

From the Editor: On Translation

With this issue I would like to discuss an upcoming change to our Book Review section: we have begun to commission reviews of recent translations of women's writings into English with the expectation that they will start to appear in the issue after next (Spring 2012). We have no aspirations to become a major venue for reviews of translations, and most of the review section will continue to be devoted to monographs. We do hope, though, that this alteration in our review policy will signal the importance that the journal attaches to the international dimensions of women's literature, to the labor of translation, and to the rich terrain that the activity of translation offers for feminist study.

Traditionally the Book Review section of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* has focused on monographs, to the exclusion of a range of publications such as scholarly editions, anthologies, biographies, memoirs, and translations. I have followed my predecessors in adopting this policy with few exceptions simply because of the constraints of space and time. As a biannual, the journal cannot publish more than thirty reviews a year—twenty is more typical—without straining its print and postal budget, not to mention the energies of its staff. The Book Review Editor, therefore, is always making difficult decisions: every inclusion entails vast swaths of exclusion, inevitably ignoring important work that has been done in feminist literary study. Limiting ourselves to certain academic genres has been regrettable but necessary. Monographs have presented the obvious choice, given their centrality to literature as both a scholarly field and a profession, in spite of the longer shelf-life and greater influence that scholarly editions, biographies, or translations often have.

There are compelling reasons for devoting more space to any or all of these genres. They are crucial to the continued study of women's writing, and they suffer from derogation in the academy, often not "counting" as scholarly labor in the way that criticism and analysis do. I have singled out translations, though, because attending to them is especially in keeping with the journal's longstanding mission. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, after all, proclaims itself to be a journal devoted to all women's literature. This global scope has been part of the journal's identity from its earliest years. In her first editorial preface, printed in the journal's third issue (Spring 1983), Shari Benstock observed, "*Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* will continue to publish criticism of women's writing across a broad historical and international spectrum" (p. 5). When Holly Laird became Editor, she deepened this commitment, noting in her first preface

(Fall 1988), “I would particularly like to see more essays about Afro-American, Third-World, Western European, and other literatures beyond the borders of Anglo-American writing—by women—and will seek submissions in those areas” (p. 194). When I became Editor in 2005, one of the central goals I articulated was to extend Laird’s efforts—pursued throughout her editorship and seen, among other places, in the special topics issues *Women Writing Across the World* (Fall 2001) and *Where in the World is Transnational Feminism?* (Spring 2004, guest edited by Shirley Geok-lin Lim)—to increase the journal’s international purview.

I have been delighted over the past few years to have distinguished scholars from both inside and outside the United States agree to serve on the editorial board (some of these appointments will be announced in upcoming issues). The journal has benefited greatly from their insight. I also have been pleased to see an increase in submissions from outside North America even as we have continued to receive excellent work from scholars in the United States and Canada. Some of these international submissions have dealt with Anglophone literature, but many have not. With this increase, we gradually have been able to publish, or have forthcoming, more articles dealing with literatures outside of Britain and America. At the same time, we have remained attentive to important and exciting scholarship in our more traditional areas, as for example, in the special issue Kate Adams edited on *U. S. Women Writing Race* (Fall 2009), in an upcoming issue on *Women and Anglo-American Periodicals* (Fall 2011), and in several articles in the present issue.

My hope is that through these efforts we are able to provide those who read our journal consistently with an opportunity—whatever their areas of interest or expertise—to gain some sense of the latest developments in feminist scholarship in a variety of world literatures. If significant parallels become visible through juxtapositions of articles, or if we are able to help foster dialogue across boundaries, that is all to the better. If nothing else, these efforts should remind us of the smallness of our specializations without diluting the quality of work within those areas; that is, to help ensure that the minute focus one must typically retain in order to undertake rigorous study is not paired with a narrowness of vision, particularly when we address questions of gender.

Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature remains an Anglophone journal, with articles published in English even when they deal with non-Anglophone literatures, and with non-English quotations first appearing in the original language and then translated. The limitation is necessary, but I believe this Anglophone venue can—perhaps even by virtue of its being Anglophone—provide more occasions for pondering the implications for feminist study of linguistic barriers and bridges, particularly of English’s

twenty-first-century status—with all the accompanying entitlements and limitations—as *lingua franca*. While English speakers enjoy the most power globally as an audience, our world of meaning is also the smallest, the most penned-in by the concessions and labors of those who provide access to other worlds. An Anglophone audience, especially a monolingual one, thus enjoys a mode of existence that combines epistemological privilege with linguistic dependency. Ongoing exploration of this state of affairs seems worthwhile.

