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Introduction[1]

1 Introduced to feminist wordplay and neologism in the books I read as I was nursing small children in the late 1970s, I remember laughing till the tears came: Mary Daly’s *Gyn/Ecology. The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) was my first exposure to the daringly creative and inventive subversion of conventional language or “*malespeak*” a subversion she deploys provocatively in the preface and introduction to this book. Her work and other contemporary writers’ disruption of mainstream “*malestream*” language that had arrogantly placed “man” in first position as *the* representative of the human race and denigrated women, girls, and female pre-occupations were absolutely hilarious. The various disruptions of conventional language they practiced spoke to my own interests in language and languages and my sensitivity for nuances of meaning. More importantly, they set off a “laughter of recognition” (Lothane [2008b]) that is vital to developing a sense of complicity, drawing the reader and author together in mutual understanding and support. Further, and much more importantly than during my university years, the subversive work on language that feminist writers were producing in those years offered a political explanation for the sense of isolation, neglect, and disrespect I felt as the mother of several small children.

2 In academic terms of the period, I enjoyed the play “with institutionalized meanings” (Zijderveld [1983: 8] cited in Mackie [1990: 12]) which define the ideology of public knowledge, disseminate it, and constantly reinforce it as “normal”. Marlene Mackie’s work on the role of humour in the social construction (or de-construction) of gender addresses two functions of humour, which later writers on the subject maintain (Kein [2015]; Leng [2016]; Reilly [2021]): the conservative social control function and the

rebellious aspect, where humour "works as a de-ideologizing and disillusioning force" (Zijderveld [1983: 58], cited in Mackie (1990: 20]). Misogynist humour (in its many diversified forms) serves the conservative social control function that helps maintain the "gender-as-taken-for-granted reality" [1990: 12-13], while feminist satire, irony, wordplay is an example of de-constructive, subversive use of humour, which, Mackie [1990: 21] argues, is often didactic, using devices of irony, exaggeration, sarcasm and wit, to 'pick up' women and not 'put down' men In that sense, it is constructive, and creative, and as criticism of the social structures, "it offers evidence, *in a form that appeals to many people,* that social arrangements might be otherwise" (Mackie [1990: 23], my emphasis). In other words, it is not only funny, it is enlightening.

3 This disruptive aspect of humour is also outlined in Martin [2016: 123-124] as the "mental play comprising cognitive, emotional, social and expressive components" that disrupt "normal" discourse through the "social play of humour" in experimental feminist texts, which, as Martin points out, may have any number of goals, among them congenial and pro-social (in this case, feminist complicity) as well as aggressive and coercive (in this case, anti-patriarchal.)

4 The feminist wordplay of the 1970s, often developed in speculative fiction, was hilarious material because it pointed to numerous social sore spots, and did so with abrasive but intelligent humour. It devised ways of undoing the language that maintained and further enflamed those sore spots, thus acting on the problem that Irigaray [1977: 205] had formulated as follows:

> If we continue to speak the same language, we will reproduce the same history/ story. Begin the same stories over again [...] If we continue to speak the same, if we continue to talk the way men have been talking for centuries, the way they taught us to talk, we will miss each other (my translation)[2].

5 As we know from the populist patriarchal politics that seem to be reconquering our public space today, the discourse that has indeed been deployed "for centuries" is re-emerging, and with a vengeance. All the more need to refer back to the work of second-wave feminist critique of language as it was finetuned and implemented by writers such as Mary Daly and Gerd Brantenberg, the Norwegian author of *Egalias døtre*, whose work is the subject of this article.

6 The neologistic and innovative disruption of language practised in their writing has an intention beyond story-telling or narrative of any kind: it brings derisive humour and subversive revolutionary energy into a text that is at the same time a harsh and painful exposé on the position of women in patriarchy. The satiric humour inscribed in and through linguistic manipulation helps to both uncover and undermine the system that creates and maintains the abusive power structures that are in place – as Brantenberg so clearly shows in her reversal of these structures.

7 The 1970s and 1980s represent a high time of Anglo/American and European feminist work on the language of patriarchy and demonstrate its political thrust. This work revealed patriarchal power to be anything but "normal"; it was unveiled as a construct in sore need of deconstruction. The "normality" of conventional language came under feminist attack not only from linguists such as Dale Spender and Robin Lakoff in English, as well as writers such as Mary Daly, Margaret Atwood, Marge Piercy, but also in many other languages: in French with Hélène Cixous, Marina Yaguello, Nicole Brossard, Louky Bersianik, among others, in German with Verena Stefan, Luise Pusch, Elfriede Jelinek, among others and in Norwegian with Gerd Brantenberg. And like Daly

and Brantenberg, other writers, too, resorted to humour to undermine the assumptions of power implicit in "normal" mainstream / "malestream" language and work toward a language that would be more appropriate to women's feminist interests and purposes.

1. Translating feminist wordplay

8 The translation of such experimental women's writing, in which the language itself is an important topic, has usually been undertaken in the name of women's feminist solidarity, but also with men translators participating[3]. Such translation presents a host of complex challenges, as we know from the academic work that exists on the translation of humour, punning, wordplay (Delabastita [1998], Chiaro & Baccolini [2016]). In the case of feminist work, the difficulty of translation can even jeopardize goals of transnational feminism as well as ideas about shared feminist knowledge and experience (Flotow [1998]).

