Translational and Trans/national Crossings: French-American Feminist Mis/Dis/Re-Connections[1]

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> This side of the psychosis of patriotic fervor, I like to think, there is overwhelming evidence of a more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities.
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> —Homi K. Bhabha (5)

> Transcending our undeniable and important differences, our desire to give voice to woman binds us together in one radical and global project.
>
> —Domna Stanton (Language 81)

The late 1960s and early 1970s were a time of intense feminist reflection and social mobilization in both France and the United States. In both countries, moreover, what emerged was not a single unified women's movement; "[t]he key to understanding the progress of the women's movement in the United States," writes Susan Bassnett, "lies in accepting the fact of fragmentation from the very start" (19). Similarly, accounts of feminism in France—which many see as "born in May 1968, as an outgrowth of and a reaction to the male-led student/worker revolution" (Lloyd 175)—foreground the movement's close links with other radical political movements of the time. These links and the resulting diverse orientations within the movement—including "class struggle feminists, revolutionary feminists, and Psychanalyse et Politique" (Allwood 27)—have inevitably produced internal divisions which continue to mark the feminist scene in France.[2] During the mid and late 1970s, texts produced in France around the issues taken up by the women's liberation movement started to appear in translation in U.S. academic journals such as *Diacritics*, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, and *Sub-Stance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism*.[3] With the publication in 1980 of the anthology *New French Feminisms*, edited by Elaine Marks and

Isabelle de Courtivron, a significant and diverse body of writing became accessible to a North American readership.

Appearing almost three decades after the publication of the English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe*, *New French Feminisms* picked up where the former volume had left off, introducing Anglophone readers to voices from the contemporary feminist scene in France. Marks and Courtivron open their introduction to the volume by quoting Hélène Cixous, one of the writers featured in the anthology: "We translate what the American women write, they never translate our texts"; to this the editors respond, "Our book is therefore the beginning of an exchange" (ix). This exchange—as attested to by recent bibliographies of critical works on some of the writers included in the anthology, most notably Julia Kristeva, Cixous, and Luce Irigaray—has indeed been prolific. The present essay seeks to reflect on some of the factors that have determined the shape of this exchange over the last two decades, exploring some of the misconnections, disconnections, and reconnections that have characterized the reception in North America of what has come to be known—or, as Christine Delphy and Claire Goldberg Moses would argue, what has been invented or constructed—as "French Feminism." I am interested in this reception/construction and in its on-going narrativization as sites of translational and transnational exchange. My theoretical point of departure is inspired by Lawrence Venuti's observation that translations set into motion "a process of identity formation that is double-edged. . .a translation can be powerful in *maintaining or revising* the hierarchy of values in the translating language" (68; emphasis added). Whether the effects of translation will prove to be conservative or transgressive, Venuti argues, depends on a host of factors: strategies devised by the translator, reception of the work, and "uses made of the translation in cultural and social institutions" (68). As a cultural practice, then, translation can domesticate the foreign text, constructing representations of the foreign culture that serve domestic purposes, or it can work to challenge domestic norms and precipitate social change.

Given this potentially radical and radicalizing effect of translation, and the often controversial "politics of choice" that shapes translation practice—determining "Who [will get translated]? What? Where? When? Why?" (Penrod 44)—it is not surprising to find the very movement of the French feminist texts across the (transatlantic) threshold of translation becoming the object of intense scrutiny. My interest here, then, is precisely in the metanarratives that have emerged around and about the circulation of the French texts (in translation) in North America. I would like to begin with the present moment, and the latest, still animated (after all these years), installments in the continuing saga of French Feminism in America. In 1995, fourteen years after the appearance of the *Yale French Studies* special issue on "Feminist Readings: French Texts/American Contexts" (published the same year as *New French Feminisms*), the journal put out a second special issue, enti-

tled "Another Look, Another Woman: Retranslations of French Feminism." The most polemical article in the issue, Christine Delphy's provocatively titled "The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move," was then accorded privileged status by being reprinted in a special commemorative anthology—*Yale French Studies* 97 (2000)—celebrating the journal's 50th anniversary. Delphy's arguments would subsequently gain further amplification in Claire Goldberg Moses' 1998 article in *Feminist Studies*, entitled, with a nod to Delphy, "Made in America: 'French Feminism' in Academia."

