Feminist Translation Strategies: Different or Derived?

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Summary

This article explores the problem of difference in translation under the influence of deconstruction, with particular reference to four French-Canadian feminist texts by Nicole Brossard and their feminist translations into English (two translations by Barbara Godard and two translations by Patricia Claxton). These translators claim to utilise innovative translation strategies in challenging certain conventional views on translation. It is because of their explicit rejection of traditional views on fidelity and their emphasis on the individualistic and creative nature of translation as expressed in metatexts that feminist translators' work is seen as a threat to mainstream translation discourse. Equally, it is for precisely these reasons that feminist translators may make a contribution to contemporary translation studies, should their claims be substantiated in practice. But in my view, no critic to date has really questioned the basis upon which feminist translation rests: the contention that through the utilisation of innovative translation strategies a feminist translation becomes a deliberate mistranslation and extension of the source text, and that feminist translation, unlike conventional translation, constitutes difference and not derivation. If, following Derrida, *all* translation is transformation, we need to examine how feminist translation differs from conventional translation. And thus, my contention is, firstly, that in the texts analysed the feminist translation discourse is not substantiated by actual translation practice and secondly, that the unusual translation techniques used constitute a minor feature of the translations.

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die probleem van verskille in vertalings onder die invloed van dekonstruksie, met besondere verwysing na vier Frans-Kanadese feministiese tekste deur Nicole Brossard en feministiese vertalings daarvan in Engels (twee vertalings deur Barbara Godard en twee deur Patricia Claxton). Dié vertalers maak daarop aanspraak dat hulle vernuwende vertaalstrategieë aanwend om sekere konvensionele sienings van vertaling uit te daag. Dit is juis hulle duidelike verwerping van tradisionele beskouings van getrouheid en hulle klem op die individualistiese en kreatiewe aard van vertaling soos dit in metatekste uitdrukking vind wat meebring dat feministiese vertalers se werk as 'n bedreiging van hoofstroomvertaling beskou word. Dit is eweneens die redes waarom feministiese vertalers 'n bydrae tot kontemporêre vertaalstudie kan lewer, sou hulle aansprake in die praktyk bewys word. Maar dit is my mening dat geen kritikus tot op hede inderdaad die grondslag waarop feministiese vertaling rus bevraagteken het nie: die bewering dat 'n feministiese vertaling deur die benutting van vernuwende vertaalstrategieë 'n opsetlike "verkeerde" vertaling en verlenging van die bronteks word, en dat feministiese vertaling – anders as konvensionele vertaling – neerkom

op verskil eerder as afleiding. Sou ons in navolging van Derrida aanneem dat *alle* vertaling transformasie is, noop dit ons om ondersoek in te stel na hoe feministiese vertaling van konvensionele vertaling verskil. Derhalwe is my betoog, eerstens, dat die feministiese vertaaldiskoers nie in die ontlede tekste deur werklike vertaalpraktyk gerugsteun word nie en, tweedens, dat die ongewone vertaaltegnieke wat ingespan word 'n ondergeskikte kenmerk van die vertalings uitmaak.

1   Introduction

Translation theorists have always grappled with one specific problem in translation – the fact that translations are not the same as their originals and can never be the same. This is clearly reflected in their theories, which, despite different approaches, have all depended on some notion of equivalence (whether aesthetic, formal, dynamic, functional or cultural) to evaluate translations. But the advent of deconstruction and the privileging of form over meaning have changed all this, resulting in a radical redrawing of the questions upon which translation theory is founded. Instead of being seen as reproductions of an exact meaning, translations are seen as texts in their own right which are always in the process of modifying, deferring and displacing the original. The translation process itself can be conceived of as an action in which the movement along the surface of language is made visible, and the limits of language and intertextuality explored. Thus the term "difference" in translation, traditionally a negative term signifying distortion or deviation, is seen in a new light under the influence of deconstruction (as *différance*, meaning both difference and deferral), and many translation researchers believe that the notion of translation itself should also be reassessed. Gentzler points out that deconstruction is not an approach normally associated with translation theory in Anglo-American circles, but suggests that

> the shift to a more philosophic stance from which the entire problematic of translation can be better viewed may not only be beneficial for translation theory, but ... after such a confrontation, the discourse which has limited the development of translation theory will inevitably undergo a transformation, allowing new insights and fresh interdisciplinary approaches, breaking, if you will, a logjam of stagnated terms and notions.
>
> (Gentzler 1993: 145)

In this article, I explore the problem of *différance* in translation under the influence of deconstruction, with particular reference to four feminist prose works written in French by French-Canadian Nicole Brossard and their feminist translations into English, two of which were translated by Barbara Godard and two by Patricia Claxton (also Canadian): *Sold-Out: Étreinte/*

Illustration (Brossard [1973]1980), translated as *Turn of a Pang* (Brossard 1976) by Patricia Claxton; *French Kiss: Étreinte-Exploration* (Brossard 1974), translated by Patricia Claxton as *French Kiss or a Pang's Progress* (Brossard 1986); *L'Amèr ou le chapitre effrité* (Brossard 1977), translated as *These Our Mothers or: The Disintegrating Chapter* (Brossard 1983) by Barbara Godard; and *Picture Theory* (Brossard [1982]1989), translated by Barbara Godard as *Picture Theory* (Brossard 1991).

The analysis of Canadian feminist texts and their translations is interesting, because it provides a vehicle for the concrete examination of the work of a group of translators who claim to have broken the "logjam of stagnated terms and notions" in their application of deconstructive and feminist principles found in the feminist texts they translate. In their metatexts feminist translators have indicated both their intention to examine translation theory itself as discourse as well as their intention to use translation to context the self-evident legitimacy of a discourse and its producers. Canadian feminist translator Barbara Godard has commented in this regard that

> to raise the issue of the [translation of French feminist texts] in the framework of language, gender and ideology is to ask about the theories of discourse advanced in these texts and the theories of translation which have produced the English version.
>
> (Godard in Basnett & Lefevere 1990: 91)

On the basis of these translations, I set out to examine the contention (made by Barbara Godard in particular) that through the utilisation of innovative translation strategies, a feminist translation becomes a deliberate mis-translation and extension of the source text, and that feminist translation practice, unlike conventional translation practice, constitutes difference and not derivation. Clearly, given the constraints of space and the limitations of my corpus, any conclusions drawn must inevitably be conditional ones, but I nevertheless believe that it is possible to make some preliminary remarks (cf. Wallmach 1999 for more detail).

