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Eleonora Federici (ed.)

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# Translating Gender

In collaboration with Manuela Coppola,  
Michael Cronin and Renata Oggero



PETER LANG

Bern · Berlin · Bruxelles · Frankfurt am Main · New York · Oxford · Wien



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*To Barbara Godard,  
whose innovative and pioneering work in gender and translation  
has inspired many young scholars*

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ELEONORA FEDERICI AND VITA FORTUNATI

## Introduction

This volume is composed of a selection of papers given at an international conference held at the University of Calabria in September 2009, a project which was part of the European Thematic Network Acume 2 "Interfacing Sciences, Literature and Humanities: an Interdisciplinary Approach" coordinated by Professor Vita Fortunati (University of Bologna).<sup>1</sup> The starting point was to discuss translation theory and practice through an interdisciplinary approach involving various areas of research: sociolinguistics, pragmatics, literary studies, media studies, semiotics, cultural studies, philosophy and history.

Gender Studies and Translation Studies certainly are two interdisciplinary fields in themselves. Discourses on/of translation and discourses on/of/about women have been carried on in different disciplines and have created challenging cross-breeding and fruitful exchanges. Gender Studies and TS have been characterised by a strong critique of binary thought and a will to overcome dichotomies, among which there is that of difference/equivalence. They have dialogued and offered new perspectives on ideology, poetics and translation. For both fields two "movements" can be detected: the first is a transversal spatial movement, a challenging synchronic "travel" across disciplines, the second a movement in time, a diachronic "journey" across the centuries.

Many issues can be raised when discussing gender and/in translation. The volume proposes different voices on the theory and practice of translation as an act of communication across linguistic and cultural barriers where the translator's role is central. Gender awareness in translation practice, in effect, has provoked many questions about linguistic and social stereotypes, the ideology and politics of language and the importance of context in which the translator lives and works.

<sup>1</sup> For details on the thematic network see: <[http://acume2.web.cs.unibo.it/wiki/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](http://acume2.web.cs.unibo.it/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page)> [accessed 20 Oct 2010].

ELEONORA FEDERICI

## The Visibility of the Woman Translator

To be or not to be visible?

In *The Translator's Invisibility* Lawrence Venuti criticizes the idea of the translator as invisible and of a good translation as fluent, transparent and easy to read.<sup>1</sup> Criticizing the Anglo-American attitude towards the translating practice, Venuti positions himself against the inescapable translator's erasure from the text and urges for a translation that can be read as a text in its own right. Unlike the omnipresent author, the translator has always been invisible. This attribute, *invisible*, has become a contentious term since the publication of his book, but feminist-oriented criticism had begun previously to discuss the translator's traces in the text and the need for "intervention" as an inevitable act. Similarly to feminist scholars like Sherry Simon or Luise von Flotow who uncover a women's history of translation,<sup>2</sup> Venuti offers a series of genealogies of the history of translation from the seventeenth century onward. He retraces long-obscure translators documenting the long process of *text domestication* while calling for *foreignization* through an active translation practice where the translating subject can re-read and re-write the translated one. Because the act of translating confronts linguistic and cultural diversities, translation is 'a locus of difference'.<sup>3</sup> In his preface to the Italian translation of Venuti's work, Gianni Puglisi talks about "una alterità derivata", a "derived alterity"

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1 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation*, London, Routledge, 1995.

2 Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation. Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, London, Routledge, 1996; Luise von Flotow, *Translation and Gender. Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'*, Manchester, St. Jerome Publications, 1997.

3 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 42.

coming from a practice of translation where the “other” captures the authentic, the original. Translators have always been invisible presences in the TT, “shadows” echoing the author’s words but, as echoes, they work as refraction and sound different; in this way they are visible. The visibility of the other’s voice is evident especially when we have a parallel text and our eyes jump from one language into another.