Delphy and Moses reference each other's work and the work of other scholars who support their view, and their common attack—which by now appears to constitute the latest orthodoxy on the matter[4]—involves the following arguments. "'French Feminism'," Delphy writes, "is not feminism in France" (190); it is an Anglo-American imperialist construction (since it presumes to define for the French what their feminism is) that has favored certain writers—Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva—to the exclusion of others, like herself, more directly connected with the feminist movement in France and its activist and materialist orientation. This construction, Delphy argues, consists not so much of the French texts themselves as of "a body of comments by Anglo-American writers on a selection of French and non-French writers" (196), and it has served a specific domestic American agenda. "French Feminism" was invented by American scholars, Delphy contends, in order to "try and deflect the criticism its creators thought they would get" for their essentialist platform, with its emphasis on the "feminine" and "sexual difference," and its endorsement of a "human nature approach" (195; 198-9).

For Delphy, the major feminist debate has been and remains that of "'Difference' versus 'Equality'," and while her own materialist position favors the holistic/constructionist paradigm of "Equality," she views American "French Feminism" as a way of avoiding the hard lessons of "social constructionism: that things can change [one can, for example, do *without* gender as a basis for personal identity], but that it will be long and arduous" (207). The basics of Delphy's attack are thus that Anglo-American feminists have used certain French texts in order to constitute—through "a series of rhetorical manoeuvres that use distortion and generalization, imperialism and exoticism"—a fabricated "French Feminism" that has allowed them "to legitimate the introduction on the Anglo-American feminist scene of a brand of essentialism, and in particular a rehabilitation of psychoanalysis" (216). One of the most damning charges that Delphy levels at these Anglo-American "French Feminists" is their investment in national labels; "How relevant *are* national boundaries to feminism?" she asks (191), and adds, "[t]he fact that it [the French women's liberation movement] was a movement that shared many traits with other movements—in terms of preoccupations, analyses, campaigns, demands, activism—was not only ignored, but denied" (211). To these charges, Moses adds a further emphasis on internal political

dynamics. Made-in-America French Feminism, she argues, is guilty on two counts: complicity with a French faction (Psychoanalyse et Politique) she views as having undermined the women's movement in France (248); and being the product of disciplinary imperialism—"the hegemony of literature" (273) over disciplines like her own, history— within Women's Studies. The result, Moses writes, has been a conflation of "writers and critics with the women's movement" (254)—"'theory' without 'history'" (264)—an eroticized and exoticized misrepresentation that has its mirror image in the way the group Psychoanalyse et Politique has demonized "a U.S. feminism supposedly in cahoots with the patriarchal, racist, and classist state" (265).

Moses concludes her article with this call: "Let us respond by building an international movement to challenge the backlash. To do so, we must understand each other better—across boundaries of nation as of discipline—than we have to date" (267). Developing such an understanding across national and disciplinary boundaries is indeed imperative, but it can only be impeded by the disconnections I see in the positions articulated by Delphy and Moses. Nowhere in their lengthy articles is there an actual engagement with either the French texts they (directly or indirectly) target, or the *specific* substance of the various North American intellectual projects to which these texts have contributed. Ann Vickery, for example, has recently documented the vital influence that writers like Kristeva and Cixous have had on American Language writing. Responding directly to Moses's criticism that American academia "fashioned for American readers a more literary than sociological version of French feminism," Vickery points out that "it was this version that writers like Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian, Kathleen Fraser, and Beverly Dahlen took up and enthusiastically investigated in their own explorations of language and gender"; had it not been for this transatlantic contact, she continues, "American language writing might well have developed a very different formation" (280). Similarly, Canadian literary scholars such as Barbara Godard, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, and Marie Carrière have explored the fertile points of contacts between, on the one hand, Québécois women writers and their French counterparts, and, on the other, Québécois and Anglo-Canadian women writing "in the feminine." In both the U.S. and Canada, Literary Studies and feminist theory have been profoundly transformed by their dialogues with French feminist theory and textual practice. Nancy Fraser has recently observed, "[I]n sum, elements of those discourses that go under the name 'French feminism' have influenced feminist culture in the United States and may be helping to reconfigure it" (2).

While the arguments put forth by Delphy and Moses serve to highlight certain problematic aspects of the American academy's domestication of French feminisms—the highly selective and unrepresentative 'canon' that has been produced; the predominance of a national/ist binary in the commentaries (more on this later)—and while both profess a commitment to a more international form of feminism, their arguments end up reinforcing

entrenched positions that pit their own disciplinary and ideological orientation (materialist and historicist) against those they portray as epistemologically misguided or institutionally too powerful. In the remainder of this essay I would like to reflect—through a closer examination of specific instances of reception—on both the misconnections and reconnections that form part of the larger narrative of this cultural exchange.