In the next section, I discuss the influence of deconstruction on the discipline of translation studies and then examine the concerns of Canadian feminist translators as expressed in metatexts. I then focus on the question of creativity in the context of translation and develop an analytical framework for the analysis of feminist translation strategies by refining Delabastita's (1993) and Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) categories in an attempt to establish whether the translation strategies used in the four translations could be said to be "different" or "derived".

2   The Influence of Deconstruction on Translation Studies

How has deconstruction influenced the body of scholarly work that constitutes translation studies? While not offering a specific "translation theory" of its own, deconstruction is a useful tool not because it necessarily defines another approach, but because it deepens and broadens the conceptual framework by which the very field itself is defined. Deconstructing a discourse implies demonstrating how it undermines the philosophy it asserts, or the hierarchical oppositions on which it relies, by identifying in the text the rhetorical operations that produce the supposed ground of argument, the key premise. Deconstructivists such as Jacques Derrida use translation to challenge the limits of language, writing and reading as well as suggesting that it is in the process of translating texts where one comes as close as is possible to that elusive notion or experience of *différance* which underpins the entire philosophic enterprise (Derrida in Graham 1985: 150). The act of "deconstructing" or interpreting a text is not seen as recovering some deeper "given" objective meaning which controls and unifies the text's structure, but as exposing what is usually suppressed, namely the infinite possibilities, the "free play" of meanings. Each decon-struction, each interpretation, opens itself to further deconstruction. Derrida challenges the reader and the translator to think and rethink every moment a translation solution is posed, an item named, an identity fixed, or a sentence inscribed. With each naming gesture he suggests a footnote, a note in the margin, or a preface, to retrieve those subtle differing supplementary meanings and tangential notions lost in the process of transcription. Thus, both writing and translation are seen as "the endless displacement of meaning which both governs language and places it for ever beyond the reach of a stable, self-authenticating knowledge" (Norris 1982: 29).

  The rise of translation theory as an academic discipline was strongly influenced by structuralist linguistics, since this seemed to offer translation a systematic framework within which to work. But already at that time, in the writings of Roland Barthes, whose "Death of the Author" appeared only three years after Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, and Catford's *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, approaches were beginning to emerge which, as they worked their way through a variety of disciplines towards the phenomenal success they currently enjoy in literary theory, would later have considerable influence on translation theory (Fawcett 1994: 247). In fact, theories of translation have generally drawn on three adjacent disciplines for their notions of the "contents" and purposes of their study as well as for general methodological stances: linguistics, poetics, and philosophy. It is perhaps no accident that these three disciplines, as well as the many other

areas of study for which they have provided models, provided a focus of attention for poststructuralist inquiry.

Rosemary Arrojo, who was instrumental in introducing deconstruction to translation studies in the early 1990s, is of the view that translation has been conquering a more defined space within language and cultural studies since the 1980s partly as a result of the increasing popularity in translation circles of the philosophical approaches to translation formulated in previous years and grouped under the umbrella term of poststructuralism. "As we regard translation as a form of transformation, we finally begin to move beyond the old stalemates which have paralysed reflection on the area for at least two thousand years" (Arrojo 1998: 25).

The first significant effect of these theories on translation is that postmodernist theories propose a radical revision of the traditional dichotomy that has always put practice under the alleged control of theory. According to Ingberg,

> [p]oststructuralist theorists have explored in detail the implications of the existence of varying perspectives for our understanding of the nature and function of discourse. They have argued that our traditional notions of the unity and self-sufficiency of textual products, including theoretical and ideological constructs, are largely illusions fostered by the blind spots each perspective creates.
>
> (Ingberg 1986: 6)

Thus, poststructuralist approaches support a view of theory and practice as dialogically related, a view where neither concept governs the other but where both function as contesting and complementary, as dialogical forces within discourse. Theory and practice, in such a view, are not thought of as essences or discrete functions or operations; rather they are seen to represent theoretical formulations of positions which in practice can be applied only temporarily and alternately. Arrojo (1998: 26) supports this, stating that only within a theoretical framework that does not depend on such a gap can the study of translation effectively grow and prosper. In her view, translation theorists have tended to propose a fundamentally authoritarian, generally fruitless relationship between theory and practice as they envision an ideal scenario in which what is commonly implied, in the name of science or rational expertise, is that it is the exclusive business of theory to establish definitions and models and to set translation rules and standards, while it is the translator's role to accept and blindly follow them (Arrojo 1998: 26).

Secondly, and no less importantly, poststructuralist conceptions of meaning have directed attention away from the authority of the author towards the role of the reader as well as undermined the notion of the

"original" as a stable, objectively transferable entity. This is a change which has far-reaching implications for translation theory. As Arrojo puts it:

> If there is no stable "original" to which one could be objectively faithful without interfering with its allegedly intrinsic meaning, the traditional issues which have concerned translators and theoreticians for as long as this complex activity has been practised take a radically different turn and begin to liberate the general reflection on translation from the unrealistic expectations and dead-end arguments which have transformed its study into a series of failed attempts at giving definite answers to the perennial question of how translators could possibly become transparent in order to be faithful to the languages and cultures involved in their task.
>
> (Arrojo 1998: 26)

Many theorists have criticised deconstruction in translation studies as a rather reckless and pointless activity that implies "bottomless chessboards and random, accidental development, without an end", as *play* without calculation, wandering without an end or *telos*" (Gentzler 1993: 159,167). But from such a stance, what have traditionally been regarded as the "theoretical problems" of translation begin to be recognised as being part of a world view that insists on searching for the alleged hidden core or model that would finally put an end to all the relative, local, finite interpretations with which our perspectives are traditionally constructed. Since it takes the implications of the Saussurian theorisation of the arbitrary, conventional sign to its last consequences, thereby questioning the possibility of stable meanings that could be reproduced and recovered in their sameness, deconstruction implicitly and explicitly challenges all the traditional notions usually associated with translation as an idealised form of meaning transferral from one language to another, and from one culture to another, without the interference of either the translator or his or her circumstances. If meaning cannot be fully repeated even within the domain of that which we still call the "same" language, that is, if it is difference which is the basic trait of any process of signification, the traditional notion of the text as the immobile, protective container of its author's intentional, supposedly recoverable meaning is radically revised. From the point of view of deconstructive thought, since translation

> practises the difference between signified and signifier … we will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some "transport" of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched.
>
> (Derrida 1987: 20)

Consequently, translation begins to be recognised as a form of "trans-formation": a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another (Derrida 1987: 20). And it becomes possible to conceive of a theory of interpretation that is not constructed around the interrelated poles of loss and recovery (cf. Derrida's *Living on Border Lines* (1979), *Des tours de Babel* (1985a) and *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation* (1985b); *Difference in Translation* (Graham 1985); *Oficina de Tradução: A Teoria na Prática* (Arrojo 1986) and Gentzler's *Contemporary Translation Theories* (1993), to mention only a few).