9 First among these challenges is the humour based on linguistic play. Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* which was translated into German only two years after it appeared in English as *Gyn/Ökologie. Eine Meta-Ethik des radikalen Feminismus* ([1980] tr. Erika Wisselinck) got a cool reception, even though there was an eager readership. In an article entitled "Mary, please don't pun-ish us anymore! Mary Daly, *die Sprache und die deutschsprachige Leserin*," (Mary Daly, Language and the German-speaking woman reader [1987]), Luise Pusch, who herself specialized in producing feminist wordplay in German, explained that the translator's evident trouble with Daly's wordplay made the text unreadable, and made willing groups of readers give up in despair. Daly's English puns had become *pun*ishments in German.

10 Another approach to the translation of feminist word experiments has been mimetic translation, which evokes and seeks to reproduce the effects of the *sound* of a text at the expense of its meaning (Flotow [2004]). A good example of such work comes from the Quebec author/translator duo, Nicole Brossard & Susanne De Lotbinière-Harwood [1986: 37], in which the sounds of the French source text are the focus of the English translation:

> Does she frictional she fluvial she essential does she in the all-embracing touch that rounds the breasts love the mouths' soft roundness or the effect undressing her?

for the French:

> Fricatelle ruisselle essentielle aime-t-elle dans le touche-à-tout qui arrondit les seins la rondeur douce des bouches ou l'effet qui la déshabille ? [1986: 36]

where such translation may be admired as a poetic rendering that "works" in a certain context and time and with a certain appreciative audience, but can also be accused of reducing experimental literary work to an intellectual game for a tiny audience that is already bilingual and does not really require translation as a form of mediation (Flotow [2004: 103]). This mimetic solution was not used in the English translation of Brantenberg. Indeed, the translator Louis Mackay's ability to mediate the Norwegian source text seems to have been so successful that most academic references to the book refers to the English version exclusively (see e.g. DeRose [2006], Munawar [2019]).

11 Experimental women's writing of the 1970s and 1980s found and developed many different ways to subvert and abuse conventional "normal" language in order to undermine the uneven power relations this language-use reflects and maintains. Humour was a major tool. The pleasureful outcome and deconstructive effects that

humour provides are evoked in these words from Freud's text *Humour,* and doubtless moved the writers who deployed it.

> Humor is not resigned; it is rebellious. It signifies not only the triumph of the ego, but also of the pleasure principle, which is able [...] to assert itself against the unkindness of the real circumstances (Freud [1927] [tr. 1961], cited in Lothane [2008a]).

12 Humour in the work of the feminist writers and thinkers of this period mobilized the pleasure of rebelliously identifying the politics of language and laughing at the "unkindness" of its supposed "normality". Questions about whether such humour is translatable and to what extent it remains both pleasurable and politically meaningful upon translation are at the centre of this article on Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre* (1977).

13 The next two segments of this article present and analyse the strategies Brantenberg uses to develop and deploy feminist wordplay in *Egalias døtre* and the results of the English translation by Mackay. How does the play with "institutionalized meanings" work in Norwegian? How successfully has the English text rendered Brantenberg's subversive reversal of (binary) gender-as-taken-for-granted "normality"?

2. Lexical creativity in *Egalias døtre* (1977)

2.1. A feminocentric world

14 In her afterword to the 2013 reprint of *Egalias døtre*, Brantenberg [2013: 331] explains how she came to write the book, and how she realized that "the language had to change. It was flooded with patriarchal expressions". If Egalia, the land she devised, was to be a land that had been a matriarchy "since the dawn of time," humans could not be called "*mennesker*" (["humans"], from "*menn*" ["men"]): they had to be called "*kvinnesker*" (from "*kvinne*" ["woman"])[4]. Brantenberg concludes: "Thus, the changes made to the language were done more out of logical than of ideological reasons". The author was creating a woman-centered society, and therefore the language of the inhabitants had to be equally feminocentric. Consequently, the differences between the real-world Norwegian language and the language of Egalia stem from the principle of female as norm, with the effect that the feminine takes the place as the supposedly gender neutral.

15 In the matriarchy of *Egalia*, the "*matriotiske*" (≈ "matriotic") inhabitants frequent *Frueklubben Friheten* (≈ "Liberty ladies' club"), drink their *Susan Pepper*'s and *Bloody Marius*' and pay for them with "*matrarker*" (≈ "matriarchs") while looking down at the harbour where the sailing ship *Anders Lovindus* lies with its male figurehead. The name of the ship is typically masculine in Egalia – long and decorative, with several ornamental syllables. Often, men in Egalia also have a surname inherited from a female relative, indicating who the mother of this female relative was (see below: "*datter*" ["daughter"]). The male protagonist of *Egalias Døtre*, Petronius Bram, is surrounded by male characters such as Baldrian and Fandango Ødeskjær, Lisello Uglemose, Syprian and Grodrian Barmerud, Rudrik Lisdatter, and Lillerio Monadatter. As a contrast, the women's first names are short and to the point, without any decorative effect, consisting usually of one syllable: Ba Bram, Gerd Barmerud, Lis Ødeskjær, Ann Månekollen, and Gro Maidatter. Further, the women's clothes are practical, while the men are expected to dress up, spend time and money following the

fashions for facial as well as bodily hair, and wear their *PH* ("*penisholder*" ["penis holder"]) without complaining. In the upper middleclass of Egalia, only women have paid work outside of the house, while their husbands are "*husfedre*" (plural form of Brantenberg's neologism "*husfar*" ≈ "housefather", which is a masculine version of the existing word "*husmor*" ≈ "housemother", i.e. a "housewife"). In formal settings, the men are referred to by the profession of their partner, such as "*herr direktør*" (≈ "Mr. CEO"), and "*herr grosserer*" (≈ "Mr. wholesaler"). The working-class men can work as cleaners or in childcare, while Lisello, the unmarried son of the former principal, works as a teacher, because that is one of the few professions seen as fit for a man. With the goal of changing the power balance between the genders in Egalia, the main character Petronius joins the "*maskulinistbevegelsen*" (≈ "masculinist movement"), and he ends up writing a book about "an upside-down world gender-wise" (Brantenberg [2013: 280]).