Resonant lines from a text that was one of the first objects of exchange, Monique Wittig's *Les Guérillères* (published in France in 1969; English translation in 1971), suggests a different beginning for the narrative of the French-American feminist exchange: "What was the beginning? . . . They move over the smooth shining surface. Their movements are translation, gliding" (30). The beginning, I would like to argue *pace* Delphy and Moses, was an auspicious one: French and American voices in an evolving conversation, seeking to spell out the many ways in which oppression and repression (the very terms that would later be used to polarize French and American feminisms) are indeed two sides of the same coin. In 1972, Phyllis Chesler publishes *Women and Madness*, a ground-breaking analysis of the predicament of contemporary women—a predicament epitomized by those "who are seen, or who see themselves, as 'neurotic' or 'psychotic" (xx)—and a scathing indictment of Western society's long history of systemic assault on women's bodies and psyches. In her concluding chapter, "Female Psychology: Past, Present, and Future," Chesler uses three long quotations from the English translation of *Les Guérillères*, an epic utopia centered on a society of warrior women who have overthrown patriarchal institutions and language to usher in a new feminist order. The quotations from *Les Guérillères* are prominently placed (the first two serve as epigraphs to the chapter, and the third begins a sub-section), and serve to further reinforce Chesler's critique (of a patriarchy that enslaves women, tricks them into complicity with their own oppression, and turns them against each other), and amplify her vision of a future in which women will be able to act "with strength and happiness" (Wittig qtd. in Chesler 279). Belying subsequent characterizations of her own work and of American feminism in general as exclusively empiricist and experiential in contrast to the French feminist interest in discourse and the unconscious, Chesler's analysis throughout *Women and Madness* and in this concluding chapter argues the inextricability of the different spheres that shape the self in its affective and social relations, including the discursive (through the medium of language and narrative) and the material. Chesler concludes, "Perhaps the majority of women in America will be able to effect such psychological changes only after crucial changes in their economic and reproductive lives have already occurred" (302).

Chesler's conversation with Wittig, a dialogue across languages and cultures, then continues with the 1975 publication of *Les femmes et la folie*—the French translation of *Women and Madness* to which Cixous contributes a preface entitled "L'order mental." In her preface—published the same year as "Le Rire de la Méduse,"

the key text by which an American readership will come to know her (originally published in *L'Arc*, and in English translation in a 1976 issue of *Signs*)—Cixous joins Wittig and Chesler in their social critique and call for change. Cixous's short text is impressive, not only for her signature poetic prose and effective rendering of Chesler's insights, but also for the manner in which it speaks to the very activity in which Cixous is engaged, that of translational and trans/national crossing. Although in the process of translation, Chesler's book would lose the important, culture-specific statistical appendix with which the English volume concludes—a substantial section entitled "The Female Career as a Psychiatric Patient: The Sex, Class, Race, and Marital Status of America's Psychiatrically Involved Population 1950-1969"—Cixous resists any such tendency to erase the specificity of Chesler's analysis. Cixous's preface, like her other texts appearing in translation around this time,[5] both acknowledges French-American historical and cultural differences and seeks to bring the two into a productive dialogue. In the preface, Cixous urges her reader, "Écoutez aussi ce qu'une voix de femme américaine nous apporte: des Américaines—même si leur histoire ne peut coïncider avec notre histoire (cella de la femme en France)—nous avons beaucoup à apprendre" [Listen to what the voice of an American woman has to offer us: from American women—even if their history is not the same as ours (as the history of woman in France)—we have much to learn] (8; my translation).

In retrospect, Cixous's preface to *Les femmes et la folie*, as well as other of her texts translated around this time, read like uncanny responses to yet-to-be voiced accusations: that she is not a feminist, that she dwells in the ephemeral realm of words and misconceived feminine essences, that she has contributed to sabotaging a feminist social project. In her interview with Christiane Makward in the 1976 issue of *Sub-Stance,* Cixous explains her position: "I do not for a moment imagine that the world will be transformed by writing alone. . .starting with. . .the social and economic change—we must completely redefine and re-think the articulation of 'man/woman'" (25). In her preface to *Les femmes et la folie*, she outlines a complex vision. She speaks of a continuum that runs from psyche to discourse to social structures and institutions. Echoing Chesler, she warns against an internalized self-hate that turns woman against woman; and she calls for solidarity in a political struggle that does not disregard differences between women. Cixous concludes with a call to arms: "Et cela veut dire: femme de tous les desires, femmes différentes, même combat! Chacune de nous veut que l'autre soit et qu'elle soit où elle peut être la plus elle-même" [All this amounts to saying: a woman of many desires, different women, same struggle! Each one of us wants the other to be and to be where she can most be her-self] (8; my translation).

