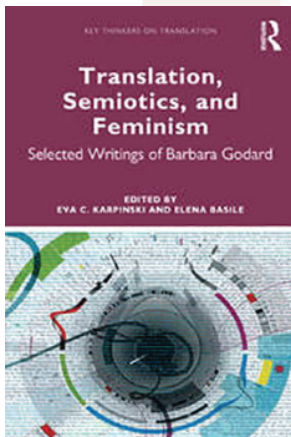


In, Across, and Beyond *Translation, Semiotics, and Feminism*

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BY: Vasiliki Misiou



Eva C. Karpinski and Elena Basile

Translation, Semiotics, and Feminism. Selected Writings of Barbara Godard

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“At Last! At Last!” These are the very first words Kathy Mezei wrote in her endorsement for Eva C. Karpinski and Elena Basile’s edited collection of essays on translation by Barbara Godard. The relief and satisfaction expressed by Kathy Mezei is palpable. Godard, an influential critic, translator, editor, and one of the leading figures in feminist translation theories, taught at York University, Toronto, from 1971 until 2010. She authored several articles, book chapters, and reviews and edited and translated a dozen books, among others. Yet, she never published a single-authored monograph, not even in the field of feminist translation studies she had helped develop. Godard’s two former students thus decided to put together a collection that spotlights her numerous and diverse contributions to several areas in translation studies, illustrating its complex and interweaving interaction with other fields of study.

The collection comprises 16 essays written by Godard, among which are two previously unpublished essays and two essays that have been written and published in French. Between the 1980s and her untimely death in 2010, Godard widened and deepened her thinking, sharing her pioneering ideas about gender and translation, semiotics and translation, the intersections between Deleuzian philosophy and translation studies,

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and translation in the context of settler colonialism in the Americas. As Karpinski and Basile stress, “these are just a few directions of Godard’s far-reaching and dynamic investigations. [...] Her writing challenges the ideological neutrality of translation, expands its conceptual paradigms and cultivates a deep awareness of the social relations of address that orient meaning in translation” (2021: 1.13-1.42).

These 16 representative texts range from academic essays, conference papers, and prefaces to excerpts from Godard’s translator’s journal. Karpinski and Basile divided the collection into four thematic parts, which cover feminist theories, comparative cultural studies, semiotics, ethics, and the embodied praxis of translation, with a wide range of topics being discussed and investigated. The two editors provide an introduction to help readers navigate this maze of insightful and intriguing ideas. This eloquent and critical piece gives an insider’s glimpse into Godard’s conversation with conceptual and methodological explorations, key ideas, and original thinking. Additionally, they offered guiding introductory essays to each part, elucidating the material presented in each section. Their decision to preface the 16 essays with one-paragraph synopses reveals their goal to ensure that Godard’s influence and her theoretically and methodologically innovative contributions will be fully understood and appreciated by readers. These introductory texts set the tone for the papers featured therein and, at the same time, highlight interconnections between them.

Part 1, ‘Theory and praxis of feminist translation studies,’ consists of four chapters that examine Godard’s take on feminism, feminist theories of language and writing, and her very own practice as a translator of Quebec women writers such as Nicole Brossard, France Théoret, and Antoinette Maillet. In Chapter 1 (pp. 5-10), ‘The translator as She: The relationship between writer and translator (1983),’ Godard shares her views on the “puzzling” nature of translation and invites readers to explore what she sees as main challenges in translation – that is, a) the multiple systems in which translation takes place, all inextricably linked to production and reception, b) the relationship between writer and translator which is both “respectful and subversive,” and c) the incessant process of “translation/creation/invention.” Gendering the translator as “she” and speaking from this standpoint, Godard redefines translation as “creative transposition,” as “an act of reading and interpretation that entails multiple pleasures” (p. 5). In Chapter 2 (pp. 1-18), ‘Language and sexual difference: The case of translation (1984),’ Godard draws readers’ attention to the need for new linguistic means, styles, and aesthetics that will be able to “convey the realities of the female body,” women’s experiences and their relation to language (p. 15). Focusing on the challenges encountered in translating women’s and, in particular, feminist writing and drawing from her experience as translator of Nicole Brossard’s *L’Amèr*, Godard points to issues raised when it comes to translation and sexual difference and calls for further research in the “contested terrain of the genders of language” (p. 15).