16 Through and through, the text performs a reversal of gendered power structures. The imbalances in power and freedom described in the narrative and reflected in the inverted language are constantly highlighted, thus creating an effect of constant disruption of its normality. Brantenberg's inversion of the gender roles inscribed in real-world Norwegian language does not only display the author's lexical creativity and humourous take on the topic, but also instantly wakes up readers and has them laughing at "normality's" sudden unnaturalness.

2.2. Techniques of feminocentric language

17 The feminocentrism of this universe – which is the decisive factor in Brantenberg's success in creating a satirical portrait of the phallocentric real world outside the novel – is all-encompassing. This section will therefore not attempt to describe every instance of it, but rather shed light on a selection of lexicographical creations, chosen for their suitability to exemplify the five main creative morphological and lexicographical techniques used by Brantenberg to invent the language of Egalia and create its humourous effect. These techniques are: 1) compounding, 2) morphological derivation, 3) creation of neologisms, 4) alterations in agency of existing verbs, and 5) gender-inverting idioms and known/fixed expressions.

18 Compounding is a highly productive technique for word formation in Norwegian. In theory, any two or more existing Norwegian words can be combined to create a new word. Hence, there are endless examples of words from this first category in *Egalias døtre*. Many of the examples are compounds formed by combining "*kvinne*" ["woman"] with other existing words. These compounds are for the most part analogous to existing real-world compounds where "*mann*" ["man"] or "*menn*" ["men"] is a component and is taken to signify all humans regardless of gender. By replacing the supposedly gender-neutral term "*mann*" with "*kvinne*", Brantenberg highlights its non-neutrality, thus creating a satire that evokes the "laughter of recognition". For example, in Egalia, a "*likekvinne*" ("*lik*" ["equal"]) is somebody's peer, an "*overkvinne*" ("*over*" ["over"]) is a person who outranks or overpowers someone, and a "*sidekvinne*" ("*side*" ["side"]) is the person sitting or standing next to someone. These words are created by analogy to the real-world compounds "*likemann*", "*overmann*" and "*sidemann*". A similar technique is used for naming professions: a "*sjøkvinne*" ("*sjø*" ["sea"]) is someone working on a boat, and "*sjøkvinnsromantikk*"

("*romantikk*" ["romance"]) derives from the ridiculous idea that a "*sjøkvinneliv*" ("*liv*" ["life"]) is anything but hard. The corresponding real-world compounds here are "*sjømann*", "*sjømannsromantikk*" and "*sjømannsliv*".

19 Yet other compounds are created to describe reproductive organs. In contrast to real-world Norwegian, it is male genitalia that are designated by negative or derogatory words, such as "*skamsekk*" ("*skam*" ["shame"], "*sekk*" ["bag"]) for "testicles" (analogous to "*skamlepper*" ("*lepper*" ["lips"]) for "outer labia", and "*skambein*" ("*bein*" ["bone"]) for "pelvis"), and "*dinglepølse*" ("*dingle*" ["dangle"], "*pølse*" ["sausage, hot dog"]) for "penis". On the other hand, the female reproductive organs have positive names in Egalia: the outer labia are called "*livsleber*" ("*livs*" ["of life"], "*leber*" ["lips"], older spelling), and the inner organs are called "*livsorganer*" ("*organer*" ["organs"]). The focus on these words in *Egalias døtre* offers readers the opportunity to consider the real-world counterparts, as well as the horrible implications of the real-world terms linking female reproductive organs with shame. Inverted like this, the unnaturalness of that link becomes highlighted, allowing readers to let loose a liberating laugh at the absurdity of how power structures are reflected even in references to people's genitalia.

20 The second technique, creative morphological derivation, is usually carried out by adding an existing or an invented affix to an existing root. Starting with the real-world Norwegian suffix *-inne*, signifying the feminine variant of a word usually used in the masculine form (i.e. "*venn*" ["friend"], "*venninne*" ["female friend"]), Brantenberg invents the suffix *-ann* (most likely from "*hann*" ["male"], "*mann*", or perhaps the third-person pronoun "*han*" ["he"]) signifying the masculine variant of a word. This creation allows Brantenberg to frame the masculine variants as *other* – as pertaining to the second sex, even – while placing the feminine form center stage as the norm, simply because it does not require a suffix. In *Egalias døtre*, we find "*vennann*" (≈ "male friend"), "*lærerann*" (≈ "male teacher"), "*sangerann*" (≈ "male singer") and "*forfatterann*" (≈ "male author"). These are analogously molded on the real-world feminine words "*lærerinne*", "*sangerinne*" and "*forfatterinne*", in addition to the above-mentioned "*venninne*". Brantenberg also changes the root sometimes, and keeps an existing suffix, such as in *kvindat*" (from "*mandat*" ["mandate"]), "*kvinnskap*" (from "*mannskap*" ["crew"]), "*jomherr*" (from "*jomfru*" ["virgin"]; "*fru*" ["madam"], "*herr*" ["mister"]) and "*herken*" (from "*frøken*" ["miss"], diminutive of "*frue*"), which signifies "unmarried man" as well as "male teacher". Readers immediately identify the analogous real-world terms and realize the blatantly othering effect of such derivations. The effect is not only humourous, as there is a clear political component to these inventions. Therefore, readers are on the one hand likely to find the author's creativity amusing and enjoy the moment of recognition, but on the other they might also experience an awakening or a moment of painful realization regarding real-world society's othering of women.