  Another important influence of deconstruction on translation studies can be found in the discussion of metaphor. Metaphor has traditionally been defined as a trope of resemblance, not just as resemblance between signifier and signified, but also the resemblance between signs, one of which represents the other. Derrida sets out to show that it is also a trope of difference (Godard 1991b: 112). This revisiting and rewriting of metaphor as a trope of difference has prompted translation theorists influenced by the poststructuralist paradigm to revisit metaphors relating to translation, which in turn has led to the establishment of approaches to translation which have taken up the call for resistance to established norms. In fact, the act of resistance to established norms or subversion of these norms has in itself become not only a metaphor used in translation, but an approach to translation which can be categorised under the umbrella term of resistive approaches to translation or "resistancy" (Venuti 1995).

  The most vocal proponent of these approaches to translation is Lawrence Venuti. Venuti (1995) uses the term "resistancy" or "resistance" to refer to the strategy of translating a literary text in such a way that it retains something of its foreignness; as such it is broadly synonymous with "foreignizing translation". This approach, strongly influenced by post-structuralist translation theory, was conceived as a way of challenging the assumption prevalent in Anglo-American culture that the only valid way of translating is to produce a target text which reads fluently and idiomatically and is so "transparent" that it would seem to reflect the foreign writer's intention and the essential meaning of the foreign text, and could therefore be mistaken for a product of the target culture. The translation gives the appearance of not being a translation at all, but the "original". For Venuti, what is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator's crucial intervention in the foreign text – "[t]he more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text" (1995: 1-2).

  Venuti also strongly criticises the idea that an idiomatic translation (or what he calls "domestication") should be the default translation strategy

taught to student translators and advocated for all types of text. Kwieciński agrees with Venuti in criticising the implicit claim that

> a functionalist domesticating stance represents some sort of indisputable natural law in translation, a claim which consequently reduces the epistemological self-awareness of the researcher and the translator and ultimately effaces the role of cultural politics in shaping translational behaviour.
>
> (Kwieciński 1998: 187)

In advocating "foreignising" translation, Venuti aims to make visible the "otherness" of the source text in translation culture, often by foregrounding the foreign linguistic form. In practice, therefore, "resistancy" may involve the translator choosing to translate a text that challenges the contemporary canon of foreign literature in the target language, or it may involve the use of unidiomatic expressions and other linguistically and culturally alienating features in the translated text so as to create the impression of foreignness. In concrete terms, the latter strategy would entail not only a freedom from absolute obedience to target linguistic and textual constraints, but also where appropriate the selection of a non-fluent, opaque style and the deliberate inclusion of source text (SL) realia or target language (TL) archaisms; the cumulative effect of such features would be to provide TL readers with an "alien reading experience" (Venuti 1995: 20). Venuti concedes that foreignising translations are just as partial in their inter-pretation of the foreign text as are domesticating translations, yet points out that they "tend to flaunt their partiality instead of concealing it" (p. 34). Translation therefore emerges as an active reconstitution of the foreign text mediated by the irreducible linguistic, discursive and ideological differences of the target-language culture. Venuti's stated aim is "to force translators and their readers to reflect on the ethnocentric violence of translation and hence to write and read translated texts in ways that seek to recognise the linguistic and cultural difference of foreign texts" (p. 42).

  This view of translation as difference ties in very closely with those of Philip Lewis's (1985) concept of abusive fidelity, which evolved partly as a result of problems created by the daunting task of translating Derrida's inventive and self-reflexive writing into English. In discussing an English-language version of Derrida's essay "La mythologie blanche" Lewis (1985: 31-62), argues for a more sophisticated translation strategy that acknowledges the complications poststructuralism has brought to trans-lation, particularly the concept of meaning as a differential plurality, and that therefore shifts the translator's attention away from the signified "to the chain of signifiers, to syntactic processes, to discursive structures, to the incidence of language mechanisms on thought and reality formation, and so

forth" (p. 61). What is at stake here is a "new axiomatics of fidelity" which Lewis terms "abusive": the translator seeks to reproduce whatever features of the foreign text abuse or resist dominant cultural values in the source language, yet this reproductive effort requires the invention of analogous means of signification that are doubly abusive, that resist dominant cultural values in the target language, but supplement the foreign text by rewriting it in that language. Lewis observes that

> the real possibility of translation – the translatability that emerges in the movement of difference as a fundamental property of languages – points to a risk to be assumed: that of the strong, forceful translation that values experimentation, tampers with usage, seeks to match the polyvalencies or plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own.
>
> (Lewis 1985: 41)

Abusive fidelity clearly entails a rejection of the fluency that dominates contemporary translation in favour of an opposing strategy that can aptly be called resistance. Hence, Venuti (1992: 12) asserts, it has so far proved most useful in translating texts that foreground the play of the signifier by cultivating polysemy, neologism, fragmented syntax, discursive hetero-geneity – namely poststructuralist theoretical statements, postmodern narra-tives, and feminist experiments in prose and poetry that reflect Hélène Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine* – such as the writings of Nicole Brossard, as we shall see in the next section.

3   Defining Feminist Translation in the Canadian Context

Québecois feminist writers in particular have appropriated Derrida's concept of transformation, and translation has become "a metaphor used by women writers to describe their experience; like translated texts they can be betrayed, transformed, invented and created" (Harwood in Homel & Simon 1988: 49). This is evident in the awareness and exploitation of inter-textuality of writers such as Nicole Brossard, France Théoret, Louky Bersianik, Anne Hébert and Madeleine Gagnon in their concern to deconstruct the dominant discourse while giving form to a woman's vision of the universe, and in particular in their use of wordplay, neologism and sound patterning to explore language as a sign of difference. The radical feminist texts of Nicole Brossard are an excellent example of this trend. She herself characterises her writing as

> an *écriture de dérive* (a writing that is both *derived from* and *adrift*) somewhere at the border between what's real and what's fictive, between what

seems possible to say, to write, but which proves to be, at the moment of writing, unthinkable, and that which seems obvious but appears, at the last second, inexpressible.

