the text is translated and also how gender as an approach is formulated because it polices the relationship between the source text (the original) and the translated text (the derivative). Translations can never fix meaning; they are always open to new possibilities. Translations are not complete texts; they are neither stable nor fixed texts; they are always subject to new interpretations and socio-cultural changes. For this reason, translations have been condemned to secondariness and deprived of authority; they are an imitation of the 'original in such a way that the priority of the original is not reinforced but by the very fact it *can* be stimulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on' (p. 144). Yet, these series of changes and open interpretations are not confined to translation theory.

Poststructuralist theories have formulated original texts in the same way when directing attention 'away from the authority of the author towards the role of the reader,

as well as undermin[ing] the notion of the “original” as stable, objectively transferable entity’ (Wallmach 2006, pp. 5-6). Remarkably, the original and the translation stand on the same footing as their meaning is neither stable nor fixed; they are both open to new socio-cultural interpretations. According to Simon ‘The “original” is never finished or complete in itself. The “originary” is always open to translation so that it cannot be said to have a totalized prior moment of being or meaning . . . an essence’ (Simon 1996, p. 144). The original and the translation are only attempts at representing a unified essence.

Jacques Derrida is concerned with the complicated process that a text undergoes while being translated from one language to another because ‘there is no meaning behind words. It is just a superficial chain of signifiers’ (Derrida and Venuti 2001, p. 180). Thus, the creative process of a text is an act of translation because ‘when we are writing in one language, we are writing in different languages and we are choosing some meanings over others. So even the act of writing becomes an act of translation’ (p. 184). The original text and the translation are acts of writing - specifically, ‘creations’. The “act of creation” is in reality a series of complex processes that the designation “author” serves to simplify’ so as to represent the essence of a unified idea (Gentzler 2001, p. 150). Therefore, an original text and a translation are acts of creation dominated by a series of signifiers in an endeavour to adequately communicate a kernel message within a socio-cultural space. Accordingly, the original text when translated is co-authored; translation is neither a derivation nor subservient to the original. A translation, when comprehensively fluent, is not invisible but capably tackles its ‘role in analyzing and interpreting the source text in order to determine meaning and render it’ (Zaharia 2004, p. 401). Interaction with the text provokes a translation to create deep meanings.

The question of fidelity is, thus, reframed by the awareness that translation is a writing project in which authorship is co-shared by the author and translator. Troubling the structures of authority in translation has repercussions for feminist translation which tends toward a form of activism that highlights the ‘speaking voice of the translator and her active role in the translation process, and a willing recognition that translators are interventionists’ (Simon 1996, p. 12). Interventionism for feminist translators is in the form through which their gender becomes heard and definitive. It guarantees the visibility of translation and rescues both women and translations from being relegated to ‘the bottom of the social literary ladder’ (p. 1). Feminist translators have made their translations political gestures; for instance, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood in her preface to Gauvin’s work writes: ‘My translation practice is a political activity aimed at

making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this translation has used every translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language' (de Lotbinière-Harwood 1989, p. 9). Womanhandling translations - in other words feminist translations - are designed to open new possibilities for the translation project. Accordingly, footnoting, explanation, and hijacking, are all interventionist means to extend and develop the intention of the original text while not deforming it (Simon 1996, p. 15). They also accentuate 'the "difference" between original and translation' and explain 'the mode of circulation of the translated text in its new environment' (p. 28). They are all tools for crystallising the creativity of women translators in the process of re-territorialising their social and literary position from the margins to the newly-created centre which all feminists have contributed to establishing.

Feminist translation intends to trouble patriarchal authority in the same way feminist writing does. For von Flotow, this can be achieved through activism of which the primary target is the deconstruction of the 'conventional and prescriptive patriarchal language' in order to facilitate 'women's word to develop, find a space and be heard' (von Flotow 1991, p. 73). There is a battle of empowerment in which they carry voice and authority through being visible. Compared to feminist writers, feminist translators give themselves 'permission to make [their] work visible, discuss the creative process [they are] engaged in, collude with and challenge the writers they translate' (p. 74). Producing authoritative feminist translations helps feminist translators to debate and challenge the authority of the original text so as to create visible, empowered texts produced through translation in which the hegemonic voice is the feminine.