21 Thirdly, there are certain neologisms that are analogous to entire existing words, which are modified to create a new meaning, customized for Egalia. For instance, Brantenberg's neologism "*mone*" mimics "*kone*" ["wife"]; a "*mone*", then, is a "male wife". Another important example is "*dam*", the standard pronoun in Egalia. "*Dam*" is analogous to the real-world Norwegian pronoun "*man*" ["one"]. "*Man*" is considered gender neutral, although it is etymologically related to "*mann*". Similarly, "*dam*" is clearly closely related to "*dame*" ["woman, lady"], an etymological fact that makes its supposed gender neutrality less convincing for the young masculinist Fandango, who is

considering a career as a linguist. He asks: "Why couldn't [the generic pronoun] just as well be 'mister'? Or 'man'?" (Brantenberg [2013: 191]). His reaction is similar to that of real-world feminists at the time as it mirrors the frustration caused by always seeing oneself identified as the other and never the norm. This example also shows how Brantenberg not only satirizes linguistic expressions of phallocentrism through the use of neologisms that invert and reveal gendered power imbalances, but also describes the effect such imbalances have on the group that is diminished by such language, thus creating an instance of recognition that is double: readers may recognize both how patriarchal language excludes women from the norm and the common reaction among feminists to this linguistic and sociopolitical phenomenon – "does our language *have to* be this way"?

22 Not only nouns are the object of Brantenberg's lexical and morphological creativity in *Egalias døtre*. A significant trait of the language of the book is how certain verbs are altered in order to shift the agency of participants (often inverting active and passive roles) as well as the valency and transitivity of the verb. Several of these verbs have to do with sexual relations or reproduction. In Brantenberg's verb phrase "*å befrukte seg*" (≈ "to fertilize oneself"), the reflexive pronoun "*seg*" ["oneself"] is added, signifying that the subject can actively choose this action, in contrast to the real-world Norwegian variants "*å befrukte noen*" (≈ "to fertilize someone") or "*å bli befruktet*" (≈ "to be fertilized"). In addition to adding the reflexive pronoun, Brantenberg's verb phrase "*å tilfredstille seg på noen*" (≈ "to satisfy oneself on/onto someone") turns the transitive verb of the real-world Norwegian phrase "*å tilfredsstille noen*" (≈ "to satisfy someone") into a ditransitive verb. The technique of adding a second object to the verb alters the agency of those involved, denominating a selfish sexual act where the other person becomes little more than precisely an object. Another way to alter the agency related to an action is to replace the verb of the expression or even add a possessive determiner, such as in Brantenberg's "*å ta sin orgasme*" (≈ "to take one's orgasm"), in lieu of the real-world expression "*å få orgasme*" (≈ "to have/get (an) orgasm"), or to add a prefix signifying a lack of agency, as in "*å bli bepult*" (≈ "to be/become "befucked"). The subtle change in agency in these Egalian expressions easily brings out a laugh in readers, as the changes, with only minor adjustments, make the power dynamic of situations and relations very explicit. The idea of women having virtually all the power in sexual and reproductive situations may also elicit giggles in some readers (since that is infinitely far from the reality in most parts of the world).

23 Lastly, some idioms from *Egalias døtre* are worth mentioning. Replacing the "neutral" form of "*mann*" with "*kvinne*" ["woman"] results in the expression "*å gå kvinne av huse*" (≈ to go "woman from house", meaning: everyone leaves the house to join in on something or to get something, i.e. become very enthusiastic). Another example which follows from this gender-swap is "*å kvinne seg opp*" (≈ "to woman up"), a brantenbergian analogy to the real-world expression "*å manne seg opp*" (["to man up"]) which has recently become an alternative expression among gender-conscious speakers of real-world Norwegian. Further, the replacement of "*Frue*" (["lady"]) for "*Herre*" (["lord, master"]) creates many new expressions and idioms, such as "*Frue min hatt!*" (≈ "Lady my hat!", an analogous expression to the fixed "*Herre min hatt!*", used to avoid saying "*Herregud*" ≈ "Lord God", in the sense of "Oh my god"), or "*å leve fruens glade dager*" (≈ "to live the lady's happy days", analogous to living "the lord's happy days", i.e. "to live a good and easy life"). These gender swaps put a twist on reality that not only makes readers laugh, but also unveils underlying power structures "hidden" in the real-word

expressions, seemingly invisible due to the fixedness of the phrases. The brantenbergian twists disrupt the normality of such structures and reveal that they are severely gendered, which in turn reminds readers that such gendered language is a result of inequality in the real world.

24 The techniques described above are frequently used in combination, as when Brantenberg creates "*vaskemone*" (≈ "cleaning *mone*", i.e. "cleaner"), "*nabomone*" (≈ "neighboring *mone*", i.e. the "*mone* next door") or "*fiskermone*" (≈ "a fisher's *mone*"), using her neologism "*mone*" in different compounds, analogous to the compounds where "*kone*" usually appears. Other neologisms are combined with derivations creating adjectives, such as "*herkenaktig*" (≈ "*herken*-like", "*herken*" referring to the unmarried man). Compounds are also created by combining existing words with derivations, such as "*klassevennann*" (≈ "classmate", with the invented suffix *-ann* indicating the masculine). In some cases, all parts of real-world words are substituted for Egalian translations, such as when Brantenberg introduces readers to a famous poet, Frukvin Vildenmey, whose name is based on the real-world poet Herman Wildenwey. While Herman is a common name, it can also be deliberately (mis)understood as a compound of its homophones "*herr*" and "*mann*". Brantenberg thus creates the name Frukvin (≈ "lady" + "woman"). Substituting "*wey*" (possibly an old spelling of "*vei*" ["way, road"]) with the similar sounding "*mey*", she even invents what looks like an older spelling of "*møy*" ["maiden"], while elegantly ensuring that the reader knows very well on whose name the analogy is built. The latter example makes it quite clear that it is not the etymological root of a word that determines whether or not it can be altered. On the contrary, the over-the-top "translation" of a real-world Norwegian proper name simply adds to the humourous effect.