The centrality of translation—with all its difficulties and complexities—was brought home to me in the Fall of 2010 when I had the privilege of meeting Sheila Malovany-Chevallier and Constance Borde, who had just published the first unabridged translation into English of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* (*The Second Sex*). That the only available English translation of this central feminist text before 2010, Howard Parshley's of 1953, was incomplete and flawed, was a fact of which I was vaguely aware. I had never really paused to contemplate the significance of this fact until I heard Malovany-Chevallier and Borde speak to an audience at the University of Tulsa about their many years of grappling with the complexities of Beauvoir's language and thought, as well as their explanation of what had been cut from or obscured by the earlier translation. That a text so central to second-wave feminism in the United States wrought its influence through a defective translation is rather stunning to consider. It must in some way alter how one thinks about this era of political mobilization and cultural transformation, particularly in a transatlantic and international context. Counterfactuals are all too tempting to consider: Would anything have changed with a fuller translation more attuned to the nuances of Beauvoir's thought? Would American feminism and French feminism be any closer in tenor and orientation than they are now? On the other hand, would many Americans have failed to read a longer book? The list of questions could sprawl on. Their talk, a revised version of which was published as an Innovations piece in the last issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* (Fall 2010), catalyzed my thinking about the centrality of translation to feminist literary scholarship. It convinced me that translation is a crucial issue, underlying so much of what we do and so much of what we hope for, that attending to it more directly seems necessary.

Of course, translation is a longstanding and crucial feminist issue, one rife with questions of power, exclusion, appropriation, and erasure. This topic also has been addressed in articles my predecessor editors have published, and in fact the journal has been attentive to the roles of language and translation in feminist literary history since its founding.¹ The failings of the Parshley translation of *Le deuxième sexe* have been the subject of compelling analysis by scholars such as Sherry Simon, as have the

complexities attending the reception of French feminism in the United States through translations—sometimes flawed—of the writings of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva.² The issue is one of the oldest attached to questions of female intellect, literacy, and writing. In the words of Simon, “translation was the means through which women, beginning in the European Middle Ages, particularly, were able to gain access to the world of letters” (p. 2). Lori Chamberlain likewise notes, “in some historical periods women were allowed to translate precisely *because* it was defined as a secondary activity.”³ Similarly, Japanese women of the Heian period played a central role in the formation of the kana phonetic syllabary, partly because only male courtiers were taught to write with classical Chinese characters. The flourishing of vernacular literature that followed from the development of this syllabary thus owes something to the linguistic excluding of women.⁴ Even as translation provided a path for many women to authorship, women’s exclusion from some languages, especially classical ones, figured centrally in early modern Western European discussions of women’s education. As Margaret Ferguson has shown, debates over female literacy were intertwined with contests among classical and vernacular languages, which in turn signified rivalries among nation-states for imperial ascendancy.⁵

Arguments abound over what constitutes a feminist form of translation, an activity inevitably tangled in the complexities of intimacy, voice, intention, and power as is seen in the traditional descriptions of it through metaphors of seduction, adultery, cuckoldry, rape, colonization, and childbirth.⁶ Scholarship on the feminist dimensions of translation, as well as on the impact of translation on feminist scholarship, is established, multi-layered, expansive, and dynamic. A bibliography on the topic would be much longer than this preface, and I can do no more here than touch upon some of the major strands of conversation on this issue, with apologies to the many scholars whose work on this topic I have not mentioned.

As we open the review section to translations, I am filled with questions: How best to approach this topic? How to avoid a superficial tokenism of internationalism, a sort of Christmas-around-the-world showcase without intellectual sharpness or depth? How—if at all—not to reiterate the linguistic colonization already performed by English? Above all, how to ensure that reviews be done well? Answers will be sorted out as we go along, learning from our readers and from those whom we ask to review. I welcome reflections and suggestions, especially from those with a background in this area. I have decided that we will focus on translations of non-Anglophone writing into English partly because we are better positioned to select books, recruit reviewers, and edit reviews of English-language translations, but also because Anglophone writings typically receive more attention globally—

both in English and in translation—than do non-Anglophone ones. This is especially true for an Anglophone audience, which I hazard to say is the one that has the most to learn about women’s writings in other languages.

We shall begin, then, with trying to make non-Anglophone languages and literatures slightly more visible and audible by attending to some translations of them. We also will feature translation as a crucial form of intellectual labor that should be the subject of analysis, assessment, and feminist critique. I welcome nominations of qualified reviewers and of translations to review.

I will leave the readers to judge whether it is a happy accident or irony that in a preface in which I have called attention to the feminist dimensions of translation and international dialogue, the new board members I am introducing include two Americanists located outside of the Americas and a scholar of German literature located in the United States. Sarah Gleeson-White is Senior Lecturer in American Literature at the University of Sydney. With interests in American regionalism as well as early film writing, she is the author of *Strange Bodies: Gender and Identity in the Novels of Carson McCullers* (2003) and articles in *PMLA* (forthcoming), *Journal of American Studies*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, *Southern Literary Journal*, and elsewhere on William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Flannery O’Connor, and Cormac McCarthy. From 2008 to 2010 she was Vice President of the Australian New Zealand American Studies Association and currently is serving on the Executive Committee of the Society for the Study of Southern Literature. She has an essay on the Hollywood South forthcoming in the *Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the American South*, is working on a book on regionalism and mass culture titled “The Mechanics of Regionalism,” and is producing an edition of Faulkner’s Twentieth-Century Fox screenplays.