Discussing the notion of “otherness” in translation, Susan Bassnett refers to the confrontation with unfamiliar concepts and forms and affirms that ‘translators negotiate the relationship between the known and the alien, the self and the other’.<sup>4</sup> She underlines how recent translation theories have taken into account the translator’s identity and process of self-discovery debating about an “alterity” located in an in-between zone: ‘Otherness is reconceptualised as something that can be negotiated in a contact zone, an in-between space’.<sup>5</sup> Translators have become interpreters, intercultural mediators functioning as bridges between linguistic and cultural worlds. Skilled translators handle the discrepancies between languages and cultures and exercise a central role in connecting two literary worlds through a challenging interchange between them. From this perspective, translation is a relational act that can be envisaged as a web of connections between texts, cultures, authors and readers.<sup>6</sup>

This reconceptualisation of otherness has brought feminist Canadian scholars in Translation Studies to consider the translating process as a battleground for linguistic, cultural and gendered identities useful for a deconstruction of the myths of objectivity and transparency. The phenomenon of Canadian feminist translation has been due to a specific ideological and cultural environment, a social conjuncture developed partly as a result of the diglossic situation in Canada united with

4 Susan Bassnett, “Translation, Gender and Otherness”, *Perspectives. Studies in Translatology*, 13:2 (2005), p. 90.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

6 Many scholars have dealt with this issue, for example, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere eds, *Translation, History, Culture*, London, Pinter, 1990; Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *The Translator as Communicator*, London, Routledge, 1997; Susan Bassnett, and Harish Trivedi eds, *Post-Colonial Translation. Theory and Practice*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999; Eleonora Federici, *The Translator as Intercultural Mediator*, Trento, Uniservice, 2006.

the concern about language in Québec writing and the feeling of political powerlessness in the 1970s and 1980s. As Luise von Flotow stresses, the group of English-French women writing and translating each other in Canada in the 1980s made clearly visible the issue of bilingualism and the feminist agenda.<sup>7</sup> Political and linguistic concerns also inspired Canadian writers from the late 1970s onwards – a major example is Nicole Brossard – to initiate innovative ways of writing through language seen as a sign of difference.<sup>8</sup>

One of the main figures of Canadian feminist translation studies, Barbara Godard, positioned the engagement with otherness as a central issue for translation, outlining how: ‘though traditionally a negative *topos* translation becomes a positive one’<sup>9</sup> in feminist practice. Despite its status as a minor activity, translation has been acknowledged as a strong form of expression for women in the last centuries permitting them to enter the world of letters and contribute to the intellectual life of the period. The translation of key texts has revealed important aspects of the movement of ideas and has been studied in relation to the social, political and intellectual framework. Women translators have been recovered as cultural agents of their time by feminist scholars, but not only.<sup>10</sup> Starting from the historical trope of the *femininity of translation* (*les belles et infidèles*) Simon has re-proposed in her volume the traditional masculine/feminine imagery of the

7 Luise von Flotow, “Feminism in Translation: the Canadian Factor”, *Quaderns Revista de Traducció*, 13 (2006), pp. 11–20.

8 Nicole Brossard is a leading exponent of the so-called formalist poetry in Québec and a major theoretician and promoter of literary and cultural feminism. She founded the feminist paper *Les Têtes de pioche* (1976–79) and the magazine *La Nouvelle Barre du jour* (1977). Some of her works have been taken as major examples of possible feminist translations: *La lettre aérienne*, Montréal, Remue-ménage, 1985 (translated by Marlene Wildeman, *The Aerial Letter*, Toronto, The Women’s Press, 1988); *Le désert mauve* Montréal, Hexagone 1987 (translated by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, *Mauve Desert*, Toronto, Coach House Press, 1990); *L’amèr: ou, le chapitre effrite: fiction théorique*, Montréal, Quinze, 1977 [rev. edition, Montreal: Hexagone, 1988] (translated by Barbara Godard, *These Our Mothers; or, The Disintegrating Chapter*, Toronto, Coach House Press, 1983).