25 These techniques of word formation – creating compounds, derivations, neologisms and changes in agency, as well as inverting gender in idioms and fixed expressions – lead readers to constantly, consciously or subconsciously, translate from "Egalian Norwegian" into its real-world counterpart. Brantenberg's systematic use of a female-as-norm analogy that remains closely linked to the real-world standard male-as-norm as a steering principle for her lexical creations ensures that the text remains understandable – and thus translatable – for the reader at all times.

2.3. Satiric effects

26 The ultimate effect of Brantenberg's linguistic gender inversion is satire, as is made explicit in the subheading of the English translation: *Egalia's Daughters. A satire of the sexes* (1985), and the reader's continuous translation of the book's fictional matriarchal society into the patriarchal reality they know from real life contributes to the work's satirical effect. By subverting the male as norm and creating lexical inventions by analogy with existing real-world Norwegian words and idioms, Brantenberg shows readers their world reflected as in a distorting mirror, and invites them to navigate between recognition and distortion – a well-known recipe for humour if the balance is right. Luck [2020: 100] puts it this way in *Rewriting Language*:

> As Brantenberg, and her translators, show in *Egalias døtre*, employing female generic terms has humourous potential precisely because speakers recognise the familiar male-as-norm.

27 Although the patriarchal hierarchy and the authorities of the real world that benefit from this hierarchy are only seen and recognized through the reader's translation of the reflection from the distorting mirror, there is no doubt that they constitute the target of the book's satirical mockery. This effect culminates in the book inside the book, namely Petronius' own satirical gender-bender *Demokratiets Sønner* (≈ Sons of the Democracy), which opens with precisely the same scene as *Egalias døtre*, except that Petronius' gender-bending results in a "fictional" male-as-norm universe. This mise en abyme serves several purposes, perhaps most importantly creating a new layer of recognition. Furthermore, readers are bound to see themselves in one of the many ways in which Petronius' book is received by the other characters. Many of them react with laughter, as many real-world readers react to Brantenberg's work.

28 The liberating function of humour and laughter is a topic in Barr's article "'Laughing in a Liberating Defiance': *Egalia's Daughters* and Feminist Tendentious Humor" (1989). Barr [1989: 90–91] states: "'laughing at patriarchy breaks the rules', and by breaking the rules it is 'a feminist achievement'" (quoted in Luck [2020: 117–118])). Luck [2020: 118] explains:

> Like Christopher [Petronius' father] and Petronius, women are meant to comply with the dominant social order, one that considers them secondary on the basis of their sex/gender. By provoking a gleeful reaction to the reversal of norms, the novel, according to Barr [1989: 93], acts as 'a social corrective – a weapon'.

a weapon, we might add, that is fueled by Brantenberg's lexical creativity.

29 Looking into the distorting mirror of Egalia, many readers will see features of the real-world society they live in amplified or twisted, and thus focalized and foregrounded in the readers' mind. And due to Brantenberg's lexical neologisms and linguistic gender inversion, gendered language use will be at the very center of readers' consciousness as a means by which both reality and the matriarchy of Egalia are mediated and upheld. On this point, Luck [2020: 119] states:

> What is frequently perceived as insignificant, that is language use, is revealed to be a powerful reiteration of a world view that privileges one sex/gender over the other.

30 The revelation of the role played by language use in upholding power imbalances between genders is – albeit amusing – not really funny, although the means to make the point are satire and humour. Much like readers' responses to Petronius' *Demokratiets Sønner*, reactions from real-world readers of *Egalias døtre* will vary, ranging from excitement and joy over the work's humourous and subversive effects – like Kristoffer, Petronius' father, who cannot stop laughing throughout the book – to annoyance or sadness caused by the reminder of the social inequalities it holds up to mockery, like Petronius' friend Baldrian, who finds the book "more tragic than funny" (Brantenberg [2013: 327]). Norwegian linguist and author Kristin Fridtun [2019: np] has described experiencing both these reactions when re-reading *Egalias døtre*:

> *Egalias døtre* [...] is known to be a very entertaining novel. [...] I myself have described the book as 'funny' and 'peculiar' when discussing it with friends, and I have chuckled warmly thinking about the linguistic innovations [...] But this fall I re-read the book, and although it amused me queenly, reading it didn't exactly make me happy. No, this book wasn't at all simply funny! It was harrowing, provocative, unsettling.

31 For Fridtun, it is the book's continued relevance that takes the joy out of the reading experience. While some readers may not agree with the premise that the world is (still)

oppressive to women and may encounter characters who mirror that skepticism, Brantenberg’s book continues to be read and commented upon, and is still relevant to such a degree that new translations and re-prints (a translation into French and a new re-print in Korean of the 2016 translation) are forthcoming. Humour continues to make the point that “normality” in language is not normal, and it makes this point palatable.

3. Laughing at “normality” in translation

32 As shown above, Brantenberg’s gender-bender relies heavily on humour as a subversive device, thereby illustrating Freud’s [1975] notion that humour can serve as a central tool of rebellion against authority. This subversion aims to create both laughter and a liberating pleasure in her reader, and as Luck [2020: 100] points out, in *Egalias døtre*, “[t]hrough wordplay [...] language can be revealed for what it is: a key tool to both communicate and uphold normality”. Yet this central role played by lexical creativity to convey the political message of the novel – itself inextricably linked to the pleasure of the novel’s finely balanced combination of recognition and unfamiliarity – is bound to pose considerable challenges to any translator, due to the inevitable linguistic and cultural differences between Norwegian and the target language.