In the American academic discourse that will come to demonize her, Cixous will be represented as the voice of essentialism, a believer in woman's innate and eternal difference. But in her preface to Chesler's book, and in another work published the same

year—*La jeune née* (1975), which will not be translated into English for another decade—Cixous is emphatic in her critique of the ideology of the "Selfsame" (*The Newly Born Woman* 70). Cixous's own personal history, so plural and so embedded in the history of colonialism, has certainly taught her both the dangers of erasing differences and the pitfalls of reifying them:

> The paradox of otherness is that, of course, at no moment in History is it tolerated or possible as such. The other is there only to be reappropriated, recaptured, and destroyed as other. Even the exclusion is not an exclusion. Algeria was not France, but it was "French."
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> Me too. The routine "our ancestors, the Gauls" was pulled on me. But I was born in Algeria, and my ancestors lived in Spain, Morocco, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany; my brothers by birth are Arabs. So where are we in history? I side with those who are injured, trespassed upon, colonized. I am (not) Arab. Who am I? I am "doing" French history. I am a Jewish woman. . . . I want to fight. What is my name? I want to change life. Who is this "I"? Where is my place? I am looking. I search everywhere. I read, I ask. I begin to speak. Which language is mine? French? German? Arabic? Who spoke for me throughout the generations? (*The Newly Born Woman* 70).

Writing across identities, languages, and national boundaries, Cixous's is a dialogic, translational, and trans/national practice that recalls Mikhail Bakhtin's understanding of translation as the paradigm of all human communication. As Caryl Emerson has written, for Bakhtin,

> [c]rossing language boundaries was perhaps the most fundamental of human acts. Bakhtin's writing is permeated by awe at the multiplicity of languages he hears. These are not just the bluntly distinct national languages—Russian, English French— . . . but also the scores of different "languages" that exist simultaneously within a single culture and a single speaking community. In fact, Bakhtin viewed the boundaries between national languages as only one extreme on a continuum; at the other extreme, translation processes were required for one social group to understand another in the same city, for children to understand parents in the same family, for one day to understand the next. These stratifications of language, Bakhtin argued, do not exclude one another; they intersect and overlap,

> pulling words into various gravitational fields and casting specific light and shadow. . . . this means that every speaking subject speaks something of a foreign language to everyone else. It also means that every speaking subject has more than one native language at his disposal. *To understand another person at any given moment, therefore, is to come to terms with meaning on the boundary between one's own and another's language: to translate* (xxxi-xxxii; emphasis added).[6]

I recognize in Cixous's and Bakhtin's primal scenes of translation the space of my own polyglotic beginnings[7] and the place from which a number of the initiators of the dialogue between French and American feminisms spoke. Domna Stanton, whose important 1980 essay "Language and Revolution: The Franco-American Dis-Connection" I invoke in my title, is one such woman of plural personal and professional origins. Writing of her speaking position in a 1977 issue of *Tel Quel*, Stanton's interrogations recall Cixous's: "Qui répète ce discours? Qui re-parle? Moi/elle, Grecque enseignant le francais aux États-Unis. Polyglotte sans glotte à moi, comme tout femme d'ailleurs, Européenne en Amérique et Américaine en Europe" [Who repeats this discourse? Who re-speaks? Me/her, a Greek teaching French in the United States. A speaker of many tongues without a tongue to call my own, indeed like all women, a European in America and an American in Europe] (119; my translation).

Not all readers, however, share an inclination to inhabit the potentially unsettling and transformative space of translation. "The scandals of translation," Venuti writes, "are cultural, economic, and political. . . . Translation is treated so disadvantageously, I want to suggest, partly because it occasions revelations that question the authority of dominant cultural values and institutions" (1). A telling early exchange between three American feminist scholars in the 1981 *Yale French Studies* special issue "Feminist Readings: French Texts/American Contexts" reveals exactly such ambivalence towards the linguistic and cultural phenomenon of translation itself, perceived here as both "fascinating and fearful," a potentially dangerous force that requires "in fact, not just mediations, but mediations of mediations":

> *Susan Gubar*: I would just speak for a moment about the people that I feel are bridge figures between French theoretical/critical thinking and the American literary historical establishment. . . . I wonder if other people feel the same sort of dependence on those figures who really do crucially important translations (trans-lations) carrying across from one culture to another, from one language to another, and from one set of ideas to another.

> *Carolyn Allen*: I feel the same dependency especially in reading French writers whose French is very taken up with word play, but it frustrates me. You can't always tell how much has been lost in translation. And my experience has been that other American feminist critics are also dependent on what has been translated.
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> *Sandra Gilbert*: And you understand what you are trying to do without when you see how fascinating the work done in France is and how essential it certainly seems. But at the same time, I have to say that I do feel troubled and excluded by it sometimes. I tend to feel that they are very opaque. Even when my French is good enough, it's still so much an "other" culture. That makes it both fascinating and fearful, and extraordinarily glamorous. It seems to me that what we need is, in fact, not just mediations, but *mediations of mediations* (Gaudin et al. 6-7).