Following up on the topic of gender, language, feminist writing, and translation, in Chapter 3 (pp. 19-27), 'Theorizing feminist discourse/translation (1989),' which remains one of her most seminal papers, Godard delves into her theory of feminist translation as feminist poetics. She encourages readers to view translation as "production, not reproduction" (23), as a form of rewriting that enables the multiple possibilities and interpretations of the text to reveal themselves and the genesis of meaning through the transformation taking place – a transformation performed by the feminist translator who actively engages in the creation of meaning. Favoring the "womanhandling" of the text by feminist translators who, through creative interventions, reinstate difference and claim visibility, thus celebrating agency and their authority as co-creators, Godard urges toward politically and ethically conscious practices of translating that will facilitate the creation and traveling of new knowledge. In the last paper of this part (pp. 28-49), 'Translating (with) the speculum (1991),' Godard explores further the overlapping systems of gender and translation, which she sees as relational and operating within economies of exchange. Inspired by Luce Irigaray's critique of male-dominated systems of sign exchange and sharing with her the vision of an "alternative economy of signification," as Karpinski and Basile note (p. 28), Godard investigates the pragmatics and ethics of translators' choices underlining the importance of centering attention on "who is speaking to whom and under what conditions" (p. 43).

Part 2, "At an oblique angle": Figures and vectors of translation across continents,' engages readers in Godard's journey of addressing different modalities of translation, this time zeroing in on various "topoi" and vectors of translation that mold its role(s) and function(s) across time and space shaping in turn the cultural exchange occurred. In Chapter 5 (pp. 55-81), 'Writing between cultures (1997),' Godard directly shares her wish to explore "systematic interferences between languages in Canada" (p. 55) at two different historical periods in Canadian culture that reflect the genesis of two diametrically opposed modes of translation, colonial and decolonial. Through her study of the 17th-century writings of Marie de la Incarnation and a thorough reading of the contemporary play *Almighty Voice and His Wife* by Daniel Moses, Godard shows that the former trope of translation operates as "con/version" (p. 58), whereas the latter as "re/version" (p. 59), raising questions about the possibility and role of decolonial translation within a context marked by settler-colonial hegemony. As the collection's editors underline, this paper strongly indicates that "the passage between languages is always situated in a particular history and is shaped by specific 'linguistic and cultural interference'" (p. 55). From her analysis of forms of translation in colonial Canada, readers follow Godard to her investigation of carriers of cultural production and exchange in the Americas in Chapter 6 (pp. 82-103), 'Relational logics: Of linguistics and other transactions in the Americas (2005).' Here, Godard explores forms of violence and resistance within the complex interplay of language and space in the Brazilian,

Canadian, and Quebec contexts. Drawing from the work of visual artists, directors, and writers who subvert settler narratives in these contexts and seeing translation as “borderland” (p. 89), Godard expands on three significant topoi of translation that circulate therein: a) the myth of Babel, b) the myth of the Border, and c) the cannibalizing trope of Anthropophagy, pointing to the capacity of different tropes of translation to “enact different logics of cultural contact” (p. 82).

Focusing on translation as subversive – of norms, institutions, and cultural fields – in Chapter 7 (pp. 104-124), ‘Translation as reception: Quebec women writers in English Canada (2002),’ one of the two essays in this collection previously available only in French, Godard investigates the decisions made about translated literature from Quebec in English Canada in the 1980s. She maintains that despite the transformative potential of experimental feminist writings by Brossard and Théoret, no impact was felt, and the English Canadian literature remains unaltered. By focusing on the dialogues between Anglo- and fran-cophone feminists, Godard asks readers to consider the “dynamism of interre-lated cultural fields and [...] translation as a logic of relationships” (p. 120). Drawing from Brossard, she too believes that translation is not about the creation of a new text by eliminating another but rather about “augmenting the text by including its variants,” contributing to meaning-making and enhancing “discursive relationships” (p. 120), which despite their complexity allow for the articulation of new values from a feminist perspective. The last paper (pp. 125-136) in this section, ‘Millennial musings on translation (2000),’ starts with Godard wondering how to think of translation and language at the turn of the new millennium: “Will translation be a keyword for the 21st century? And if so, in what semantic networks? Will translation’s salience ... create continuity between past and present, or effect radical change?” (p. 125). By outlining major conceptualizations of translation in the Western tradition – translation as *confusion*, *transmission*, and *production* – she investigates forces of linguistic homogenization/diversification and the role of translation practices and poetics in fostering contingencies, cultural and historical, in any encounter between languages against the “cosmopolitan ideal of universal beauty” and “the postulates of transparency and rationality” (p. 135) of language engineering with the use of computers. Yet, as Godard contends, “whether translation is a process of enfolding an outside, or of unfolding to an outside in a movement of expansion” (p. 135) is a question yet to be answered.