9 Barbara Godard “Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation”, in Bassnett and Lefevere eds, *Translation, History and Culture*, p. 92.

10 Jean Deslisle ed., *Portraits de traductrices*, Ottawa, Artois Presses Université, 2002.

translator/translation subverting it and recuperating the lost voices of *translatresses*.<sup>11</sup>

Today women translators and theorists are promoting a practice of feminist translation that can be seen as a set of principles guiding the translation process. Focusing on the issues of identity and gender as retraceable social constructions in language, they outline the specificity of female "authoriality". It is a clear ideological position which emphasizes the importance of the translator's visibility and agency. In the so-called *transferential process* suggested by Godard, the reading subject becomes the writing subject, the distinction between them is blurred. Like the author, the translator uses disjunctive strategies, breaking through with a unified language.<sup>12</sup> It is a practice derived from a poetics of identity described as *transformance* where feminist writing and translation merge to foreground female subjectivity in the production of meaning. Translation is not a carrying across but a re-working of meaning, the continuation of the creation of meaning:

The feminist translator affirming her critical difference, her delight in interminable re-reading and re-writing, flaunts the signs of her manipulation of the text. *Womanhandling* the text in translation would involve the replacement of the modest, self-effacing translator. [...] 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 – in a preface.<sup>13</sup>

The traces of the translator flaunt like flags in a textual territory whose cartography is continuously explored and rewritten.

Another Canadian scholar, Luise von Flotow, has underlined the importance of paratextual elements as means of deconstructing and re-appropriating the text.<sup>14</sup> The feminist translator can use devices such as supplementing (her own notion of compensation), prefacing, footnoting (which draw attention to the translation process and the translator's choices) and *hijacking* (the appropriation of a text not overtly

11 Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation*, ch.2.

12 Barbara Godard, "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation" in Bassnett and Lefevere eds, *Translation, History and Culture*, pp. 87–96.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

14 Luise von Flotow, "Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories", *TTR traduction, terminologie, redaction*, 4:2 (1991), pp. 69–84.

feminist where the feminine is made visible through language). With this practice the reader takes part in a feminist activity of translation which reveals the gendered discourses implicit in texts. Feminist translators use language as cultural intervention, they alter expressions and metaphors of gender bias and domination at the level of concepts, of syntax and of the lexicon. The strong attention to the translation process emphasises the practice as a form, a creative writing and re-writing, where the visible translator is faithful to her reading of the ST, her understanding of the author and her capability as an interpreter of words.

Translating becomes a creative act and the process of translation 'a fluid production of meaning similar to other kinds of writing'.<sup>15</sup> Translation is a hard, erudite, passionate and difficult form of work and the translator is an artist, a writer.<sup>16</sup> Translation as rewriting and locus of creativity has been advocated also by another Canadian translator, Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood who, in *Re-Belle et Infidèle. La traduction comme pratique de réécriture au féminin/The Body Bilingual. Translation as Rewriting in the Feminine* (1991)<sup>17</sup> has considered re-writing as a passage from ST to TT but also from masculine to feminine language. Translation as practice of rewriting in the feminine in the French part of the title recalls to mind the *écriture féminine* and the works of French theorists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous while the *body bilingual* in the English part underlines how women's bodies are always and still considered as the site of difference. French Feminism proposed a feminine writing where the body worked as a symbolic construct and a sign of passage between the maternal semiotic and the patriarchal symbolic. The female body was seen as "translated" into the page.<sup>18</sup> If the *écriture féminine* is a

15 Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation*, p. 12.

16 Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush eds, *The Translator as Writer*, London, Continuum, 2006.

17 Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-belle et infidèle. La traduction comme pratique de réécriture au féminin/The Body Bilingual. Translation as Rewriting in the Feminine*, Toronto, Women's Press, 1991.