One is struck by how *affectively* charged the exchange is, how it brings to the fore anxieties and frustrations associated with the very need for—the *raison d'être* of—translation. For Gilbert, Allen, and Gubar, the contact with the other language/culture/woman and the resulting dependence on the linguistic and semiotic mediation of translation are experienced as both a dangerous attraction—in speaking of the "'otherness'" of the "French feminist theoreticians," Gilbert confesses to "wistful fantasies" that leave her "faint with desire" (10)—and an unwelcome and disturbing experience. It is an experience that triggers anxieties about the impenetrable foreignness of another tongue (the Other's tongue) and loss of control over the communicative process; anxieties arising from a sense of being condemned to a state of linguistic and cognitive exile, and of being cut off from the vital sources of authentic meaning and expression. Following Venuti, one might see these sentiments as symptomatic of what he describes as the global hegemony of English: "The economic and political ascendancy of the United States has reduced foreign languages and cultures to minorities in relation to its language and culture. *English is the most translated language world-wide, but one of the least translated into*" (10; emphasis added). In the first instance, then, an integral part of the initial response to French feminist writing in translation has been both a fascination with and fear of that which translation inescapably exposes: the tenuousness of one's hold over the "real."

Given Cixous's interrogation of national/ist identitarian discourses and their linguistic and cultural fetishes and her sustained critique of binary conceptual constructs, it is all the more ironic that some American responses to her work in translation have been, from the beginning, so invested in the very terms she cautions us against. One could see the years 1975-76 as the years in which French feminist theory is officially legitimated as an intellectual import in North America. The feminist journal *Signs* includes a

translated excerpt from Kristeva's *Des Chinoises* in its inaugural issue and a translation of Cixous's "Le rire de la meduse" appears a year later. It is notable that neither essay is signaled as being in any way "different": the general concerns introduced in Kristeva's essay are picked up by the contributors to a special issue of *Signs* on Chinese women the following year (Autumn 1976), and Cixous's essay is not even perceived as requiring an introduction. All this will change with the 1978 publication in *Signs* of the first in-depth analyses of French feminism for an American audience: Elaine Marks's "Women and Literature in France" and Carolyn Burke's "Report from Paris: Women's Writing and the Women's Movement." I would like to argue here, however, that the terms of their discussion and the frame of reference within which French feminist texts will come to be read as they become available in translation had already been suggested by Shoshana Felman in a trend-setting review-article in the Winter 1975 issue of *Diacritics*, in which Felman discusses Irigaray's *Speculum de l'autre femme* and Chesler's *Women and Madness* (*Speculum*, published in 1974, would not be translated until 1985, the year that Irigaray's 1977 *Ce sexe* also appears in English translation). Felman writes in 1975, thereby possibly sealing the discursive fate of French feminist fortunes in North America for decades to come:

> In a sense, the difficulty involved in any feminist enterprise is illustrated by the complementarity, but also by the incompatibility of the two feminist studies which we have just examined: the works of Phyllis Chesler and Luce Irigaray. The interest of Chesler's book, its overwhelming persuasive power ... lies in the fact that it does not speak for women: it lets women speak for themselves. Phyllis Chesler accomplishes thus the first symbolical step of the feminist revolution: she gives voice to the woman. But she can only do so in a *pragmatic, empirical way*. As a result, the book's theoretical contribution, although substantial, does not go beyond the classical feminist thought concerning the socio-sexual victimization of women. On the other side of the coin, Irigaray's book has the merit of perceiving the problem on a *theoretical level*, of trying to think the feminist question through to its logical ends, reminding us that women's oppression exists not only in the material, practical organization of economic, social, medical, and political structures, but also in the very foundations of logos, reasoning and articulation—in the subtle linguistic procedures and in the logical processes through which meaning itself is produced (4; emphasis added).