33 In this section, we look at Mackay’s 1977 English translation of *Egalias døtre*, in order to determine to what extent the translation reflects the source text’s implicit criticism of our patriarchal society through a satirical subversion of its linguistic norms, and how the translator negotiates the different constraints weighing on the Norwegian and English languages respectively.

3.1. A feminist translation project

34 In *Gender in Translation*, Simon draws on Berman’s argument about the crucial importance of a strong translation project for a translation to be successful[5]. She highlights its relevance to feminist translation:

> To the extent, then, that Berman emphasizes the power of the translating subject to formulate ethical and esthetic goals [...], his outlook is consonant with that of much feminist translation theory and practice. (Simon [1996: 35])

35 This stance is also that adopted by Rivard in her work on the translation of post-phallic humour in Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man*. She shows just how crucial the existence of a feminist translation project is for the translation of feminist humour:

> this feminist humor, which upholds the novel’s topos and aims primarily to question the reader’s perceptions through the use of ridicule, sarcasm and exaggeration, calls for a feminist translation project[6]. (Rivard [2017: 2])

36 In the case of *Egalia’s Daughters*, there can be no doubt that such a translation project exists, as we demonstrate in our analysis below. The translator patently adopts a similar agenda to that of the source text: creating a distorted mirror image of the patriarchal norms present in the Norwegian and English cultures and languages respectively. This is manifest both in the conditions in which the translation was realized – in collaboration with the author herself – and in the resulting target text, which inventively recreates and even enriches the matriarchal language of the source text, using satire and lexical creativity to poke fun at and undermine patriarchal society.

37 This explicit collaboration between author and translator takes the notion that the feminist translator should work "in *collusion* with the author" (Rivard [2017: 13], emphasis in original) to a literal plain; here, Mackay is very much an "active participant in the creation of meaning" (Godard [1990]). As for the translation challenges posed by the humorous and creative aspect of Brantenberg's text, the author's taking part in the translating process means that she was highly aware of these difficulties:

> The text needs rethinking in every new language. [...] Many words/sentences/ideas get lost in the English translation, because in Norwegian there are many more gendered terms than in English... Some words, however, are gains. Such as 'ladsels'. 'Ladsels in distress'. 'Lordies and gentlewim' is a comic phrase that has no equivalent in the Norwegian text. (Brantenberg *in* Patai [1996: 62], our translation)[7]

38 One could add other finds to the list, such as the "maidman's ball" for Norwegian "*prøveball*" ("*prøve*" ["test, try out"], "*ball*" ["ball"]), or the translation of "*hysteriske mannekvinnesker*" ("*hysteriske*" ["hysterical"]) as "testerical menwim" (p. 70).

39 The combination of losses and gains through translation as described by Brantenberg, a recurrent phenomenon of translation in general, is particularly typical of the translation of humour:

> Since different languages organize their concepts, sounds and words differently, the translation of wordplay is risky, in places tedious. (Flotow [1997: 52]).

40 However, the translator of a humouristic text can "maintain the source text's link between form and content through the use of such strategies as compensation, the recreation or addition of wordplay" (Maher [2014: 275]).

3.2. Coining a matriarchal language in English

41 Even with a feminist translation project, the difficulty of recreating the source text's feminist humour goes beyond the different constraints posed by the two languages and cultures, which all translators face. An additional challenge lies in the fact that the source text is already a translation of sorts. It shows the readers a distorted image of the real world they know, inviting them to question what they might so far have taken for granted, i.e. our society's gender roles, and in particular the male-as-norm principle inscribed in the Norwegian language. In order to trigger a thought-provoking "laughter of recognition" (Lothane [2008b]) in the reader, it is therefore crucial for the translator to create a similar reaction in the target reader; but for this recognition to take place, the translator needs to create a distorted mirror image of the *target* language and culture. For the translation to also be a "feminist achievement" the anglophone reader has to be led to "[break] the rules" by "laughing at patriarchy" (Barr [1989: 90-91]), and the translator needs to wield greater creative license than is typically the case.

42 From this perspective, while the challenges posed by both structural and cultural differences do abound – such as gender being far less marked morphologically in English than in Norwegian, as noted by Brantenberg – the English translator's work is in fact facilitated by the historical proximity of the two languages. As Delabastita [1996: 136] points out, "[w]hatever the type of wordplay, the reproducibility of wordplay will be higher if it somehow involves interlingual borrowings common to both the target language and source language". In other words, "the transfer of puns is made possible and their reading is made pleasant, even amusing, because there is *more*

or less related linguistic and cultural material in the target language" (Flotow [1997: 56]).

43 In much of the wordplay explored above, and in numerous other examples, the translator has indeed been able to resort to puns exploiting similar linguistic features as in the original. Crucially, the male-as-norm principle is in force in the English language as well as in Norwegian, which makes possible a straightforward translation of much of the source text's creative lexicality with a comparable effect in terms of laughter-provoking distortion of the reader's world. Thus, the "*matriotiske*" rather than "*patriotiske*" ["patriotic"] poems studied by the pupils of Egalia are logically translated as "matriotic" poems: this neologism is coined in the same way as the Norwegian one, resorting to the substitution of one semantically-loaded grapheme (<p>) with another (<m>), indirectly highlighting the common root between "patriotic" and "patriarchal". Similarly, when a friend of Petronius's mother asks her whether she is considering "fertilizing [her]self", "to fertilize someone" becomes "to fertilize oneself", with "oneself" as a straightforward equivalent of the addition of the reflexive suffix "*seg*" in the source text (see Section 2), so that the valency and transitivity of the source and target texts undergo a parallel change; the women of Egalia are just as in charge of their sexuality and reproduction in the translation as in the original.