18 Many are the works by the three scholars which have influenced feminist thinking all over the world. To quote but a few: Hélène Cixous, "Le rire de la Méduse", *L'Arc*, 61 (1975), pp. 39–54; Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly*

poetics born from the fluidity of the body, the “language of the mother/the mother tongue”, so is de Lotbinière’s *re-écriture*. The French and English sections of the text are not the same, they are not translations of each other, they interconnect but they are different. De Lotbinière’s text is subjective and emotional, written from the perspective of a bilingual author and translator who puts on the page her own identity and self-perception inscribed in her work and revealed in the passages from one language into another. Her autobiographical style reinstates the authority of the translator’s personal register, giving content and positionality to the translator’s “I”. We face here a renewed notion of authority, a notion presented by all these scholars who borrow from André Lefevere the notion of *rewriting* adding to it the notion of *feminist location*.<sup>19</sup> Rewriting in the feminine means to affirm the translator’s critical difference while re-reading and re-writing the ST. In the awareness that translation is a discursive act, the translator subverts the linguistic codes of the text and transmits a different cultural value. What is remarkable about this explanation is that the signature of the translator is given authority equivalent to that of authorship. The faithfulness to the text passes through her own reading, her own visibility; it unveils a perception of “difference”.

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*Born Woman*, translated by Betty King, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986; Susan Sellers ed., *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, London, Routledge, 1994; Luce Irigaray, “When Our Lips Speak Together”, *Signs*, 6 (1980), pp. 69–79; Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985; Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, translated by Gillian Gill, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985; Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1980; Toril Moi ed., *The Kristeva Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986.

19 André Lefevere ed., *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992. Many figurations connected to the *positionality theories* stand behind the work of feminist translators: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism”, *Critical Inquiry*, 12: 1 (1985), pp. 243–61; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco, Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987; Elizabeth Spelman, *Inessential Woman. Problem of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, London, The Women’s Press, 1988; Trinh T. Min-ha *Woman, Native, Other. Writing Post-coloniality and Feminism*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1989; Teresa de Lauretis, “Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness”, *Feminist Studies* 16: 1 (1990), pp. 115–50.

Because the translating subject’s position is a gendered one, the ‘need to resex language’<sup>20</sup> is central and feminist translation theory is strongly grounded in the feminist critique of language. Since Lori Chamberlain’s famous essay “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation” (1988),<sup>21</sup> where the author clearly referred to Jacques Derrida’s philosophy of difference, many theorists have discussed the issue of patriarchal language to be translated and have raised questions about the perceptions of translation and how these reflect society’s conception of gender relations.<sup>22</sup> This is the reason why, reclaiming their right to literary existence, feminist translators intervene. This interventionism is by no means gratuitous, but solicited and oriented by the text itself. The translator is not ‘free’ to do whatever she wants, her work is shaped and focused by agency and visibility. This recognition provides an essential critical perspective on translations as products of the ideological tensions of given times and allows us to make cultural sense of the “difference” between the original and its translation.

From this perspective, feminist translators reframe the key issue of *faithfulness* in translation: ‘for feminist translation fidelity is to be directed towards neither the author nor the reader but towards the writing project – a project in which both writer and translator participate’.<sup>23</sup> It is a notion of fidelity subject to variation, or echoing Roman Jakobson’s definition, an *equivalence in difference*. Through the deconstruction of the gendered images of dominance, betrayal and fidelity, these scholars outline how faithfulness is to be directed toward the writing project in which both author and translator participate, as José Santaemilia has well summarised: ‘a translator *creates* but *copies* (or *rewrites*), reproduces *faithfully* but has scope for *intervention*, aims at *equivalence* but

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20 Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, *Re-belle et infidèle*, p. 117.

21 Lori Chamberlain, “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation”, *Signs*, 13: 3 (1988), pp. 454–72.

22 See for example, Deborah Cameron ed., *The Feminist Critique of Language. A Reader*, London, Routledge, 1998; Jane Sunderland, *Gendered Discourses*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2004; Lia Litosseliti, *Gender & Language. Theory and Practice*, London, Hodder Arnold, 2006.