(Brossard in Gould 1990: 89)

Often approaching their work in collaboration with their authors and professing to utilise innovative translation strategies to destabilise the notion of gendered positions within texts, feminist translators in Canada claim to produce "an extremely discontinuous textuality in which the author inventively joins in the production of meaning, undermining conventional representations that not only subordinate translator to author, but also metaphorise authorship as male and translation as female" (Venuti 1992: 12). In fact, my interest in Brossard and in the translations of her work by feminist translators is explained by the fact that it can be said about Canadian feminist *translators* as much as their authors that

> they work words in different ways, in subversive ways, disrupting the linearity of conventional discourse, deconstructing grammar, sabotaging the symbolism of patriarchy, stripping words to their bare meanings and breaking open language to let it say what is unsaid and unsayable in the language of patriarchy. Through these linguistic transgressions, they expand cultural space to liberate territory for women's expression.
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> (Scott 1989: Preface to *Lair*)

Canadian feminist translation is therefore a phenomenon

> intimately connected to a specific writing practice in a specific ideological and cultural environment, the result of a specific social conjuncture. It is an approach to translation that has appropriated and adapted many of the techniques and theories that underlie the writing it translates.
>
> (Von Flotow 1991: 74)

It developed partly as a result of sociocultural facts such as the diglossic situation in Canada and the resultant negative view of mainstream translation in Quebec. Another factor which led to the phenomenon of feminist translation is the concern about language so characteristic of Quebec writing which arose out of the frustration of political and linguistic powerlessness. This concern with language, together with the upsurge in feminist writing on both sides of the Atlantic, inspired Québecois women writers from the late 1970s onwards to begin developing innovative ways of writing which challenged patriarchal society through the manipulation of language (cf. Wallmach 1999). In other words, these feminist translators are so called because they wish to explore the original authors' innovative

writing processes as part of the translation process. The writer Nicole Brossard's feminist works in particular clearly reflect the ideas and motivations of poststructuralism and deconstruction in her awareness and exploitation of intertextuality and in her use of wordplay to explore language as a sign of difference. In the four original prose works under discussion, Brossard's texts are discontinuous, containing no clear plot or setting for her characters, and are characterised by poetic alliteration, neologisms and linguistic wordplay. The only clues to theme are repetitions of words belonging to the same lexical sets, such as words relating to the writing process, to the female body, and to female sexuality. In fact, the cohesion in these texts depends largely on the introduction of a lexical item or items and then their exact repetition in close proximity in the text. Although punning and neologism are characteristic of her writing, they do not occur frequently enough to be the dominant style marker of her language. Rather, her texts are connected by "wordplay" in the broadest sense, by lexical chains woven through the text. For Brossard, meaning resides primarily in form, in the pattern of signifiers created by a text (Wallmach 1999: 162).

  From the evidence of their commentaries in prefaces, it would seem that Brossard's translators, particularly Barbara Godard, are influenced by these textual norms in producing their translations. Barbara Godard is of the view that the problematic nature of feminist texts, with their extensive use of punning and linguistic wordplay, calls for translation "for the signifier"–translation for form, rather than for meaning and in so doing, for the creation of a new and different text (Godard 1990: 112) (cf. Wallmach (2000a) for a discussion of feminist translation "for the signifier"). In the preface to her translation of *Picture Theory* Godard explains:

> In the absence of narrative connections holding the text together, or of leitmotifs, *Picture Theory* is linked by networks of signifiers ... *Picture Theory* foregrounds a theory of the signifier as continuous difference, of a network of sliding signs which entails a theory of the transformativity of the translation effect ... Though it bears the same title, this English version differs greatly from the French version of *Picture Theory*. With [my colleagues'] help ... its work on language, its status as text enters yet another network of signifiers to extend its productivity.
>
> (Godard 1991a: 9-11)

Similarly, in the preface to *These Our Mothers or: The Disintegrating Chapter* (Brossard 1983), Godard indicates that her aim is the opposite of a faithful reproduction of the original. She tells her readers: "May the intensity of your involvement as reader be as great as mine and you extend its creation in new directions to make this the text of bliss it works to be."

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Godard was the first to point out the implications of this new poetics for translation theory. In her view, the concept of translation as transformation broadens the whole concept of translation, allowing the feminist translator to translate for the signifier and to use innovative translation strategies:

> The feminist translator, affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable rereading and rewriting, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. Womanhandling the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator. Taking her place would be an active participant in the creation of meaning who advances a conditional analysis. Hers is a continuing provisionality, aware of process, giving self-reflexive attention to practices. The feminist translator immodestly flaunts her signature in italics, in footnotes – even in a preface.
>
> (Godard in Bassnett & Lefevere 1990: 94)

In contrast to Barbara Godard, Patricia Claxton makes far fewer comments regarding her choice of translation strategies. There is no preface to the translation of *Sold-Out: Étreinte/Illustration* (Brossard [1973]1980) which is entitled *Turn of a Pang* (Brossard 1976). Like *Picture Theory*, *Sold-Out* is an experiment in narrative form where characterisation, theme and plot are minimal. However, Claxton has written a preface to her translation of *French Kiss: Étreinte-Éxploration* (Brossard 1974), translated as *French Kiss or: A Pang's Progress* (Brossard 1986). Claxton (Brossard 1986: 5) specifies in her preface that her aim (agreed to by the author) is to make the translation a little more accessible than the underlying French, which is to say less hermetic. But only to a point, for she believes there is much to be found beneath the apparent surface of Nicole Brossard's book, and so it must remain. With accessibility in mind, Claxton states that she has included "occasional unobtrusive aids" for readers unfamiliar or not very familiar with Montreal and French and Québecois literature and history. However, she also states: "While this English text may be a little more accessible than the underlying French, if it has succeeded in its purpose the character of the book in other respects remains intact" (Brossard 1986: 6, Preface).