Feminist search for empowerment through activism that extends to writing and translation also has repercussions in public media and popular discourses by re-sexualising media images and appropriating lexical tokens which were signifiers of women's exploitation and subservience to the (straight) male gaze so as to react against masculinist reactionary attitudes. Feminist drag intentionally eroticises masculinity to underline a shift in power relations signifying the empowered and authoritative position of females and that (hetero)sexuality that was ever a sign of subalternity become pivotal to women's power (Lazar 2004, 2006). The sexual terrain is no longer a weak point making of woman a passive object for male desire; it is re-signified, in other words, translated from a feminist viewpoint to grant women voice, visibility and power. Such a severe backlash against conventional masculinist/patriarchal attitudes might be deemed as 'feminist socio-cultural translation' of a developing drag for empowerment. 'Women as a

category is as much a product of translation as translation has been eroticised to become a semiotic sign representing femininity and subordination' (Bai 2010, p. 2). There is an attempt to maximise empowerment of both women and translators and to normalise a discourse of re-gendering and re-sexualising the socio-cultural concepts of women. 'Translators and women have historically been the weaker figures in their respective hierarchies' (Simon 1996, p. 1). Therefore, feminists intervene to subvert this conventional drag.

Michelle Lazar, however, believes that severe backlash against masculinist attitudes as part of the radical emancipatory agenda adds to the complexity of gender power relations. '[To] speak from the position of a "woman" is not the same as speaking from the political perspective of the structure of gender, whereas a feminist perspective means that one has a critical distance on gender and on oneself' (Lazar 2007, p.147). This developed radical feminism targeting resistance and change widens the gap not only between both genders but also between one's own gender and one's own self. Lazar's attempt to eschew the trap of essentialism and radicalism in fear of the death of the meaning of feminism and femininity crystalises her postfeminist bent.

Judith Butler's approach on gender identity, nonetheless, eases the tension created by radical feminism. Insisting that there is no identity outside language, Butler states the fact that 'the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitutes its reality' (Butler 2002: 136). It is through discourse that performatively constitutes the subject as genders are not performed. 'Gender is a fantasy; a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface bodies,' argues Butler, 'then it seems that genders can neither be true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary stable identity' (p. 136). Gender is a parody while gender identity is a sequence of acts and manners expressing something that has been already there all the time despite natural sex. Similarly, translation is empowered through the manner by which it is expressed. Its axis of power is the word which is constitutive of a discourse that has already been there all the time but is adjusted according to the signifiers that provide it with a performative gender in a way comparable to Butler's wardrobe metaphor. Gender as a parody is not subversive but accentuates the acute differences between the binaries of male/female; gay/straight; and masculine/feminine; as is the case with the gender performatively constituted by radical feminism.

Translation is deprived of the authority granted to the original text because it is defined as the 'Other' of the original and its existence is relative to the original. However, placing all translations in one category excludes the differences between translations as well as all the efforts exerted to make of translation performative texts so as to maintain patriarchal authority's upper hand. Judith Butler is also against placing all women in one category: '[t]he very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms' (Butler 2002, p. 1). There are diverse categories of women and, thus, they can never be deemed as a unified group. This sharp disagreement urges a comprehensive change in the way gender is considered. Butler argues: 'The consequence of sharp disagreements about the meaning of gender . . . establishes the need for a radical thinking of the categories of identity within the context of relations of radical gender asymmetry' (p. 11). Maintaining the comparison with women, translation should not be claimed to be the same or created under the same conditions or according to the same notions. The masculine-made gap between the original and the translated texts, as well as gendered metaphors of translation, especially the erotic ones, are the motive for coining new approaches for tackling translation as a creative text and re-considering the structures of power asymmetries of the original and the translated texts.

Butler's quest is one of assigning power and voice not to gender but to the performativity of sexes, no matter what the gender drag might be. Equally, a translated text is, sometimes, more expressive and artistic than the original when a translator does not curb her/his creativity because languages are dissimilar. For instance, his translation of Omar Khayyam granted Fitzgerald a world of fame when he widened the scope of the original; he did not deem himself a mere subordinate facilitator exhibiting obedience and loyalty to a king, but a confident creator responsible for any inferiority that might be detected in the translated text. This resulted in his co-authoring the text and rendering Fitzgerald and, equally, his translation visible up till now; his is an empowered translation that surpassed the complex (gender) power structure asymmetries.

Original works require same language readership; theirs is a limited range. Yet, translation though condemned as inferior and derivative, endows the original with the power to surpass all the boundaries of language, race, identity and sex. It is through the agency of translation that an original creative work, no matter what its content is, acquires a universal voice and a distinctive identity. In a word, it becomes visible. Otherwise, an original would have remained an 'Other' to non-same language speakers. This 'otherness' undermines any great work; without translation, the visibility and the empowerment of

the originary are impossible outside its boundaries. Originals and translations complete each other.