23 Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation*, p. 2.



ends up producing *difference*.<sup>24</sup> It is the text's *manipulation* by the feminist translator that lets language speak for women.

The "correction" of the text is carried on in the name of "feminist truths" which aim at the deconstruction of archetypal feminine images and gendered discourses. However, an overt interventionism in the act of translation is controversial because, to what extent does the translator's role become overtly political and which are the borders not to overcome to maintain the *faithfulness/equivalence in difference*? To whom and to what is the translation to declare fidelity? Moreover, should fidelity be considered as a movement in synchrony with writing as if writer and translator were one? Is the visible/invisible dichotomy useful for gender conscious translators? And finally, if fidelity comes from an interchange between author and translator, how can we translate texts which are not particularly or overtly feminist as the ones we referred to?

### Kate Clanchy's poems into Italian: a case study

Kate Clanchy is a contemporary Scottish poet; she is the author of two prize-winning collections of poetry, *Slattern* (1995) and *Samarkand* (1999) and of a wonderful collection of poems on motherhood, *Newborn* (2004) which is the case study of this research.<sup>25</sup> Her last book is *What Is She Doing Here? A Refugee's Story* (2008), a memoir of the five years the poet spent living closely with Antigona, a Kosovan refugee who became her friend.<sup>26</sup>

The subject of *Newborn* is a challenging one dealing with feminist translation, the poet centres on motherhood and portrays the transformations of the female body without idealizing the subject. On the con-

24 José Santaemilia ed., *Gender, Sex and Translation. The Manipulation of Identities*, Manchester, St. Jerome Publications, 2005, p. 1.

25 Kate Clanchy, *Slattern*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1995; *Samarkand*, London, Picador, 1999; *Newborn*, London, Picador, 2004.

26 Kate Clanchy, *What Is She Doing Here? A Refugee's Story*, London, Picador, 2008.

trary, she presents these themes from a very realistic perspective. It is sufficient to have a look at the celebratory anthology on motherhood with poems by Sylvia Plath, Seamus Heaney, Hugo Williams and William Blake and others, entitled *All the Poems You Need to Say Hello* (2004) edited by Clanchy in the same year to see the difference both in stylistic and thematic choices.<sup>27</sup> Clanchy seems to take the act of writing about motherhood a step further.<sup>28</sup> She continues the exploration of its hidden – or at least not discussed – aspects. Deconstructing the taboos about the maternal bodies, the poet puts on the page the complexities of birth, its pain and difficulties. In so doing, she intends 'to rewrite and to complicate the "blacklash script" on motherhood'.<sup>29</sup> Centuries of comparisons between woman and nature and discourses on motherhood are dismantled through Clanchy's depiction of the subject. Birth is a body-centred event and the taut handling of the language in Clanchy's poems visualizes a motherhood felt and lived in the flesh; it is a woman's voice talking about the physicality of her experience, the earthquake that pregnancy causes in her life, physically and mentally. Clanchy's poetry is grounded in the domestic, the familiar, and she chooses accurate words to describe the pleasures and pains of home and family life. Love is at the centre of her collections of poems: the relationships between family, common life, the magic of a new life and its progress. These are themes strictly connected to a woman's life, a subject that can clearly interest feminist scholars. Her poems sound as a proclamation of a feminine poetic identity, or even an inquiry into it; it is her identity as a woman that is at the centre of the work. Her poetry is an act of self-representation that sounds "choral", as if any woman could recognize similar experiences. As the poet states, 'my gender is central to the way I write and important to the way I read'.<sup>30</sup> The chosen subject and the language used to talk about it creates a strong empathy with the woman reader and her work seems to be very interesting material to translate from a feminist perspective.