In other words, Claxton's initial norm[1] as expressed metatextually is not to

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1. According to Toury (1980: 54), the initial norm is a useful way in which to indicate the translator's basic choice between two polar alternatives, *adequacy* and *acceptability*. Either the translator subjects him-/herself to the source text and its textual norms (producing a source-oriented or *adequate* translation), or to the linguistic and literary norms active in the target language and the target language polysystem (producing an *acceptable* translation, so called because the translator strives to make the translation acceptable to the target

betray the source text but to transfer it, making the translation slightly more accessible than the original. She acknowledges that "inescapable differences in cultural and linguistic outlook and hence resources" may mean that the translation has a weaker impact at certain points than one might wish (Brossard 1986: 6-7, Preface). But she also believes that this unavoidable semantic loss can be compensated for in other places in the text.

Thus, particularly in Barbara Godard's case, instead of viewing translation as faithfulness, as fixing the same meaning in another language, translation is seen as allowing further room for play, extending boundaries, and opening up new avenues for further difference. This has far-reaching implications for the strategies used in translating a text, not least of which is the idea that "unfaithfulness" to the original is seen as something to be praised rather than censored. This in turn impacts on other myths now entrenched in translation, such as the necessity for the translator to remain invisible in the translation process; the idea that translation preserves exact meaning across languages; the myth of objectivity and transparency of translation, and the primacy of the source text. In fact, Canadian feminist translation could be said to follow many of the tenets of resistive translation discourse,[2] since the metaphor of "difference" which is pivotal to resistive translation theories is further entrenched in Canadian feminist translation by a diglossic socio-cultural context in which language, literature, feminism and translation are all inscribed by "difference" (cf. Wallmach 1999: 101-149). It is precisely because of their explicit rejection of traditional views on fidelity and their emphasis on the individualistic and creative nature of translation that feminist translators' work may make a contribution to contemporary translation studies, should their claims be substantiated in practice.

But are these claims really justified? In general, critics tend to examine the notion of feminist translation in terms of the metatextual commentary of feminist translators and academics and not according to the actual translations themselves. Where reference is made to the translations, isolated examples of feminist translators' prowess in deliberately mis-translating and overstating the original are mentioned. The implications of such a stance for translation theory are therefore discussed without attempting to examine and compare feminist translations with their originals

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readership). Initial norms need not be verbalised or even conscious, and they may even contradict explicit intentions. The assumption is that initial norms may be revealed through investigations of *operational norms*, i.e. textual features.

2. See Wallmach (2000b) for an exploration of the operation of conflict and resistance within translation discourse as a whole and for some insight into the metaphorical underpinning of resistive approaches to translation.

on a less piecemeal basis. Without clear insight into the conditions underlying the production of these feminist texts and feminist translations as well as a comparative analysis of the texts themselves, it is impossible to determine whether the feminist translators' metatextual claims are substantiated by the textual evidence of their feminist translations and it is equally impossible to determine whether the feminist translation strategies used are truly innovative and "different" from conventional translation strategies. Accordingly, in the next section I attempt to categorise the feminist translation strategies used in the four translations with a view to discussing the creativity shown by the translators. Before doing this, however, it is necessary to examine the question of creativity in the context of translation in general.

4 The Question of Creativity: Analysing Strategies Used in Feminist Texts and Translations

The activity of translation can be said to be fundamentally creative for a number of reasons. As Gui (in Niska 1998: par. 1.1) explains, translation cannot merely transform an original text into a literal equivalent, but must successfully convey the overall meaning of the original, including that text's surrounding cultural significance; translators have to form source text ideas into the structure of the target language; the process of searching out a target language counterpart to a difficult source language word or phrase is often creative. But translation is also built on a history of convention, since all translations are derivable from a source text. For this reason, Neubert describes translational creativity as "derived creativity": A translation is not created from nothing; it is woven from a semantic pattern taken from another text, but the threads – the target language (TL) linguistic forms, structures, syntactic sequences – are new (1997: 17).

  For Neubert, these new "threads" are the linguistic manifestations of creative translation strategies. Neubert (1997: 19) identifies as creative a number of translational procedures, formally characterised as transpositions and modulations, or reorderings and recastings of source language features under the impact of the envisaged new target text. Transpositions are primarily syntactical and modulations lexical, but they occur mostly in unison. In his view, while many of these creative mechanisms are predetermined by systemic constraints between the source and target languages, finding a particular rendering that fits is rarely the result of a one-to-one correspondence. It must either be chosen from various options or newly created from scratch.

  Drawing on Neubert's notion that certain translation strategies could be

considered to be more creative than others, I have used the categories of *substitution*, *repetition*, *deletion*, *addition* and *permutation* in analysing the nature and creativity of feminist translation strategies. These categories, as described by Delabastita (1993: 33-38) provide for translation "proper", i.e. in its conventional sense, but also for various kinds of adaptations to the target text, and could be considered to be "umbrella" strategies which can be further subdivided into more detailed subcategories. My approach used to determine the nature and creativity of feminist translation strategies is therefore to refine Delabastita's (1993) broad transformation categories with Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) categories. Briefly, Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995) categories of *literal translation* (which I have modified to account for obligatory and optional word order changes)*, transposition* (obligatory and optional)*, modulation* (fixed and free)*, equivalence* and *adaptation* are used as subcategories of *substitution* in Delabastita (1993); *borrowing* and *calque* are used as subcategories of Delabastita's (1993) *repetition*; *compensation* is further subdivided into *compensation by footnoting* and *compensation by splitting* (Hervey & Higgins in Harvey 1995: 74); and the categories of *addition* and *deletion* remain unchanged. Vinay and Darbelnet's (1995: 338-352) second-order mechanisms are used to further specify the types of translation strategies found where necessary (cf. Wallmach 1999 for more detail). A brief discussion of these categories follows, with examples drawn from Brossard's *L'Amèr ou le chapitre effrité* (1977) and Godard's translation thereof. My aim is to determine whether feminist translation strategies can be described in terms of existing categories of translation strategies.

  According to Delabastita (1993: 33-34), *substitution*, the most common translation strategy, is the only strategy which occurs in strict recoding processes; i.e. translation in its strictest sense falls into this category, whereas the other four types of relations appear to be characteristic of recoding in the wider sense of the word, when one is speaking of transformation and adaptation. Substitution implies that the relevant source text is replaced by the relevant target text item, as in the example below:

Substitution

	Source Text	Target Text
1.1	Dimanche: dans les bras de ma mère, je suis dans les bras d'une femme et je regarde mon père (Brossard 1977: 41).	Sunday: in my mother's arms, I am in a woman's arms and I am looking at my father (Brossard 1983: 33).