Part 3, ‘Semiotics and ethics of translation,’ comprises essays that mirror Godard’s interest in different philosophies and theories of language and culture. Engaging with the poststructuralist theories of Judith Butler and Jacques Derrida, Antoine Berman’s ethical approach to alterity, and Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy of the event, Godard examines them from the perspective of translation, which she sees as sign production, pointing to their potentials and limitations, calling for ethical response

to an address of “new relations” (p. 148) that emerge in various fields of everyday life, and shedding light on future paths to research. Chapter 9 (pp. 141-165), ‘Between performative and performance: Translation and theatre in the Canadian/Quebec context (2000),’ further reflects Godard’s view of translation as semiosis beyond meaning-making. Reading with Butler, Derrida, and J. L. Austin, Godard investigates translation as “the third term” (p. 143), drawing links between performance as translation and the performativity of translation. By questioning the emphasis placed on the power within the language and discursive constructs and drawing attention to speech act theory and the use of language in volatile social contexts, she emphasizes the perlocutionary or performative power of translation when a theatre text is staged. The intended audience perceives language and national identity in a certain, distinct way. Drawing on examples from translations of theatre texts from Quebec into the Anglo-Canadian context, she shows that ideology and certain sociopolitical and historical constraints affect the economy of the cultural exchange performed. In her analysis, thus, she moves toward the relationalities of translation, maintaining that it “orients itself towards neither source nor target [...] but cuts across them in unpredictable combinations” (p. 150). That is, Godard perceives translation as part of a cluster of semiotic systems capable of effecting social change. Her essay on Berman (pp. 166-185) that follows, ‘The ethics of translating: Antoine Berman and the “ethical turn” in translation (2011),’ available in English for the first time, studies his theorizing of the ethics of translating. Despite agreeing with him on the crucial role of translation in responding ethically to the call of the other, Godard sheds light on those aspects of his theory and approach to translation that are considered as addressing the other only to return to the self. Thus, reading with Anthony Pym and conversing with Henri Meschonnic, Lawrence Venuti, and Gayatri Spivak, she calls readers’ attention to the act of translation and its ideological, social, and historical situatedness. Throughout the essay, Godard stresses the need for an “ethics of difference” and a politics of translation, “resituating the ethics of translation within the sociopolitical field” and sharing her own “ethics of translation” (p. 166).

In Chapter 11 (pp. 186-213), ‘Deleuze and translation (2000),’ Godard discusses her philosophical encounter with Deleuze while translating Brossard’s *L’Amèr* and explains why she decided to explore his “implicit theory of translation as a creative swerve” (p. 187) and engage in conversation with this pragmatic thinking about language. She borrows his concept of the *fold* as it enables her to foster her conceptualization of translation and the development of a new vocabulary for translation, thus seeing it as less concerned with “being” and as more open to “becoming” and to the formation of “new assemblages” (p. 186). Inspired by Deleuze, Godard expands her translation theory, pointing out its openness to “infinite semiosis, proliferation, and creative becomings” (p. 138).

The final essay of this section (pp. 214-224), 'Bodies for examination, or not diagnosed yet (2009),' explores embodiment. Published for the first time, it is a talk Godard gave just over a year before her death. Although she has previously shared her views on the relationship between translation and embodiment, this time, she revisited *diagnostics*, wishing to "examine ways of reading physiological changes and of producing bodies as texts within the different interpretive possibilities determined by various technologies for representing symptoms" (p. 215). Informed by biosemiotics, Godard explores the body, both translated and translating, as an object of examination and as a site of knowledge production, with meaning being made through the interpretation of signs and codes. She emphasizes the ethical problems of diagnosis and raises "the issue of epistemological challenges of translating between the biomedical model of body-as-machine and the psychosomatic or ecological model of body-as-process" (p. 138). Drawing on views on corporeality – Peircean semiotics, Foucauldian archaeology, and genealogy, critical disability studies, and cultural studies on medical imaging – she explores the body as "a cultural surface" onto which "social expectations and ideological meanings" (p. 138) can easily be discerned calling for "resistance and reclaiming" against the medical industry which denies patients, and in particular female patients, "the possibility of other corporeal becomings" (p. 139).