On the other hand, widening the gap between the originary and the translation through accentuating the gender-wise differences; going to extremes by promulgating erotic sexual metaphors; showing severe backlash against gender difference; and turning translations into a hostile activist arena conforming to the principles of third wave feminism, will add to neither the original nor the translation. It will profoundly accentuate the hostility and aggressiveness between original and translation and also between genders. For these reasons, Michelle Lazar is against extremism and aggressiveness in promoting the 'feminist cause' which is notable in the case of the advertising industry. Lazar argues: 'Such representations, however, far from supporting the feminist cause, are quite detrimental to it.' She also adds: 'Feminists' concern for women empowerment is appropriated and recontextualized by advertisers, evacuating it of its political content and instead infusing meanings quite antithetical to feminism' (2007, p. 159). Lazar is not against feminism; she is against the relegation of one gender in order for the other to assume a powerful position, as masculinists did before, producing a feminist backlash challenging their pastiche of supremacy and authority. Obviously, Lazar is for creating balance in gender power structure.

Judith Butler is also against extremism and hostility in the feminist approach because 'feminism thus opens itself to charges of gross misrepresentation' (Butler 2002, p. 5). Furthermore, she believes that this is 'a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms' (Butler 2002, p. 13). To her, hostile and aggressive attitudes are self-defeating because they ignite the conflict between females and males and widen the gap between them even further. Gender for Butler is not a core aspect: put simply, a woman does not feel feminine all the time any more than a man feels masculine all the time (see Lazar 2007).

Butler's proposed reconciliation for conflicting gender attitudes is to consider gender as free-floating and fluid. She argues: 'when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily a female one' (Butler 2002, p. 10; original italics). Drag for Butler is the solution for challenging the conventional notions of gender identities that 'seek to keep gender in its place by posturing it as the foundational illusions of identity' (Butler 2002, p. 148). Sherry Simon is inclined to apply the same

strategy on translation. She contends: 'The process of translation must be seen as a fluid production of meaning, similar to other kinds of writing. The hierarchy of writing roles, like gender identities, is increasingly to be recognized as mobile and performative. The interstitial becomes the focus of investigation, the polarized extremes abandoned' (Simon 1996, p. 12). The concept of free-floating gender reconciles the issues of fidelity, authority, and visibility because a translated text will be granted wider range of responsibility and freedom which, consequently, banish extremist discourses for the sake of the creation of empowered visible translations. Out of this liberating approach another coinage is possible: free-floating originality is a term applicable to translated texts making them originals only in different languages.

Butler, Lazar, and Simon's feminist approaches combined herald a postfeminist tendency in translation. Assertion of individuality and subjectivity re-conceptualises the gender-wise concept of translation and resuscitates the power of a translated text by making of 'difference' a central notion (see Lotz 2001). Through 'difference', feminine interest and female subjectivity are negotiated in order to deconstruct the discursive context of activism and radical search for identity. Within this context, applying a postfeminist approach on femininity and, likewise, on translation 'can be an extremely vulnerable descriptor for recognizing and analyzing recent shifts in female representations and ideas about feminism' (Lotz 2001, p. 106). Applying a postfeminist drag on translation underlines the ambiguities that a gendered translation confronts in a heteronormative context and challenges violent binary oppositions. Compared to feminism, translation would 'represent something radically revolutionary and pioneering and transcend the feminist past; instead, the 'post-ing' of feminism involves a process of resignification' (Brabon and Genz 2009, p. 65). In this sense, translation would be re-conceptualised as it would enfold new gender-wise meanings.

In addition, the application of the postfeminist approach creates a synergy between feminism and femininity by 'disputing the definition of femininity as a straightjacket for women, a gendered prisonhouse built on restraint and restriction' (Genz 2009, p. 7). Empowerment and voice are gained through revalorising all the stereotypical concepts of femininity as well as translation. The postfeminist context 'makes heroes of feminine women, those who both "enjoy" womanhood [...], and know how to use their advantage in the personal and public sphere' (Talbot 2014, p. 176). The shameless and positive expression and representation of gender is the sign of assertiveness which is the primary step to empowerment. Consistent with Butler's opposition to extremism and hostility in

feminist approaches, Lazar's warning against severe backlash, and Simon's bent towards a gender-wise free-floating translation of texts, adopting postfeminism in translation theory means the resurgence of sufficient knowingness concerning cultural, social and personal construction; these are all vital assets toward producing a translated text enjoying individuality and are, equally, the shortcut for gaining voice and empowerment.

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## Notes on Contributor

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