The second category, *repetition*, subdivided into *borrowing* and *calque* (Vinay & Darbelnet 1995: 32), implies that the source text item is not

substituted but repeated or transferred directly from the source text into the translation. Some or all of the formal features of the item are reproduced (Delabastita 1993: 34). In the following example, Godard repeats Brossard's use of the English word:

Repetition

	Source Text	Target Text
2.1	Fiction de nous les mères, comme de grands autruches sortant nos petits biscuits secs et nos kleenex pour que les enfants cessent de s'enfuir dans le sable nous fuyant (Brossard 1977 32).	Fiction about us mothers, like great ostriches taking out little cookies and kleenex so that the children will stop burrowing in the sand to get away from us (Brossard 1983: 26).

Using *deletion* as a translation strategy means that the source text item is not rendered in the target text at all. This is a very frequent phenomenon in actual translation practice and often cannot be avoided (e.g. metaphor into non-metaphor) (Delabastita 1993: 35).

Deletion

	Source Text	Target Text
3.1	Il vit dans un *laboratoir* idéologique, saisissant les différences formelles et conséquemment fonctionnelles (Brossard 1977: 43).	He lives in an ideological *laboratory*, apprehending formal and consequently functional differences (Brossard 1983: 35).
3.2	Nous dansons très collées. Trèsserrées (Brossard 1977: 28).	We dance very close together. Pressedhard (Brossard 1983: 22).

In this category Brossard uses the gendered nature of the French language to emphasise the absence or the presence of female identity. In example 3.1 Brossard omits the final "e" at the end of *laboratoire* (laboratory) to indicate women's absence from this process. In example 3.2 the extra silent "e" indicates that Brossard is speaking about women. In neither case was the translator able to indicate this in her translation.

  The opposite process to deletion is *addition,* where the target text turns out to contain linguistic, cultural or textual component features which have no apparent antecedent in the source text (Delabastita 1993: 36). Additions may also be due to conscious intentional interventions of the translator, and therefore could be considered to be the most important strategy in creating "difference". This is the category within which Godard takes the opportunity to introduce wordplay familiar to anglophone feminists. In each

example below, the underlined word is unmarked in French, but marked in English. *Histoire* (history) is translated as "*his*tory" to foreground the notion that it is men's history which is under discussion. *Solidarité* (solidarity) is translated as "sisterhood", to emphasise women's solidarity. In example 4.3, *mère* (mother) is translated as "m ther" to indicate the gaps, blanks in the narrator's concept of her mother.

Addition

	Source Text	Target Text
4.1	Que peut-il en être d'une femme qui reconnaît le processus et qui, de fait, d'âge et d'<u>hist</u>oire, de corps en rencontre l'inexorable? (Brossard 1977: 19).	What happens to a woman who recognizes this process and encounters its inexorability, image and in <u>*his*tory</u>, in body (Brossard 1983: 13).
4.2	La <u>solidarité</u> des femmes est la dernière épreuve de solidarité humaine (Brossard 1977: 20).	The <u>sisterhood</u> of women is the ultimate test of human solidarity (Brossard 1983: 14).
4.3	C'est ma <u>mère</u>, elle le sait et je suis censée le savoir tout autant .... Parole sèche, pleine de lapsus, de ma <u>mère</u> que je travaille ainsi qu'on s'arme (Brossard 1977: 25).	She's my <u>m ther</u>, she knows it and I am supposed to know it just as well ... Sharp words, full of gaps, about my <u>m ther</u> that I work on as if I were arming myself (Brossard 1983: 19).

According to Delabastita (1993: 36-37), the final category, *permutation* (or *compensation*), does not describe the actual transfer of individual source text signs but rather the relationship between their respective textual positions within the source text and the target text. Often, the source text item is rendered in the target text (by means of some homologue or analogue, whether or not involving some addition or reduction), but its position within the target text does not reflect the relative position of its source text counterpart. For instance, the translator may decide to introduce a distinction between two levels of discourse, i.e. between the textual and the metatextual level, relegating her rendering of a source text item or feature to the latter. The metatextual status of the second level of discourse is signalled by conventional means, e.g. footnotes, parenthesis, italics, prefaces, as in the following example, where Godard uses a footnote to indicate the source of an intertextual reference which might not be familiar to English readers.

Compensation by Footnoting

Source Text	Target Text
5.1 "Je les polis sans cesse comme de beaux os" (Brossard 1977: 26).	"I polish them unceasingly like fine bones." (Translator's note: Anne Hébert. "The Thin Girl", trans. by Alan Brown) (Brossard 1983: 20)

However, it would seem that compensation is a far broader category than is indicated by Delabastita (1993: 37). Hervey and Higgins (in Harvey 1995: 74) go on to provide several subcategories for the category of compensation, of which I use *compensation by splitting*, where meanings expressed in the source text have to be expanded into a longer stretch of text in the translation. In the examples below, Godard compensates for the polysemy of the source text items by explicating all the possible meanings in the target meanings either next to each other or by means of graphological deviation.

Compensation by Splitting

| Source Text	Target Text

6.1 L'amèr ou le chapitre effrité (Brossard 1977)	Theseourmothers
	The Sea Our Mother
	    Sea(S)mothers
	    TheSe
	                our
	                mothers
	Or: The Disintegrating Chapter
	(Brossard 1983)

6.2 <u>longtemps longer</u> nos corps encore à deux, à la faveur de la nuit (Brossard 1977: 34).	a <u>long time lo(u)nging</u> our bodies two-gether to pass under cover of night (Brossard 1983: 28).

Thus, it is possible to fully describe feminist translation strategies using categories from Delabastita (1993) and Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), and thus it would seem that the types of strategies used in Godard's and Claxton's translations are not unique to feminist translation. Nevertheless, a number of strategies are used which, although they do occur in translations other than feminist translations, do not usually occur with any frequency in conventional translation. It is therefore important to establish the frequency with which feminist translators employ strategies such as repetition, compensation, addition and deletion in their translations. Accordingly, I

analysed the translation strategies used in representative extracts of equal lengths of the four texts and their translations.