Part 4, 'The translator as subject / the subject of translation,' casts light on Godard's views as a practicing translator. It consists of an unpublished conference paper on translation paratexts, two translator prefaces, and some journal entries. All four texts allow Godard to share her feminist "interdiscursive" and "interanimating" theories of translation while engaged with translating Quebec's experimental feminist writings. Chapter 13 (pp. 229-232), 'Hors d'Oeuvre: The translator's preface (1987),' offers insights into Godard's ideas regarding paratextual elements. Drawing on Gérard Genette's concept of peritext, she reminds readers of the importance of prefaces, which act "between the text and the extra-textual" enacting "movements in cultural conventions" (p. 230). This also enables her to expand on her views of the translator-function in the text, seeing it as related to the presence or absence of the translator's signature through the prefaces appended to translations. Therefore, the lack of a preface, Godard maintains, reflects "a poetics of transparency [...] an attempt to naturalize the translation into the target culture." In contrast, its presence "grounds the meaning of the translation in its transformation," with translation thus being seen as "part of a complex system of meaning" (p. 230). By exploring French-English and English-French translations of literary texts from Canada, she concludes her essay by centering attention on the "nuanced differences among [...] prefatorial types, especially, when they coexist" (pp. 231-232). She asks readers to regard "every text [as] a pre-text," considering that "[t]here is nothing outside the work" (p. 231).

Chapter 14 (pp. 233-237), 'Pref-ace to Lovhers (1980),' concerns Godard's reflections on feminist translation poetics. Still considered one of the most influential texts on the (feminist) translator as a subject actively participating in meaning-making, it invites readers to follow Godard in her "historical adventure" as a "subject" of translation (pp. 233-234) and her trajectory that has shaped her theoretical approach to feminist translation. Seeing translation as "a practice of reading/writing" (p. 233), she offers a self-reflexive meta-text on her translation of Brossard's *Amantes*, focusing on the challenges encountered in translating from French into English, critically analyzing the text and outlining its patterns and feminist intertextuality, and situating this key work within Brossard's oeuvre.

Continuing with her reflexive pieces on translating, Chapter 15 (pp. 238-247), 'A Translator's Journal (1995),' hosts Godard's journal entries produced while she was working on the novel *Picture Theory* by Brossard. These entries mirror her approach to translation as this was molded by her feminist praxis of translation and her encounters with semiotic, linguistic, and psychoanalytic theories. From "I" (writer) to "you" (readers) to "third person" (the translator), all positions, Godard suggests, can be "reconfigured" when the work of translation is perceived as rewriting, as dialogic research. In this vein, she underlines that the translating subject is always "a subject of transfer and transformation" and that the final version of the text is never "realizable" (p. 247). As she claims, there "are only approximations to be actualized within the conditions of different enunciative exchanges," with translation being "an art of approach" (p. 247).

Similarly, in Chapter 16 (pp. 248-257), 'The Moving Intimacy of Language (2004),' Godard highlights that "texts do not reflect but produce subjects through their socio-linguistic mediation" (p. 250). She asserts that translation, as writing and rewriting, engages in a dynamic process that is both "corporeal" and "discursive," enabling "one to get outside the self" (p. 250). Hence, Brossard of a particular year meets Brossard of other years with multiple identities comprising the self. All parts of the subject are "functions of thought, emotion, and lived experience" (p. 248) and all related to language. Citing Brossard (p. 20), Godard contends that "[t]o be translated is to be interrogated not only in what one believes oneself to be but in one's way of thinking in a language, and of being thought by the same language" (p. 252). As a form of reading and rewriting, translation thus "actualizes" the virtuality of reading and the "infinite potentiality" of language to perform acts of representation and produce a "redistribution of linguistic value" (p. 252).

The present collection encompasses writings that reflect Godard's thought-provoking, wide-ranging, and transformative voice, and this is one of its most outstanding merits. Although Karpinski and Basile have not provided the reasoning behind the selection of the specific 16 essays mentioned above, the volume bears testimony

to the diversity, expansion, and flexibility of Godard's "holographic" thinking (p. xiv), reflecting the multiple perspectives she sees at once and making readers engage with new, diverse angles of perception. The four sections help editors in their attempt to present Godard as a key thinker of translation as they invite readers to participate in what Sherry Simon calls in the foreword that prefaces the collection "two decades of creative ferment, as translation becomes a powerful intellectual and creative practice" (x). Godard has contributed to expanding theorizing in translation studies, a field in open dialogue with semiotics, feminism, and other fields, and to proliferating conversations with several theories and philosophies. The remarkable coverage and variety of methodological and theoretical approaches discussed, negotiated, de- and re-constructed, as well as the investigation of Godard's translation criticism and practice reflective of her very own critical and ideological articulations of the process of translation, makes this volume mandatory reading for anyone interested in translation studies and its inextricable intertwinement with semiotics and feminism. The volume celebrates Godard's eclectic and exciting range of thinking that mirrors her critical encounters, resounding impact, and immense contribution.

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AUTHOR

Vasiliki Misiou Assistant Professor, School of English Language and Literature, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

