

## GENDER TRANSLATION AND TRANSCREATION ANALYSIS IN IRISH POEMS TODAY

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### **Abstract**

*Gender studies have demonstrated the relevance and the importance of women in literature. Thus, they are subjects of the poems instead of the objects and talk about socio-cultural themes as sexuality and belonging. The current paper attempts to read the translations presented in the book *Poem-ing beyond borders* (Wolkoff, 2011), both as translational and feminist practices that have implied in the theory of Transcreation (Campos, 1977). For this, two feminine poets and two poems of each one were analyzed: Anne Le Marquand Hartigan (“Without Hindrance” and “Possession”) and Kerry Hardie (“We Change the Map” and “The Return”). The transcreated poems show how Wolkoff was not just concerned about structural issues but to demonstrate historical aspects of feminine approach.*

**Keywords:** *Gender translation. Transcreation. Irish poems.*

The Cultural Turn, in the 1980's, demonstrated the importance of gender and translation in Cultural Studies. Both matters of gender and translation have influenced the development of discussions on sexuality and national belonging, particularly, for Irish Studies. The feminist approach in literature and in translation coincides with (post)colonialism. The current paper attempts to read the translations presented in the book *Poem-ing beyond borders* (Wolkoff, 2011), both as translational and feminist practices that have implied in the theory of Transcreation (Campos, 1977).

Recently, feminists started to use the term “gender” as a way to refer to social organization between sexes, predominantly as cultural constructs (particularly, seen in the works of Judith Butler). Also, the term was proposed by the ones who defended that research about women would change paradigms regarding Gender Studies (SCOTT, 1989).

Thus, gender is sociably built. It refers to social and sexual roles, dressing ways, value systems imposed by the dominant, male culture. In the patriarchal, social system, women were responsible for looking after children and the house, they were secondary figures, because men were the ones who provided the maintenance. Lotbinère-Harwood (1991) explains that comparatively to women, translation is considered as a reproductive task, an inferior role in the line of production. In this sense, men would be the original text and women, the translated one.

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Feminine studies have shifted this point of view. Historically and for too long, women remained silent, reproducing a cultural pattern that excluded the feminine figure from the public scene. Through the years, women started a process of legitimacy, building identities that are free of their oppressive, silenced and invisible past.

This fact has changed the role of women and translation in literature. In other words, women are not a reproduction, they are original texts, subjects of their own stories, the same way translated texts, which have gained a new status in the theory of transcreation.

According to this theory by Haroldo, Augusto de Campos and Decio Pignatari, the process of translation involves several elements which value the material components of the word, such as phonic and graphical features of the text, as well as the value of assonance, alliteration, internal rhymes and the syntactic structure of the original text. (AMARAL, 2013). Therefore, it is not enough to translate the sense of the word; it is necessary to recreate the text, restore its original structure in another language. Thereby, translation becomes a “transcreation”.

## **Gender translation and Transcreation in Irish Poems Today**

The book *Poem-ing beyond borders* by Gisele Wolkoff (2011) is an example of transcreation and cultural translation of the issue of women. Palacios (2011, p.203) explains that the author

is interested in women writer’s poetic strategies as they engage in the ‘various social problematizations of belonging and fragmentation’ in their belonging to a nation, a literary tradition, a common sexual identity, but also in their disaffection regarding normative identities and patriarchal institutions that consign them to the margins (PALACIOS, 2011, p.203).

According to Palacios (2011, p. 203), “Reinforcing intercultural dialogue is one of the stated objectives of this bilingual anthology, which has resulted from both a literary research project on contemporary Irish and Portuguese women poets”. Also, she asserts that the author’s contribution “consists in exploring the cultural and social ties between contemporary women poets in Ireland and Portugal. Her research has necessarily been informed by current debates in comparative literature, feminist critical theory and present-day poetics of resistance”.

From Poem-ing beyond borders, two poets were chosen (Anne Hartigan and Kerry Hardie) and four poems (“*Without hindrance*”, “*Possession*”, “*We change the map*” and “*The return*”) are the focus of our attention here. We shall look into gender issues as products of transcreation and cultural translation.