5   Findings

Godard's two translations show a decided similarity as regards translation strategies, as do Claxton's two translations, despite the fact that the translations are based on different source texts and that ten years have elapsed between Claxton's translations and eight years between Godard's translations. The translators' overall translation policies have therefore remained constant. The overall profiles of the translation strategies used by Godard in her translations are very similar, the dominant strategy being literal translation. Addition, which one would assume to be an important strategy in creating "difference", is ranked seventh in *These Our Mothers* (Brossard 1983) and eighth in *Picture Theory* (Brossard 1991). Likewise, compensation by splitting is ranked eighth and ninth respectively. The overall profiles of the translation strategies used by Claxton in her translations are also very similar, and at the same time very different from the profiles in Godard's translations, since literal translation is the least popular strategy. Optional transposition also occurs more often in *French Kiss* (Brossard 1986) than in *Turn of a Pang* (Brossard 1976). Addition is ranked fourth in *Turn of a Pang* (Brossard 1976) and sixth in *French Kiss* (Brossard 1986). Compensation by splitting is ranked eleventh and ninth respectively.

   However, having determined that their individual translation policies have remained more or less constant, it is important to compare Godard's strategies to those of Claxton. Accordingly, in Figures 1 and 2, Godard's strategies in both of her translations are compared to those used in Claxton's translations. Figure 1 shows how translation strategies based on linguistic or textual constraints compare (obligatory transposition, deletion, fixed modulation, borrowing, literal translation with obligatory word order changes and calque), whereas Figure 2 shows, in decreasing order of frequency, the strategies which represent an optional choice on the part of the translators (literal translation, free modulation, addition, compensation by splitting, literal translation with optional word order changes, optional transposition, equivalence and adaptation).
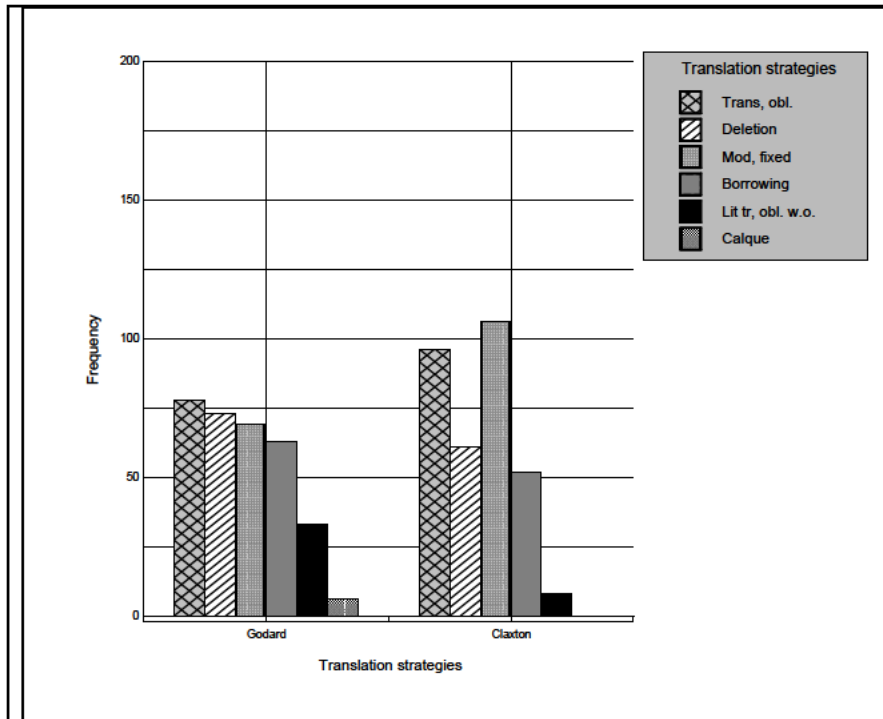
Figure 1: A comparison of the translation strategies based on linguistic or textual constraints used by Barbara Godard with those used by Patricia Claxton

Figure 1 shows that the use of linguistic or textually based translation strategies is similar for all four translations, despite the fact that these translations are based on different texts. There are fewer instances of fixed modulation and more instances of literal translation with obligatory word order changes in Godard's translations in comparison to Claxton's translations, however, which would seem to indicate that where Godard makes obligatory word order changes, Claxton uses another strategy altogether.
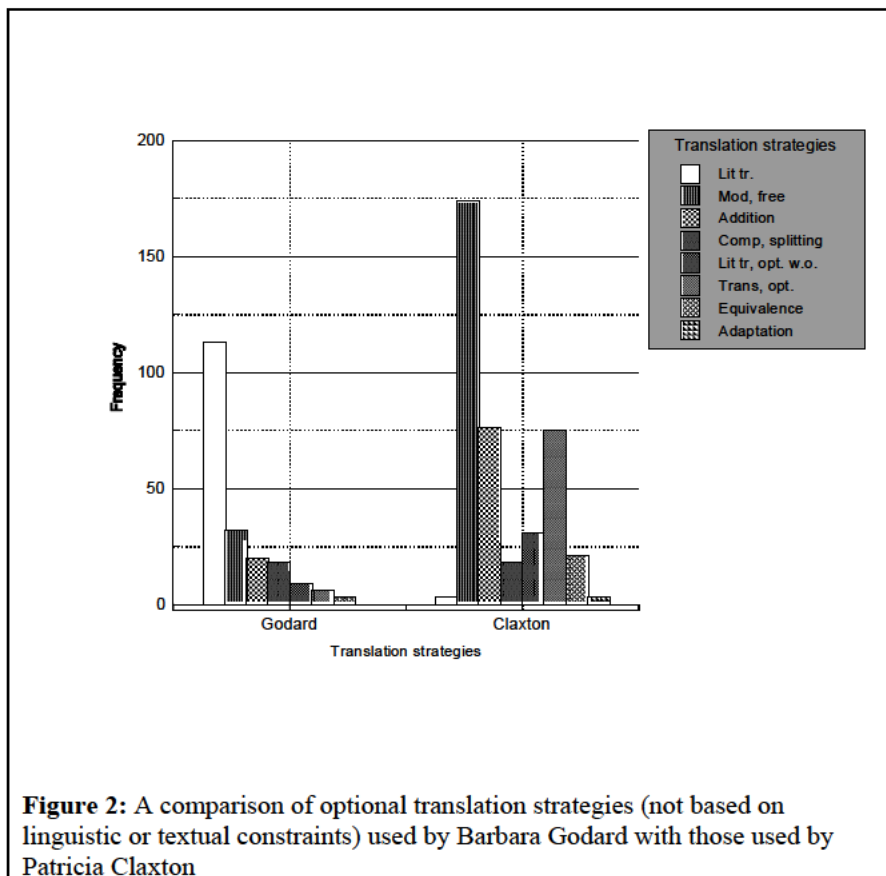
Figure 2: A comparison of optional translation strategies (not based on linguistic or textual constraints) used by Barbara Godard with those used by Patricia Claxton

