

## Towards Transnational Feminist Translation Studies

*Olga Castro*

[olga.castro@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:olga.castro@warwick.ac.uk)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2825-9618>

School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Warwick, Great Britain

*Emek Ergun*

[emekergun@gmail.com](mailto:emekergun@gmail.com)

Women's and Gender Studies & Global Studies, UNC at Charlotte, us

*Luise von Flotow*

[lvonflotow@gmail.com](mailto:lvonflotow@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5729-1369>

School of Translation and Interpretation, University of Ottawa, Canada

*María Laura Spoturno*

[lauraspoturno@gmail.com](mailto:lauraspoturno@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9678-5767>

Universidad Nacional de La Plata / Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, Argentina

This special issue comes out of a critical, collective effort to highlight transnational feminism as a productive theoretical framework for feminist translation studies, one which helps build avenues for the development of new directions in the field.<sup>1</sup> The transnational component challenges us to explore and engage with the political role that translation can play to enable (or disable) transnational feminist encounters, dialogues, resistances, and solidarities while it also challenges the colonial model of “(western) feminism as imperialism” (Mohanty, 1988). Our understanding of translation should here be broad enough to encompass all kinds of trans-linguistic/cultural/medial practices including the field of interpreting studies, intersemiotic translation, the translation of sign lan-

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guages, and machine translation as much as the travelling of theories and traditions. Transcending the many borders and boundaries of the globe to *transnationalize* our political visions and practices of solidarity, justice, and liberation (Khader, 2019) can only happen through politically and ethically informed practices of translation, such as feminist translation, because those very borders and boundaries are too often designed and/or operated to separate us from (and turn us against) each other.

Originally developed in North America by so-called feminists of color (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994; Alexander & Mohanty, 1997), transnational feminism has been defined as “the desirability and possibility of a political solidarity of feminists across the globe that transcends class, race, sexuality and national boundaries” (Mendoza, 2002, p. 296). This makes translation central to the debates on global feminist politics. As Olga Castro and Emek Ergun have argued, “[t]he future of feminisms is in the transnational and the transnational is made through translation” (2017, p. 1). Indeed, assuming a transnational perspective implies “concerned usefulness, helpfulness, shared and collaborative communication across and despite borders and languages to promote mutual interests” (Flotow, 2017, p. 175). In this context, *transnational* should not be simply understood as “beyond national borders,” as it may often be the case within translation studies, but as a conceptual framework seeking to remove the political and intellectual limitations and constraints imposed by international and global feminisms (Grewal & Kaplan, 2001). An increased emphasis on intersectionality<sup>2</sup> and on the reconfiguration of power re-

lations between the “West/East” and “North/South”<sup>3</sup> vectors in the traveling of feminist knowledges in/through translation revitalizes the agendas of both feminisms and translation studies.

This special issue builds on and seeks to expand a long-standing tradition of very diverse feminist initiatives developed in Latina, Latin American and Iberian contexts which might well fall under the English term “intersectionality” coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Prior to her work, racialized, working class, postcolonial, colonial, indigenous, lesbian and queer feminisms in the US had identified the double or triple oppression suffered by women defined as non-white, non-heterosexual, not belonging to the middle or upper classes (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1981). In Latin America, the conceptualization of intersectionality is already present in writings of the 19th and 20th centuries (Viveros Vigoya, 2016; Femenías, 2019) as much as in dissident feminisms which question “racism, compulsory heterosexism, classism and neoliberalism”<sup>4</sup> (Curiel, Falquet & Masson, 2005, p. 6), and indigenous and Afrodescendant feminisms (Lopes Louro, 2004; Barrancos, 2006; Curiel, 2007; Ramos Rosado, 2003; Pahde, 2018). Current research in Brazil shows the early contribution of Brazilian feminists to the intersectional paradigm (Goes, 2019) and underlines both the need to “blacken” feminism in order to revise social structures from a decolonial and intersectional point of view (Bambirra & Kleba Lisboa, 2019; Melo, 2019) and the defense of situated perspectives

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a group of African-American women working for the multinational company General Motors. It was subsequently conceptualized as a central paradigm in feminist studies in the United States.

3 For a brief discussion of these terms, see Castro & Spoturno in this special issue.

4 Our translation.

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2 Crenshaw (1989) proposed the term *intersectionality* as a legal notion to explain the systemic exclusions and multiple dimensions of oppressions affecting

such as those offered by community, black and postcolonial feminisms developing in rural areas (Fernandes, 2019; Pinheiro, Silva & Rodríguez, 2019). Likewise, the intersection of gender and nation has occupied feminist thought and praxis in some of the stateless nations of a “post-colonial Spain” (Bermúdez et al., 2002; Miguélez-Carballeira 2017). The struggle for gender emancipation has been accompanied by the struggle for the national, cultural, linguistic and economic self-determination of these territories (Bermúdez & Johnson, 2018). This more plural struggle has, however, not been always subscribed to by dominant views within Spanish feminisms which often dictate a call for unity, prioritizing the common cause of gender over cultural and linguistic differences (Reimóndez, 2014). The focus on feminist translation of this special issue is part of a transnational move to recognize and mobilize the importance of these (and other) contributions to articulate a broader and more comprehensive view of the transnational when applied to feminisms and translation (studies).