### **Sexuality in Anne Le Marquand Hartigan Poems**

Anne Hartigan is an activist feminist and was inspired by the Anglo-Irish tradition to break social and artistic rules. She writes about sexuality and the desire for freedom. Also, she writes about the fight against oppression and submission. Painter, playwright and poet, she is concerned with questioning feminine identity in Ireland.

Therefore, through writing, the author writes about the feminine world, the longing for freedom and equal rights. Among the themes involved in her writing are pre-Christian myths, relationship between mothers and daughters, the feminine body as both an expression of freedom and that of life provider.

In the poem “*Without Hindrance*”, Hartigan talks about the lover’s desire through the five senses. The poem is a note, in which the reader is an intruder. It is an example of experimentalism because of its structure that suggests women’s shapes, a metaphorical depiction of sensuousness through the way that the words are distributed on the page.

In the poem, the lyric-I asserts that when she is with her lover she does not have any disguise. */When I take my clothes off/ /to be with you/ /it is the bare fact/ /of myself./*. Socially, stereotyping women is a constant device, they should have an unachievable perfection. The author deconstructs this idea because the lyric-I has failures, weaknesses and scars, demonstrating how women really are, without disguises. */weaknesses failures/ /scars lie there. It/ /is how I am now./*.

In the second stanza, the five senses are evident. When the lyric-I touches the lover’s skin, she reaches the heart, demonstrating that through the skin it is possible to touch the feeling. */Touching skin takes me straight/ /to the heart. The feeling bit./*. Through a feminist perspective, it is interesting to notice how liberating writing about feelings associated with sensuality and the five senses is.

## WITHOUT HINDRANCE

When I take my clothes off  
to be with you  
it is the bare fact  
of myself. My simple  
body faults  
weaknesses failures  
scares lie there. It  
is how I am now.  
Nakedness is  
what it says. I judge myself  
removing my cheerful disguises.

Touching skin takes me straight  
to the heart. The feeling bit.  
The place I want to give you.  
The place I want to draw you to.

In this poem, Wolkoff (2011, p.113) transcreates some lines. For example, in the first stanza, the line */I judge myself/* was translated as */sei que estou/* which would literally be */I know I am/* instead of */eu me julgo/*. The alliteration of the */s/* sound is kept and it demonstrates that the lyric-I knows that she is showing whom she is, indicating that she has feelings and they are not necessarily cheerful.

In the second stanza, the first word, the verb */touching/* was translated as the noun */o toque/*. The verb suggests an action, a thing that the lyric-I does for a time. But, the noun demonstrates more intimacy and warmth. Also, it is related to the five senses along the poem.

The line */the feeling bit/* was translated as */o todo-sentimento/*. The rhyme between the lines is kept. The noun *bit* is changed for its antonym all because when the lyric-I goes to the lover's heart through the touch, it is possible to express the totality of all the feeling and not just a bit. This is our reading of the transcreation shown yet, there is also the issue of musicality.

As well as the poem below, in the poem "*Possession*" Anne Hartigan talks about sexuality. The lover is involved by the lyric-I and belongs to this one. The desire of taking care while holding the lover in the lyric-I arms is also the desire of possessing the other body. Through the touch */I balance you on the thin skin/* and the breath */I draw you in on my breath/* Hartigan demonstrates the way that the lyric-I starts to possess the lover into an inviting to intimacy.

## SEM IMPEDIMENTO

Quando tiro as minhas roupas  
para estar contigo  
eis o fato nu  
de mim. Minhas simples  
falhas corpóreas  
fraquezas fracassos  
cicatrices expõem-se ali. É  
como sou agora.  
A nudez é  
aquilo que diz. Sei que estou  
removendo os meus disfarces alegres.

O toque da pele leva-me direto  
ao coração. O todo-sentimento  
O lugar que quero te ofertar.  
O lugar para onde quero te levar.

## POSSESSION

I hold you in the crook of my arm  
I hold you in the sweat of my fist  
I balance you on the thin skin  
on the back of my hand

I draw you in on my breath

## POSSESSÃO

Te seguro na dobra do meu braço  
te seguro no suor do meu pulso  
te apoio na pele fina  
do dorso da minha mão

te aproximo da minha respiração

While transcreating this poem, Wolkoff (2011, p.111) conjugated the verbs into the first person of singular of the simple present /*seguro*/, /*apio*/, /*aproximo*/ and used the pronoun /*te*/ to emphasize the intimacy between the lovers. Also, she changed the grammatical order of the verbs and the pronoun to keep the musicality.