Cathryn Halverson is Assistant Professor of American Literature and Culture at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, and until 2010 she was Associate Professor of English and American Studies at Kobe City University of Foreign Studies, Japan. A scholar of nineteenth-century American literature, especially of women writers in the American West, she is the author of *Maverick Autobiographies: Women Writers and the American West, 1900-1936* (2004) and *Playing House in the American West: Western Women’s Life Narratives, 1839-1987* (forthcoming), as well as of several articles in journals including *American Studies*, *Arizona Quarterly*, and *College Literature*. She has been a fellow at the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Huntington Library, and Smith College, and in 2008-09 she was awarded a Fulbright Lecture/Research Fellowship at the University of

Bergen, Norway. She has begun a new project on women writers and the *Atlantic Monthly*.

Monika Shafi is Elias Ahuja Professor of German in the University of Delaware's Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and is also the current chair of the Department of Women and Gender Studies. She has published widely on twentieth-century and twenty-first-century German literature, on women writers and gender, and on postcolonialism and the literature of migration, among other topics. She is the author of *Balancing Acts: Intercultural Encounters in Contemporary German and Austrian Literature* (2001), *Gertrud Kolmar: Eine Einführung in das Werk* (1995; "Gertrud Kolmar: An Introduction to Her Work"), and *Utopische Entwürfe in der Literatur von Frauen* (1989; "Utopian Concepts in Women's Literature"). Among her many articles and book chapters, in publications such as *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*, *Modern Austrian Literature*, and *The German Quarterly*, are essays on women writers including Gertrud Kolmar, Katharina Hacker, Judith Hermann, and Monika Maron. Her new book, *Housebound: Selfhood and Domestic Space in Contemporary German Fiction*, will be published in Fall 2012 by Camden House.

In keeping with the cyclical structure of the editorial board, I also would like to thank Karen Kilcup, Phyllis Lassner, and Kathryn McKnight, three exceptionally dedicated and generous members of the board who have just completed their terms.

The journal continues to benefit from an extraordinarily capable staff, and I never cease to be impressed with how our operations maintain apparently seamless continuity even as some of our interns cycle out of the office and new interns join it. This is of course to the credit of the interns themselves and to our managing editor Karen Dutoi. After a semester of sharing the Book Review Editor position with Lexi Stuckey, Jen Krisuk has finished her tenure so that she can complete her dissertation in Victorian literature. Jacob Ball also is just about to step down as Subscriptions Manager, turning to his dissertation in early American studies. I will not say goodbye to either of them, as I will be advising them both on their dissertations, but I would like to thank them for their excellent work and say that we will miss seeing them in the office regularly.

In addition to her usual activities, Karen Dutoi has been hard at work over the last year planning a new website for the journal. The results can be seen at <http://www.utulsa.edu/tswl>. The site has a new look to match the printed journal, amplified browsing features, improved compatibility with all web browsers, and new content, including tables of contents for every issue going back to volume one. I would like to thank Jenn Fuller in

particular for the effort she made—well above the call of duty—to see that all this content was uploaded in time for the site’s debut. Jenn also very graciously agreed to oversee our new Twitter account, @TSWLjournal. If you are on Twitter, please consider following us. We hope readers will be pleased with the journal’s more robust virtual presence.

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NOTES

I would like to thank Thomas Buoye, Erin Riddle, and Susan Strehle for recommending some of the sources I have cited here, and I am grateful to several members of the editorial board for the excellent suggestions they made on a draft of this preface.

¹ For just a few examples, see Katharina M. Wilson, “The Old Hungarian Translation of Hrotsvit’s *Dulcinius*: History and Analysis,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 1 (1982), 177-87; Deborah Cameron, “Is There an Anglo-American Feminist Linguistics?” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 12 (1993), 223-27; and Jennifer Wallace, “Confined and Exposed: Elizabeth Carter’s Classical Translations,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature*, 22 (2003), 315-34.

² Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (New York: Routledge, 1996); see especially chapter 3, “Missed Connections: Transporting French Feminism to Anglo-America,” 86-110. Simon’s commentary on the Parshley translation is on pp. 90-91. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

³ Lori Chamberlain, “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 13 (1988), 470, citing Margaret P. Hanney, ed., *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1985).

⁴ Tomiko Yoda, *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Constructions of Japanese Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 82-84.

⁵ Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido’s Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁶ For one example of this debate, see Rosemary Arrojo, “Fidelity and the Gendered Translation,” *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Redaction*, 7 (1994), 147-63. On traditional metaphors of translation see also, for example, Chamberlain, “Gender and the Metaphorics.”