We see our work on the much-needed transdisciplinary dialogue between transnational feminisms and (feminist) translation studies in this special issue of *Mutatis Mutandis. Revista Latinoamericana de Traducción* as productive for various reasons. First, our decision to work with an academic, free, open access, and multilingual journal based in Colombia is aimed at contributing to the production and circulation of knowledges from/in/within the so-called South. Further, working with this journal has enabled us to compile a valuable collection of articles written in Spanish, Portuguese, and not just in English, which also contributes to disrupting Anglo-dominated global knowledge production and dissemination trends, particularly in the field of feminist translation (studies). The articles gathered in this issue enclose

diverse languages, texts, contexts and epistemic perspectives, examining a variety of sociolinguistic, geopolitical, and textual cases as well as cultural economies of translation and reception. This collaboration has undoubtedly served to expand our own critical understandings of the politics of cross-border exchanges and flows of feminist discourses in and through translation.

Second, our commitment to editing a special issue of a Latin American translation journal has mandated doing further research on the fields of feminist translation (studies) and transnational feminisms produced in Latina, Latin American and Iberian spaces, and inscribed in academic cultures other than those determined by English. There is indeed a strong tradition of feminist approaches in Latina and Latin America that directly relate to the premises of non-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic transnational feminisms in North America. The recent publication of a special thematic section on “Transnational Feminisms: Knowledge and Aesthetic Post/Decolonial” in the renowned Brazilian *Revista Estudos Feministas* (Schmidt & Macedo, 2019) attests to a growing interest in Latin America in the potential that transnational alliances have in establishing “an equitable debate among north-south different feminisms, its dialogues and frictions, without reproducing colonial violence. A dialogue that shares heritages of social struggles, a geopolitical translation understood as practice that does not fall into the repetition of coloniality”<sup>5</sup> (Bozzano, 2019, p. 2). Transnational feminist translation studies must feed from research and translation projects that stem from different spaces of knowledge and social construction.

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5 Our translation.

Third, this special issue is in itself a transnational encounter between women who come from different academic traditions and geopolitical and linguistic-cultural backgrounds. A fruitful dialogue with the authors of the papers, also located in various institutional and geopolitical contexts, has served to widen our necessarily limited views of feminist translation studies to encompass new visions, concepts and epistemologies. We sincerely hope that, by piecing together our partial knowledges and joined in our belief in the political power of feminist translation, we have compensated for blind spots and increased the epistemological scope and transnationally dialogic potential of the issue. As Patricia Hill Collins states, “there is no way to know our world without crossing linguistic, cultural and epistemological borders, of taking risks both in conversation and within our own intellectual production” (2017, p. xvi). That is a risk we believe is worth taking to increase transnational feminist dialogues. Hence, this special issue is an attempt to add to existing conversations on transnational feminisms and extend an invitation to scholars, activists, artists, educators and translators around the globe to take more risks to expand the borders of those conversations in and about translation. One outcome, we hope, is to broaden the reception of such work into different languages, thus bringing these ideas and academic practices into more local reach, and, in turn, stimulating further research on the many questions raised by a focus on transnational feminist translation (studies). Defined as “politically and theoretically indispensable to forging feminist, pro-social justice and anti-racist, postcolonial and anti-imperial political alliances and epistemologies” (Alvarez et al. 2014, p. 558), transnational feminist translation practices and ethics promote the emergence of multiple and diverse intersubjectivities in translation, questioning and de-

naturalizing categories and practices of colonial modernity such as gender and gender patterns (Lugones, 2010; Costa, 2016; Ergun, 2018). Such an agenda is reinvigorating this field and we are already witnessing a surge in scholarship with recent publications examining various aspects and effects of feminisms in translation and transnational feminisms in-the-making (Davis, 2007; Thayer, 2010; Alvarez et al., 2014; Castro & Ergun, 2017; Costa, 2006, 2014; Dongchao, 2017; Flotow & Farahzad, 2017; Collins, 2017; Nagar et al., 2017; Sánchez, 2018; Flotow, 2017).

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This special issue opens with an article by guest editors **Olga Castro** and **María Laura Spoturno**, in which they argue for new, more up-to-date feminist approaches to translation studies in the era of transnational feminism. After tracing the most recent developments in both transnational feminist theory and in feminist translation studies, their contribution brings both disciplines into closer dialogue while also challenging their geographical and glotopolitical boundaries. Castro and Spoturno offer their own vision of a methodological framework to approach transnational feminist translation studies, emphasizing the (ethical) role translation has in enabling (or disabling) cross-border alliances and in destabilizing (or perpetuating) different regimes of oppression operating in our neoliberal societies. Their article concludes with some practical examples about how this politics of transnational feminist translation can be implemented.