By 1978, Felman's distinction between an empirical and a theoretical formulation of feminist issues—a distinction she presents as interior to a feminist project broadly conceived—is exteriorized and ex-territorialized—translated, in other words, into a conflictual cultural-national paradigm whose fixed points of reference are American versus French. Marks's "Women and Literature in France" is an early example. Marks uses as epigraph for the essay Cixous's battle cry from "The Laugh of the Medusa": "Let the priests tremble, we're going to show them our sexts [sex and texts]," but her very opening sentence already effects a displacement, for the scene before us is no longer that of the battle of the genders, but that of trans-Atlantic intellectual rivalry and ideological strife: "Not yet even a dialogue, some traces of American/French differences regarding women and literature now and then appear. . . . Usually, on this side of the Atlantic, there is dismissal (too intellectualistic and elitist to be feminist)" (832). In the essay, a conflictual nationalistic paradigm is naturalized and rendered rhetorically all the more effective through the alignment of personal pronouns, that is, through the discursive attribution of *subjectivity* to a collective American "we" and *alterity* to a collective French "they."[8] Marks reassures a rhetorically constructed "us": "Literary criticism that resembles ours is still being produced [in France]" (833), while concluding that "the fundamental dissimilarity in the American/French orientation can be attributed to this differing emphasis [that is, the French emphasis on repression, the American emphasis on oppression]" (842). Her final judgment is delivered with the full force of an alleged axiomatic truth: "*We* raise consciousness by speaking to and working with each other; *they* explore the unconscious by writing" (842; emphasis added).

Marks's formulation is indeed so powerful that it quickly becomes the accepted doxa. We find it quoted by Alice Jardine in her "Prelude: The Future of Difference," a brief manifesto-like piece that introduces the 1980 collection *The Future of Difference*. This volume will, in turn, become an authoritative source and indispensable point of reference for subsequent reflections on what Stanton calls, in her essay in the same collection, "the Franco-American Dis-Connection." Jardine, who seems to revel in the rift—"I spend my life walking the tightrope of contradictions between the French and American feminist stances" (xxvi)—restates the case as it will be handed down from mediators of mediations like herself and Marks to such influential movers and shapers of the American literary-feminist scene as Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, and Toril Moi:

> As Elaine Marks has put it, American feminists emphasize the *oppression* of woman as sexual identity, while French feminists investigate the *repression* of woman as difference and alterity in the signifying practices of the West. To quote Marks, "we raise consciousness by speaking to and working with each other; they explore the unconscious by writing." That is to say, we use

> words like autonomy and power; they use words like phallocentrism and that word for pleasure which defies translation, jouissance (xxvi; emphasis added).

"We" and "they" thus become entrenched on either side of that great divide, the feared and desired "jouissance." In her essay in *The Future of Difference*—a veritable breeding ground for "we"s—Stanton quotes from Cixous's *La jeune née*, a text that at the time of the writing of the essay was not yet available in English translation. The passage Stanton translates for her readers includes an exchange between Cixous and Clement on the conditions for social change. Stanton's mediation here—which collapses the very distinction between first- and second-degree mediations since she is both translating and interpreting (through selection and commentary)—is illustrative of the complexities of translation as "a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries" (Bassnett and Trivedi 2).

In her translation, Stanton retains from the original text observations concerning language and revolution: "But there is no revolution without a coming into awareness. . .we can move nothing when we cease to communicate" (81; ellipsis in original). What she chooses to leave out and not translate is precisely Cixous's added, different, awareness—her call for the harnessing of a libidinal force: "I think that what cannot be oppressed, even in the class struggle, is the libido—desire; it is in taking off from desire that you will revive the need for things to really change" (*The Newly Born Woman* 157). Subsequent commentaries, then, will often re-enact the critical paradigm established in these early readings. It is a monologic national paradigm that pits "us" against "them," that uses translation as means of enhancing the collectivitiy's sense of itself and constructing a stronger "we," and that ultimately relegates the other text/woman to a suspended alterity; taken out of their own context, the text/woman are neither "there" nor ever fully arrived "here."

From the beginning, however, there have also been various interpretive and translational strategies aimed at bringing French and American feminisms into a more productive dialogue. Already in the essays by Burke and Marks there is an awareness of the need for cultural translation to accompany the linguistic translation, a perceived need to provide an interpretive explanatory apparatus around key words that are kept in the original French. Burke, for example, leaves in French "prise de conscience," "prise de la parole," and "prise de pouvoir," commenting on her decision: "It is difficult to translate all the echoes of the phrase 'prendre la parole'; 'prendre le pouvoir' immediately comes to mind. La parole and its cousin, le verbe ('the word,' the Logos in the full theological sense), have been until recently the possessions of a small, well-educated male elite" (844-5). Burke also does not translate "[student] revendications," "*lécriture*," "*la venue a lécriture*," "*langage des femmes*," and "*jouissance*." Marks retains "*écriture féminine*,"

explaining that "the adjective *féminin(e)* is frequently used today in such expressions as *écriture feminine* or *sexualité féminine*, not in the judgmental sense of a stereotypical woman's nature but in the classificatory sense of pertaining to women. This also applies to the noun *féminité*" (833). Marks also glosses "*le continent noir*" (835) and "*Jouissance*": "*Jouissance* in French signifies pleasure, usually sexual pleasure. The expression *jouissance féminine* stresses the difference between the male and female libidinal economies. *Jouissance féminine* is a central concept in most texts published on women's sexuality, women's libido, women's desire" (835).