In the second line, /*I hold you in the sweat of my fist*/ Wolkoff translated /*fist*/ as /*pulso*/ instead of *punho* to create rhyme between the first and second lines. In the third line /*I balance you on the thin skin*/ the verb /*balance*/ was translated as /*apio*/ instead of /*equilíbrio*/ or /*balanço*/ showing intimacy and safety.

The phrasal verb /*draw in*/ was translated as /*aproximo*/ instead of /*envolvo*/ to keep the alliteration in “S” that suggests that the lyric-I is whispering for the lover, producing a tempting tone.

## Belonging in Kerry Hardie Poems

Kerry Hardie is a journalist, a writer and a poet. She finds inspiration in nature in order to write her poems, in this sense, she illustrates the connection between humanity and the cycles of the natural world. Therefore, her poems confront both the deaths of her loved ones and her own experiences with illness, demonstrating a unique aspect of her poetry: hope. (MATTHEWS, 2009).

According to Entwistle (2011, p. 140) “in Ireland, the differentiating effect of borders – actual, ideological and/or spiritual – has a violently divisive socio-cultural history”.

She continues asserting that in the poem “*We change the map*”, Hardie’s interest is on depicting:

[...] women taking in the geopolitics of identity within differing communal spaces of being and becoming’. [...] The first person plural of

Hardie's title finally acknowledges the political contexts shadowing the assimilation of any individual 'component' in his or her wider 'environment' (ENTWISTLE, 2011, p. 140).

In this poem, Hardie is talking about hope, after the war; not only the Irish war for territory, but, also, women's war, that is, women fighting for recognition, for freedom, for rights. The lyric-I wants to */trace and memorise/ /the shape of every townland in this valley./ /name families, count trees, walls, cattle, gable-ends/ /smoke-soft and tender in the near blue distance./*. This poem points out to how women changed the Irish map, becoming involved with political issues and hoping to find new ways into the Irish social dynamics.

#### WE CHANGE THE MAP

This new map, unrolled, smoothed  
seems innocent as the one we have discarded –  
impersonal as the clocks in rows  
pacing the upper border, showing time-zones.

The colours are pale and clear, the contours  
crisp, decisive, keeping order.  
The new names, lettered firmly, lie quite still  
within the boundaries that the wars spill over.

It is the times.

I have been always one for paths myself.  
The mole's view. Paths and small roads and the next bend.  
Arched trees tunneling to a coin of light.  
No overview, no sense of what lies where.

These days I want to trace and memorise  
the shape of every townland in this valley.  
Name families, count trees, walls, cattle, gable-ends  
smoke-soft and tender in the near blue distance.

#### MUDAMOS O MAPA

Este novo mapa, desenrolado, suavizado  
parece inocente como aquele que jogamos fora –  
impessoal como os relógios alinhados na parede  
medindo o cume, mostrando os fusos-horários.

As cores são pálidas e claras, os contornos  
secos, enrolados, a manter a ordem  
Os novos nomes, solidamente escritos, permanecem  
[perfeitamente intactos  
dentro das fronteiras que as guerras destruíram.

São os tempos.

Eu mesma sempre fui a favor de caminhos próprios.  
A visão estreita. Caminhos e estradinhas e a próxima virada.  
Árvores arqueadas em túnel a procurar um feixe de luz.  
Sem visão ampla, sem o sentido do quê está onde.

Estes dias quero traçar e decorar  
a forma de cada vila deste vale.  
Nomear famílias, contar árvores, paredes, gado, eiras e beiras  
e o fumo suave e sossegado na distância próxima e triste.

The translation of the poem demonstrates some transcreation. In the first stanza, Wolkoff chose the words */jogamos fora/* instead of */descartado/*. In the third line, Hardie's clocks are */in rows/*. In English, the word clock refers to the ones that are on walls, but in Portuguese it does not happen, because the same word refers to clock and watch. Because of that, Wolkoff chose to illustrate the clocks */alinhados na parede/*.