27 Kate Clanchy, *All the Poems You Need to Say Hello*, London, Picador, 2004.

28 For this issue see Karin Voth Harman "Delivering the Mother: Three Anthologies of Birth Poetry" in Vicky Bertram ed., *Kicking Daffodils. Twentieth Century Women Poets*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1997, pp. 178–98.

29 Karin Voth Harman, "Delivering the Mother", p. 179.

30 Kate Clanchy, "Gendering Poetry", *PN Review*, 32: 1 (2005), p. 43.

If, as Monica Pavani affirms in her review of Clanchy's work, the poet is an heir of the English metaphysical poets who founded traces of celestial ecstasy in everyday life,<sup>31</sup> in Clanchy there is something else, too many are the traces of ordinary and maternal life so that the representation of motherhood seems almost redundant; her collection is like a hyper-isotopy of the motherhood theme. The reference is to the semiotician Algirdas Julien Greimas who in *Sémantique structurale* (1966) talks about a semantic and a thematic isotopy.<sup>32</sup> Greimas borrowed the term from Chemistry where it means the relationship among variants of the same atom/molecule. In his own words, isotopy is an 'operational concept at first designated iterativity along a syntagmatic chain of classemes which assure the homogeneity of the utterance-discourse'.<sup>33</sup> In Clanchy's collection we can retrace isotopy both in the formal structure, the stylistic trait of the poet and the subject of her poems; we can even talk of multiple, parallel isotopies.

For example, in Clanchy's poetry love is a recurrent theme which she envisions through a semantic isotopy and explains it through a grammatical isotopy. The poet utilises figurative elements that include anything that can be directly registered by one of the five senses – sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch – in order to portray her own perception of the outer world. The chain of lexemes and classemes creates a discursive poetic semantics where the semantic field of motherhood is almost excessive, exaggerated, redundant. It is depicted as a revolution, a loss, an explosion of the senses, a mechanism of bodily changes, a process of new gestures and thoughts. *Newborn* charts the months of pregnancy, the drive to the hospital, the birth and first encounter with the baby, the son's learning to walk and to speak. The rewriting of the motherhood theme is thus produced with an excess of elements and described in strong, straightforward language. The unusual imagery and uncommon language is a peculiar trait of the poet, in fact her collection *Slattern* has already been praised for her peculiar use of the language in

31 Monica Pavani, review of *Neonato*, translated by Giorgia Sensi, Medusa, Milano in *Leggere Donna*, 135 (2008), pp. 14–15.

32 Algirdas Julien Greimas, *Sémantique structurale: recherche de méthode*, Paris, Larousse, 1966.

33 A.J. Greimas and Joseph Courtés, *Semiotics and Language. An Analytical Dictionary*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1983, p. 163.

the depiction of love relationships. The poems were read as intensely sensual and written in an outspoken style.<sup>34</sup>

Is this a new example of feminine signature or is it merely a celebration of femininity? Is it a new *écriture féminine* where feminine sexuality and the world are discovered through the colour of a woman's life, images, sounds, smell? Can this be considered as a "fluid writing"? In a way it is, as poetry often allows texts to be, but Clanchy goes ahead with feminist writing and experimental language, experimenting the crafting of words in a very different way. The themes around the same category – motherhood – proliferate, while her stylistic choice is not a common one. In this way, the reader's expectancy with regard to the subject is not fulfilled, he discovers a different way of dealing with the maternal body and thoughts. The translator also has not an easy task, the coherence of the text is carried on through repetition, a semantic consistency which is quite complicated to translate into another language.