44 Compounding is also an extremely productive feature of the English language, so that many of the compounds in Norwegian can be translated using the same technique. Thus, the aforementioned "*skamsekk*" is rendered as "shamebag", and while this does not work as an analogy of a word for female genitalia in real-world English, the common factor of female sexuality associated with shame is enough for the implicit analogy to be identifiable by the reader, as well as the underlying criticism of this association.

45 Other similarities, located solely on the cultural level, are also significant enough for a number of references to be translated without the need for any major intervention on the part of the translator. The replacement, in Norwegian, of "*Herre*" ["Lord"] with "*Frue*" ["Lady] in set expressions relating to God, is paralleled in English by the use of expressions such as "Lady God" or "Good Lady". Just as in the source text, this playful subversion of real-life expressions suggests that the default representation of God as male, at least in the Western world, is inherently derived from and feed into the patriarchal structure of society. The translation even goes further, using the possessive determiner "Her" when referring to God: where the source text has gender-neutral "*sin*" ("*i sin time*" ≈ "in their time"), the English has "her": "in Her time"[8].

46 Finally, as explained above, Brantenberg subverts the norm according to which ships are typically referred to as female and bear female names in Norwegian. Since a ship is also normally given a female name and referred to as a "she" in the English language, the switch to the masculine and the choice of "Adonis" as the ship's name seems consistent with the overarching goal of both source and target texts – again subverting the male-as-norm principle.

3.3. More gains than losses

47 In spite of these similarities, in certain instances of playful lexical creativity in the source text, the difference in linguistic and/or cultural constraints means that the translator has had to give up on the source text's wordplay. For instance, no equivalent

is provided for the subverted expression "*å gå kvinne av huse*" (≈ to go "woman from house", see Section 2), and the Norwegian sentence containing it is omitted altogether. For cultural reasons, this time, the mirror effect of the word "*sjøkvinnsromantikk*" does not quite translate in English, because the very notion of "seaman romance" doesn't exist in English. The translation simply mentions "the romance of the sea" (p. 9).

48 In many more cases, however, the translator has managed to adapt the underlying cultural reference, using a different technique to that used by the author and/or displacing the source text's lexical and morphological creativity to different items in the target text. This section provides an overview of these different cases.

49 The incipit of the novel, which plays a key role in introducing the reader to Egalia's reversed gender roles, is particularly fraught with challenges for the translator. On the linguistic level, the use on the very first page of a series of compounds derived from the word "woman" gives rise, in English, to a problem that does not exist in the source text: the etymology of the words "man" and "woman" in English constitutes an obstacle to the female-as-norm principle in force in Egalia. Since "woman" is believed to derive from Old English "wīfmann" ["wife of man]", and thus ultimately from "mann", the use of the word would point to the masculine as the unmarked form, just as in real-world languages all around the world, and thus clash with the translation project.

50 Here, the translator – presumably with the approval and/or assistance of the author – made full use of his creative license by coining neologisms that do not exist in the source text, namely "wom" for "woman" (plural form "wim") and "manwim" for "man" (plural form "menwim"). These coinages are deployed throughout the novel and used in various compounds, so that for instance the translation of the word "*sjøkvinne*" ["seawoman"] – a compound formed in analogy to real-world Norwegian – is a neologism: "seawom". This can make the text harder to grasp for the reader of the English translation, especially as "seawom" features in the opening paragraphs of the novel, before the reader has had a chance to become familiar with the peculiar linguistic universe of Egalia.

51 The same problem occurs with the words "male" and "female". While the two words are believed not to share an etymology, they are generally perceived as related, a process called folk etymology. This perceived derivation of "female" from "male" was clearly seen as problematic by the translator, and the neologisms "fele" (for "female") and "mafele" (for "male") were coined in response to this problem.

52 While in line with the feminist translation project outlined above, all these additional neologisms complexify the reading process and risks undermining the comical dimension of the text. For instance, unlike the source text, a coinage is introduced in the very first line of the target text: "After all, it is *menwim* who beget children" (9, emphasis in original)[9]. The effect of this double translation – from real-world to Egalia's world in the source text, and then from Norwegian to English in the target text – could well be an obstacle to the process of recognition, and to the laughter associated with it. The heavier presence of neologisms in the target than in the source text in the first few pages may delay the reader's sense of recognition, thus undermining the text's humouristic aspect, and perhaps discouraging some readers from persevering with what could be perceived as quite a difficult read. This in turn can feed into the criticism often made of feminist writing, and feminist translation in particular, for its perceived elitism. And indeed, the incipit is fraught with particularly challenging passages more likely to cause the reader to frown in puzzlement than to laugh in liberating defiance,

such as when Petronius's sister mocks her brother's ambitions in the first chapter: "A diver! They don't have frogwom suits for menwim. A mafele frogwom!" (p. 10).

53 The reverse problem to the subversion of the words "man/woman" occurs in places where the hierarchy of genders is inscribed (or perceived as such) in the Norwegian language but not in English, such as with the neologism "*herken*" (see Section 2). The real-world Norwegian word for "spinster", "*frøken*" ["miss"] is derived from a word designating women, "*frue*", ["madam"], hence the neologism "*herken*" from "*herr*". However, a similar process cannot be used in English, since the word "spinster" is not derived from a term designating women; its gendered aspect is semantic rather than lexical. The translator resolves this difficulty by coining the word "spinnermann", a compound neologism playing on a phonetic and graphemic similarity with "spinster". The intended effect is achieved – illustrating, by means of humour and lexical creativity, the reversal of gender roles in Egalia. However, in terms of linguistic coherence, it could be argued that the suffix "-mann" points to "spinner" as the unmarked form. Paradoxically, this could undermine the novel's "female-as-norm" principle: real-world English, the rare occurrences of the feminine as the unmarked form – such as widow or nurse, from which widower and male nurse are derived – are typically nouns that point semantically to an occupation or status perceived as secondary to another one that is typically male. They are unmarked because perceived as inherently subordinate; thus, the widow is defined in relation to her dead husband, and the nurse occupies a position subordinate to that of a doctor.