The crucial role played by those second degree cultural mediations Gilbert speaks of—mediations which can take the form of explicitly interpretive translations or explications of the translated text—can be illustrated by putting next to Marks's gloss on "jouissance" two other glosses on the same word by the translators of Kristeva and Cixous. Leon Roudiez's "Notes on the Translation and on Terminology," part of his "Introduction" to Kristeva's *Desire in Language*, foregrounds the multiplicity of meanings which attach themselves to jouissance, including "denotations covering the field of law and the activity of sex," so that "jouissance is sexual, spiritual, physical, conceptual at one and the same time . . . also through the working of the signifier, this implies the presence of meaning (jouissance = j'ouis sens = I hear meaning)" (16). The entry "jouissance" in Betsy Wing's Glossary appended to her translation of Cixous's *The Newly Born Woman* reads:

> Total sexual ecstasy is its most common connotation, but in contemporary French philosophical, psychoanalytic, and political usage, it does not stop there, and to equate it with orgasm would be an oversimplification. It would also . . . be inadequate to translate it as enjoyment. This word, however, does maintain some of the sense of access and participation in connection with rights and property. It is, therefore, a word with simultaneously sexual, political, and economic overtones. Total access, total participation, as well as total ecstasy are implied (165).

Had this fuller cultural translation of "jouissance" been better recognized, we might have been spared over a decade of dismissive American coy righteousness, accompanied by repeated accusations of essentialist determinism and inexplicable fainting spells at the mere mention of the word. In making the explanatory apparatus an integral part of the project of translation, then, translators and editors can more fully acknowledge the density of the source text, recognizing the impossibility of separating text from intertext, and primary work from interpretation.

Another early productive intervention in the French-American feminist exchange was Gayatri Spivak's essay in the 1981 *Yale French Studies* special issue, seeking, as her title already announced, to place "French feminism in an international frame."

Recognizing that "the difference between 'French' and 'Anglo-American' feminism is superficial" allows Spivak to identify a crucial question that had been missing from Western feminist critique: "there has to be a simultaneous other focus: not merely who am I? but *who is the other woman*?" (150; emphasis added).[9] The "best gift of French feminism," she concludes (a gift, she adds, it cannot itself fully acknowledge), has been to help us "straddle and undo the ideological-material opposition" (153). In a later essay, "French Feminism Revisited," Spivak continues to explore the lessons of writers like Cixous for a program of resistance that combines the "critical voice" with "a strategic use of essentialism," and allows for the articulation of a trans/national "inter-nationalism": "an internationalism that takes a distance from the project of national identity when it interferes with the production of female individualities. And the *critique* of individualities, not merely individualism, will bring us back to Cixous" (73).

I have argued that the French-American feminist exchange that started in the early 1970s had an auspicious beginning, and I would like to conclude by outlining some of the lessons we might draw from the evolving fortunes of this translational and trans/national exchange. When not blinded by anxieties about hearing the other—in her difference from but also likeness to the self—scholars have been able to explore the many factors that affect "cultural importation and exportation, . . . *the difficulties surrounding both literal and figurative translation*, . . . how and why 'information' circulates, and the form it takes which enables it to do so" (Gibbs et al. 23; emphasis added). The difficulties and the challenges posed by translation are varied. First, there are the inevitable "translation effects" (Stratton 20), those mechanical difficulties endemic to translation in general, but made even more acute by the linguistic virtuosity of writers like Lacan, Derrida, Cixous, and Irigaray.[10] Second, as some commentators were able to recognized early on in the process, American misreadings of French feminism were the result of basic factors such as "the lack of available texts in translation" as well as linguistic and cultural differences that render certain key concepts difficult to translate (Finel-Honigman 319). In retrospect, scholars have been able to identify other factors that affect the translational process. They include the choice of venue for publication (for example, the journal *Feminist Issues*, in which most French materialist feminists were published in translation, has been difficult to get hold of in most countries); and specific ideological, philosophical, and cultural differences that lead to mis-translations. What has not translated well into an American idiom includes the centrality to French thought of a modernist perspective that foregrounds language and writing as the locus of sexual difference; the centrality of a psychoanalytic model for defining specificity and tracing its effects in writing; a different interpretation of Freud; and the prominence of a Marxist critical tradition that politicizes and polarizes the theoretical arena (Penrod 41). Translation—we could concur with André Lefevre—does not primarily or fundamentally happen at the level of linguis-

tic codes, but at the level of the conceptual and textual grids that shape meaning in the source and target languages. The stakes in any translational and trans/national exchange are thus always high.