Figure 2 shows that Godard and Claxton differ radically in their choice of optional translation strategies. Whereas literal translation is the most popular strategy in both of Godard's translations, not even one sentence is translated literally in the extract from *Turn of a Pang*, and *French Kiss* (Brossard 1986) contains only three sentences which are translated entirely literally. Free modulation is the dominant strategy in Claxton's translations, in contrast to Godard's translations. The much higher number of instances of both free and fixed modulation in Claxton's translations bears testimony to her rejection of literal translation strategies and Godard's espousal of them. Claxton's translations also contain more than three times the number of additions, more than twice the number of literal translations with optional word order changes, 12 times the number of optional transpositions, 7 times the number of equivalences and 3 times the number of adaptations than do Godard's translations. And as regards compensation by splitting, Godard's overall total of 18 instances exactly matches that of Claxton.

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To relate these results to the translators' metatextual commentary: Claxton's translations bear out her (few) metatextual comments. Her rather conventional aim of making her translations a little more accessible to the target audience, while at the same time making use of an opportunity for compensation where it arises, is largely successful. In contrast, it was found that Barbara Godard's comments in prefaces and metatexts are not substantiated in practice, or at least, not in the way expected. Far from using innovative translation strategies to create a "different" text in translation, to explode conventional notions of faithfulness to the source text, as she claims, both of Godard's translations are characterised by the overwhelming use of literal translation strategies. Of course, if one follows deconstructionists in considering the notion of a network of signifiers from the point of view that the act of translation itself extends this network across language, that the corresponding signifier in another language is a different signifier, then a very different set of signifiers *is* being created through the medium of translation. But this is a function of the inherent differences between languages, and not as a result of uniquely feminist translation strategies. This is true for all types of translations, not only for feminist translation.

To sum up, Godard's and Claxton's translations do not present a unified front which could be termed feminist translation. It is the individual translators' initial norms coupled with the linguistic constraints of Brossard's texts which explain translational choices, rather than the systemic norms and conventions of feminist translation. The fact that Godard, in particular, claims to have exploded traditional translation theory shows the narrowness of her own view of translation. The prescriptive theories of translation in vogue between the 1960s and 1980s (those of Catford (1965), House (1977) and Nida & Taber (1969) for example) have certainly been challenged, but both prelinguistic theories of translation before Catford et al. and poststructuralist theories of translation after Catford take a broader view on translation (Wallmach 1999: 65-100). Feminist translators' betrayal is of exactness, not of translation. The fact that Godard's metatextual statements contradict this, emphasising the influence of systemic factors, the "difference" of feminist translation as opposed to conventional methods of translation, can be explained by examining the discourse underlying her statements. As Hatim and Mason put it:

> While the social implications of semiotic structures such as genre or text are no doubt obvious, they are seen in more meaningful socio-textual terms only when considered within discursive practice. Discourse or the attitudinally determined mode of expression (e.g. feminist discourse, racial discourse) is thus particularly privileged as a carrier of ideological meanings.
>
> (Hatim & Mason 1997: 174)

When an ideology is challenged, discourse becomes implicated in a number of ways: which discourse a group is able to use and which discourse a group chooses to use, where, when and how, are all matters of immense ideological significance. Godard's statements must be seen in the context of feminism and resistive translation theories, both of which are a reaction against received ideas. It would serve no political purpose for her to claim that to achieve the twin goals of making the feminine visible in language and subverting patriarchy, both goals which aim at undermining the dominant discourse, feminist translators should use the most conservative of existing translation strategies. Thus, the same text can give rise to different discourses depending on the reader's point of view. A reader may insist on the primacy of his or her own ideological position, and so derive from the text the discourse which fits that preconceived ideological commitment. In this type of reading, what really matters is not whether feminist translation theory is substantiated by its practice, but whether there is enough supporting metadiscourse which claims the "difference" of feminist translation theory as opposed to conventional translation theories. Thus it is important not to lose sight of the broader context of discourse, and the goals that can be served, notwithstanding their grounding in theory rather than practice. Robyn Gillam makes the point that

> all translations of Brossard are fraught with problems, but collectively they produce an interesting result: the texts are artifacts of the process of writing and of a feminist politics/poetic. They exist as models of this process and as such are replicated as a kind of feminist practice, rather than being actually read. The "translation" of Nicole Brossard as an icon for English Canadians both transcends and reflects the limitations of their world view.
>
> (Gillam 1995: 10-12)

It would seem, therefore, that what counts is not so much the content of discourse but its positioning in terms of other discourses. Brossard in English fulfils the role of the "exotic, literary other whose hermetic products are to be treasured if not exactly understood. Like other practitioners of *l'écriture au féminin,* it seems easier to revere her as an icon of Frenchness" (Gillam 1995: 12). Thus it can be said that feminist translation provides an admirable demonstration of the workings of ideology in texts. It illustrates how a principle, or a belief, linked to power relationships (in this case, the power of the word written by woman) is transmuted, through language, as an effect of discourse, and becomes naturalised. What is a belief or an attitude which could be challenged or contradicted is constructed by language and through language as a reality, as an incontrovertible fact of the feminist world. Godard has taken on the dominant discourses of translation studies and patriarchal reality, which present themselves as incontestable,

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and produced her own discourse, which in turn presents itself in the text as incontestable. This is not to say that the assertions made in metatextual commentary on Canadian feminist translation are not of considerable interest. But their very persuasive effect is indicative of the limits of feminist translation: it is itself a critical discourse and should itself be seen as discourse, not as fact. Extending the analysis of feminist translation discourse in Canada to include the work of other feminist writers and translators would no doubt provide further insights into translation as discourse, its practices of domination and subversion and the way in which metatextual discourse conditions our reading.

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