In the fourth stanza the speaker says */I have been always one for paths myself/*. In the translation, this neuter gender is translated into the female */eu mesma sempre fui a favor de caminhos próprios/*. Emphasizing that this poem is about women and their fight, demonstrating that de lyric-I is a woman that fights for space.

The poem ends with a wish for enjoyment. The lyric-I wants to memorise the townland in the valley, counting */gable-ends/* among other things. This expression is translated as */eiras e beiras/* that mean threshing floor and remember the houses of the colonial times in Brazil, when the size of the threshing floor refers to how rich the inhabitant is yet, this cultural specificity present in the language of arrival seems to be of less importance here.

The last words */near blue distance/* was translated as */distância próxima e triste/*, the color blue translates the feeling of sadness, both to recreate culturally the anglo-saxon idea of "blue" and to maintain the alliteration in "s", thus, illustrating how the lyric-I feels about this distance.

Also, the issue of belonging emerges in the poem "*The Return*" in which Kerrie Hardie talks about the feeling of coming back to a special place. The poem has a relieved tone with the house being a metaphor to life, in this case, women's lives. In the first stanza the house is different, because it is not the object of someone's care. It happens with the history of women in literature, in which they stop being the muse of the poets, */being the object/ /of anybody's care or scrutiny/* to be the subjects of their poetry.

In the second stanza, while the lyric-I is describing the old house she (here, because of women's history, it is supposed that the lyric-I is a woman) is wondering how society see women. And these thoughts raise the identity questions in the final stanza. Women are full of internal fragrance, that is knowledge, assurance and thoughts but in the patriarchy society they should look like an old house that is being consumed by plants.

#### THE RETURN

When I came back alone to the house  
it wasn't the same. Something to do  
with not being the object  
of anybody's care or scrutiny—  
Attentive.  
Still.

Like an old house, fallen in,  
lilac growing over the empty doorway,  
blackthorn at the gable end—  
its fruiting of blue-black sloes,  
the dense air  
caught on its thorns.

And I thought, is that what we are like?  
Our own selves,  
unregarded?  
Do we stand somewhere,  
as secret, sufficient, fierce?  
And burdened with fragrance, as lilac?

#### O RETORNO

Quando voltei sozinha à casa  
já não era mais o mesmo. Algo a ver  
com não ser o objeto  
do escrutínio ou cuidado de alguém—  
Atento.  
Calmo.

Como uma casa antiga, decaída,  
os lírios se espalhando pelos vãos dos muros vazios,  
espinheiros negros na empena—  
a sua produção de abrunheiros azul-acinzentados,  
o ar denso  
encrustado em seus galhos.

E pensei, é assim que somos?  
Os nossos próprios eus,  
desamparados?  
Ficamos em algum lugar  
meio que secreto, suficiente, cruel?  
E incendiados, em fragrância, como o lírio?

In the first stanza, Wolkoff (2011, p. 131) translated the adjective */alone/* into the female */sozinha/* emphasizing the feminist approach. Also, the neuter pronoun */it/* and the adjective */the same/* in the second line was translated and conjugated into the male */o mesmo/* to agree with the male noun (in Portuguese) */object/* also emphasizing the feminist approach which demonstrates that men see women as object of their writing.

In the line */lilac growing over the empty doorway/* the verb */growing over/* was translated of */espalhando/* instead of */crescendo/* to demonstrate how the non-invited things occupy a place that do not belong to them. Also, the flower */lilac/* was translated as */lírio/* as well as in the last line */and burdened with fragrance, as lilac?/* to keep the musicality along the poem." "Lilac" is a flower that blossoms before Easter, in Portuguese it is called "quaresmeira" or "flor lilás". Because of that, Wolkoff chose the lily that represents innocence as well as lilac.



## Conclusion

In the book *Poem-ing beyond borders* Wolkoff transcended the poems focusing on their structure and message. Also, she considered the gender translation, taking into account Irish women's history and ideals. While translating the neuter gender into the feminine one, she attributes value to gender and re-signifies Irish literature into Portuguese.

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