Notes

[1]This essay incorporates parts of an earlier article, "The Problem of Trans-lation: Reading French Feminisms," *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* IV.2 (1991): 55-68. I would like to thank *TTR* for permission to reprint and Mike Sell for prodding me into returning to the scene of these (on-going) trans-Atlantic crossings. The work of Barbara Godard, perhaps the most important disseminator of French feminist theory in Canada and a major contributor to both translation theory and the study of Québécois and Anglo-Canadian women's writing 'in the feminine,' has been an inspiration.

[2]See also Duchen's *Feminism in France* and her anthology *French Connections*; Moses provides references to other recent histories of French feminism (259).

[3]The two longer works are Wittig's *Les Guèrilléres* (1971) and Kristeva's *About Chinese Women* (1977). Shorter texts include Kristeva's "On the Women of China," (1975), Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), Cixous's interview with Christiane Makward (1976) and "La jeune née: An Excerpt" (1977), and Julia Kristeva's interview with Josette Féral (1976).

[4]See, for example, Adkins and Leonard.

[5]In marked contrast to later American representations of her as alien to the American feminist scene, Cixous, in "The Laugh of the Medusa" for example, writes, "The Americans remind us, 'We are all Lesbians'; that is, don't denigrate woman, don't make of her what men have made of you" (882). Similarly, in the interview with Makward in the 1976 issue of *Sub-Stance*, Cixous often brings French and American feminisms into dialogue. On the issue of language and the need to coin neologisms, Cixous says, "You, in the United states and I, too, in France share this experience" (21). On the repercussions for men (and notions of masculinity) of feminist critique: "I think it is already apparent in the United States but hardly adumbrated in France" (24).

[6]I have not reproduced the footnotes that are part of this passage.

[7] As a first-generation, Hebrew-speaking, native Israeli, I was born into multiple tongues: Hebrew, a national mother-tongue in the process of self-birthing, my native tongue but not my mother's; Bulgarian, my mother's mother-tongue but not her mother's (who came from Turkey via Greece); Ladino, my paternal grandmother's mother-tongue, the only language she could speak with fluency, itself a hybrid of 15th-century Spanish and a host of other languages marking it as a product of a linguistic history of exile, persecution and assimilation (a history that would also mark it as a woman's tongue, a literally mutilated domestic idiom in which the vocabularies of the public sphere had atrophied and died). Ours

was a typical Israeli household of the 50s, one in which linguistic heterogeneity was inextricable from cultural but also personal difference, and in which those differences were as much inter-personal and they were intra-personal, that is, vectors of difference traversing us as individual subjects and constituting us as a collectivity. Those linguistic negotiations between Hebrew, Bulgarian, Turkish, and Ladino were also cross-generational negotiations as much as they were internalized political and cultural negotiations. Translation was thus as inescapable as language itself, the foreignness of one's utterance an integral dimension of language use, the openness/vulnerability of one's idiom to mistranslation and misrepresentation what came with the only territory one knew.

[8]Identifying the oppositions that differentiate the persons, the linguist Emile Benveniste remarks that "person is inherent only in the positions 'I' and 'you'. The third person, by virtue of its very structure, is the non-personal form of verbal inflection" (199).

[9]There were others. Writing in 1981, Finel-Honigman called for "American feminists to leave a certain parochialism, to seek to understand and assimilate new concepts and theories. It is also time for French women to become more tolerant and informed of the socio-economic and historical focus of American feminists" (322). In *The Daughter's Seduction* (1982), Jane Gallop wrote of her intent to use her vantage point (as an American) outside the "stubborn polemic" between French feminism and French psychoanalysis, to bring about "exchanges between the discourses of people who do not speak to each other" (xi). She aimed to present a shifting viewpoint, believing that the strength of an inquiry lies not in the "ability to stand one's ground" but in the "capacity for change" (xi)

[10]Teri Stratton looks at one example, Catherine Porter's (with Carolyn Burke) translation of Irigaray's *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (*This Sex Which Is Not One*). In this project, the translators have the added challenge of translating passages from Lacan embedded in (and thus already once "translated" by) Irigaray's text. One result of Porter's interpretive decisions (and slips), Stratton demonstrates, is "a misreading which will inform Anglo-American reading(s) and reception of Lacan, Irigaray, and Irigaray's Lacan" (25).

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ABSTRACT:

The Paris of 1968 was a crossroads for an exchange of avant-garde theater practices between the Third World of Nigeria and Brazil and the First World of Europe. The nature of these exchanges demonstrate, with notable exceptions, the overall failure of artists and audiences to recognize the cultural, material, and ideological boundaries that determined cultural exchange.