This being a very feminine subject and the poet's style being a direct and frank feminine voice, it is a challenging text to translate bearing a feminist approach in mind. If the feminist translator, as we have seen, works hand in hand with the author, how can these poems be translated? The Italian translation of Clanchy's poems maintains the frankness, the outspokenness but also the sound of the poems' rhythm. However, in the Italian translation, the translator always opts for the most poetical choice, for example in the poem 'Scan', the sentence 'Some star-lit hills, a lucky sky' is translated as 'pendii luccicanti di stelle, un cielo fortunato' and some lines later, the sentence '(all low windows) Flickering with early electricity' is translated as '(tutto finestre basse) tremule di primordiale elettricità'.<sup>35</sup>

Some lexical and syntactical choices are probably due to the passage from ST to TT, but they also follow the translator's personal reading of the text. They visualise 'the gains and losses in the transla-

34 Philip Hobsbaum, "Clanchy Kate" in Thomas Riggs ed., *Contemporary Poets*, Detroit, St. James Press, pp. 161–62.

35 'Scan' – 'Ecografia' in Kate Clanchy, *Neonato*, translated by Giorgia Sensi, Milano, Medusa, 2007, pp. 92–3.

tion process and the unbridgeable gaps between cultures'.<sup>36</sup> More direct language can be found in the translation of the poem 'I had my eyes shut all the time' where the maternal body is described from the inside just at the moment of delivery. Childbirth is depicted through the semantic field of cinema and volcanic eruption. The physical exhaustion of delivery is at the centre of the poem. It is an image presented through the poet's perceptions, what she saw and how she felt during childbirth. The TT maintains the direct tone of the ST, the irony and the rhythm:

<i>I had my eyes shut the whole time</i>	<i>tenni gli occhi chiusi tutto il tempo</i>
And in that <u>inner cinema</u> saw	e in quel <u>cinema interno</u> vidi
The ruched <u>vermillion curtains</u> rise	l'arricciato <u>sipario vermiglio</u> alzarsi
On a vast screen showing <u>lava</u> . There,	su un vasto schermo di <u>lava</u> . Là,
you <u>issued forth</u> in <u>scarlet flumes</u> ,	tu <u>sgusciasti fuori</u> in <u>solchi scarlatti</u> ,
in <u>cinescope</u> , in a sunrise of <u>burst veins</u>	in <u>cinemascope</u> , in un'aurora di <u>vene scoppiate</u> <sup>37</sup>

The translator here is not interventionist but nonetheless she has been able to maintain the poet's images and voice with an *equivalence in difference* which seems appropriate to the translation of poetry. The translator's re-reading and re-writing is faithful to the poet, it carries in the TL all the stylistic, syntactical and thematic elements of the SL. Nonetheless, it is a feminist translation. Sensi perceives and reproduces the force of imagery and the plain-spoken – but at the same time highly poetical – style of Clanchy. Her style is already a sign of what we could define as "post-feminist writing", something that goes beyond maternity poems of the 1970s feminist magazines and visualizes a straightforward, sincere depiction of motherhood. Here the main task of the translator is to rewrite this poetry full of multiple isotopies

woven with masterly craft like, for example, in the poem 'What Can I Say' where the poet utilises similes in order to portray the very moment of delivery. The mother's body and the act of childbirth are compared to 'Japanese tricks', 'cellophane fish', 'shit coil of sand', 'fishing nets', 'main sails', 'a parachute' and stuck together with the choice of verbs of movement 'uncurl', 'twitch', 'shoot out', 'unfold', 'tumble', 'spool', 'bloom' that recall a very fast action. The Italian translation keeps the idea of a fast, unexpected movement visualised in material acts.<sup>38</sup>

The translation from English into Italian functions very well as a fruitful interchange between the author and the translator – two women whose voices are both visible in the text and visualize a feminine representation of such a stereotyped and idealised subject. Faithfulness to the text becomes here a perception of difference which lays the ground for a reading and interpretation of Clanchy's works. The translator is visible in all the poems and it is a visibility which enhances the poet's voice and her representation of what have always been considered as feminine themes, but from a woman's perspective.

36 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, p. 306.

37 'I had my eyes shut all the time' – 'Tenni gli occhi chiusi tutto il tempo' in *Neonato*, pp. 96–7.

38 'What Can I Say?' – 'Cosa posso dire' in *Neonato*, pp. 98–9.