**Şebnem Susam-Saraeva's** article provides strong examples of how differently feminist approaches to understanding, reading and analyzing translations can work across linguistic and very distant strong cultural borders. The author

analyses the informative/liberatory role that ‘birth stories’—women’s personal accounts of giving birth— play in an environment where midwifery and ‘natural birth’ practices are supported (in 1970s/1980s Tennessee, us) and how these stories, translated into Turkish forty years later, suffer if they are not framed, introduced, and explained in order to work with a similar intention and effect. Feminist translation research and analyses thus lay bare the lacunae in translation practices, fostering better practices and fomenting more research and development.

The study of interpretation practices from a feminist transnational perspective is the focus of **Cristina Marey-Castro** and **Maribel Del Pozo-Triviño**’s article. The authors call for a most urgent feminist approach to interpretation practices involving migrant women in contexts of gender violence and/or prostitution in the Spanish state. Marey-Castro and Del Pozo-Triviño highlight the social and ethical aspects of the work of interpreters, who, according to their view, must constantly subject their practice to close scrutiny in order to break down prevailing myths and prejudices that might condition their work and increase migrant women’s vulnerability rather than reduce it.

**Lola Sánchez**’s contribution offers new critical insights into how the well-known feminist manifesto about women’s reproductive health and sexuality *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (*OBOS*) traveled across borders via translation, in this case focusing on how it was received in Spain in the early 1980s, in the first years of democracy following forty years of Franco’s dictatorship. In order to understand how the Spanish translation contributed to a creative movement of subaltern knowledge that challenged expert medical discourse and inspired the emergence of the new discursively self-constituted polit-

ical category *women*, Sánchez provides a detailed analysis of feminism in the target culture, using sources from that time that expose the fragmentary, discontinuous and partial nature of translation.

**Sycorax Collective**, a group of Brazilian translators set up in 2015 with the aim of translating and circulating feminist and anticapitalist texts in Brazilian Portuguese, discuss in their contribution the process of transnational feminist collective translation of *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, by Silvia Federici (2004). Paying special attention to both the textual and paratextual elements of the source text and their translation, Sycorax offer valuable insights into the (counter-hegemonic) editorial processes they embarked on and the (alternative) ways their work circulates in the North-South and South-South axes. They ultimately demonstrate that collective translation among women in Latin America can be thought of as a strategic transnational feminist political project.

Analyzing the English translations of two politically charged novels, Spanish-written Argentine *Pasos bajo el agua* by Alicia Kozameh and French-written Haitian *La danse sur le volcan* by Marie Chauvet, the articles by **Gabriela Yañez** and **Siobhan Meï** reveal the geo/political promises and failures of literary translation in the intricate travels of women writers’ texts. By examining the ways in which the resistant feminist discourses of Kozameh and Chauvet are translated into English, both scholars discuss strategies of rewriting that either enable cross-border exchanges of geo/politically subversive lessons or foreclose the possibility of such transnational feminist dialogues. To do that, the articles employ the conventional methodological tools of descriptive translation studies while also proposing interdisciplinary analytical frameworks to attend to the

geopolitical particularities of the translations at hand. Yañez, centering her analysis on the concept of metonymy, explores the evocative potential of metonymy in translation for repositioning resistant female subjectivities across borders, particularly those under conditions of incarceration. Meï, on the other hand, uniquely brings fashion studies into dialogue with translation studies and transnational feminist studies, and argues for a sustained engagement with the material histories and imagined lives of fashion objects as they travel through modes of cultural transmission such as literary translation. By attending to specific global circulations of various gendered objects, embodiments, affects, meaning economies, and resistant subjectivities, both articles expand our analytical perspectives on postcolonial feminist translation practices and transnational feminist possibilities as these materialize in the flows of women's voices.

Last but not least, **Pâmela Berton Costa's** contribution examines textual flows within Latin America, as they travel from Chile and are received in Brazil. Focusing on the Brazilian Portuguese translation of *La casa de los espíritus*, by Isabel Allende, Berton Costa demonstrates how the limited recognition of the feminist aspects of Allende's literary work can further impoverish that aspect of the translation. Berton Costa proposes and justifies deliberate feminist interventions in the possible retranslation in order to enhance and bring out these aspects. Her work establishes the need for interconnected feminist translation projects in Latin America.

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This special issue confirms that a plural, intersectional and transnational conception of feminisms requires, no doubt, a critical articulation of translation. After all, the transforma-

tive potential of feminist theories and perspectives is only possible through transnational dialogues (Davis & Evans, 2011 [2016]). In the dialogical processes of cross-border encounters and translational reconfiguration, the political force and epistemological capacity of discourses expand constructively responding to situated difference and experiences. There is significant work to do in the growing field of transnational feminist translation studies. May there be much more such work in Spanish, Portuguese, English and many of the other languages of the world.

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