54 An even greater challenge is the subversion of the so-called gender-neutral Norwegian pronoun "*man*" analyzed in Section 2. The equivalent pronoun in English, "one", is not etymologically related to "man", so that coining a neologism to match that of the source text would probably have resulted in more confusion than anything else. Instead, the translator astutely plays on the male form that is the basis of representation and that is almost automatically assigned to generic forms, such as "one" or "everyone," simply as a result of mental context – one of the three main factors of linguistic sexism that Garcia Meseguer [1994] has identified. Thus, while many instances of the use of "*dam*" in Norwegian are simply lost in translation, the translator regularly uses the pronoun "she/her" alongside "one" or another generic term, thereby highlighting what Zoberman [2014] denounces as the fallacy of inclusiveness. In the English version of Brantenberg's text we can thus read sentences such as: "What would happen if everybody decided she had to live by the water?" (p. 114), or (in the context of a coed classroom), "Each pupil sat alone with her questions" (p. 140). While less creative neologisms such as "manwom", this solution is more likely to elicit laughter in the readers as the choice of pronoun leads them to acknowledge – and question – the fact that their mental image of a pupil, for instance, is likely to be male by default.

55 However, this strategy cannot be used in the crucial passage in which Petronius's little brother Fandango exposes his "masculist" views on language, asking why the generic pronoun could not just as well be "mister" or "man". The metalinguistic nature of this comment means that it cannot be translated literally, for unlike "*dam*", the real-world English generic pronoun "one" is not morphologically connected to masculinity. The translator's answer to this problem is in line with functionalist approaches in translation studies, and in particular with Vermeer's *skopos* theory (1978) which asserts the primacy of a translation's self-assigned goal – akin to the translation project – and

its function in a given communicative situation. In the English text, Fandango takes offence not with a pronoun but with the word "manwom":

> [F]or instance, take the word 'manwom'. It suggests that a manwom is just a certain sort of wom, though a wom isn't any sort of manwom. Why don't they just say 'man'? And then there's the way they say wom or womkind to mean the whole huwom race for huwomity. 'The rights of wom'... (p. 146)

56 Focusing on the function of the argument in context, the translator boldly chooses to tackle a (superficially) different argument that is linked to the series of "wom"-related neologisms used in the translation: the feminist debates pertaining to the Norwegian language are replaced with those at the heart of anglophone debates on sexist language, ensuring that the process of recognition takes place in the target readers, who are again faced with a comically distorted image of their own world.

3.4. Translation strategies

57 Adaptation, or the replacement of one cultural item in the source text with another from the target culture to create a more comprehensible and relatable translation, is widely used as a translation strategy throughout the novel. This strategy is often crucial in keeping the balance between recognition and distortion that is at the heart of the novel, and thereby in preserving the subtext of the original. Thus, where Brantenberg playfully refers to General Hunnibal in reference to Carthaginian General Hannibal – playing on the name's proximity with the Norwegian pronouns "*hun*" ["she"] and "*han*" ["he"] – Mackay refers to Sheracles, similarly playing on the pronouns "he" and "she" in English and adapting the name of another well-known character, Heracles. Another illustration of this type of cultural substitution is the choice of Jill-of-all-Trades, in analogy to Jack-of-all-Trades, to translate the Norwegian neologism "*altmuligkvinne*" (≈ "handywoman", derived from "*altmuligmann*" ("*alt mulig*" ["anything"]). Finally, "*Mannesaskspropaganda*" ("*mannesak*" ≈ "masculism", "*propaganda*" = "propaganda") is coined on "*kvinnesak*", an early Norwegian term to refer to feminism – a reference cleverly rendered in the translation as "menwom lib's propaganda" (p. 57).

58 In many other instances, the translator resorts to recreating the function of a particular wordplay rather than its form, which involves adopting a different technique in translation to that used in the source text, especially where reader comprehension would otherwise be impeded by different linguistic and/or cultural realities. For example, where the Norwegian text uses two different techniques for "*husfar*" (≈ "housefather") and "*mone*" (blending of "husband" and "wife") – respectively compounding and neologism – the English text combines these two techniques to create the compound neologism "housebound", used throughout the novel to translate both "*husfar*" and "*mone*". The additional connotation created by the suggestion that a husband's place is in the home in Egalia is perfectly in line with both the fictional universe and the translation project, while the assonance contributes to the playful and humouristic dimension of the source text. It even enriches it in a way that the source text does not, showing how different linguistic constraints do not systematically amount to loss in the translation. The neologism "housebound" is a fitting illustration of the way the text lives up to the translation project of using humour as a feminist tool. Not only does it create a "laughter of recognition" by playfully distorting two well-known words – "husband" and "housewife" –, it also adds the notion that in

Egalia, husbands are bound to their house, which indirectly highlights the fact that in the real-world, wives are expected to stay home and are symbolically bound to it.

59 This last example is also a powerful illustration of the way Mackay's creative translation often resorts to the translation strategy of compensation, which consists in making up for the loss of a feature in a particular place with the use of a similar feature elsewhere in the target text. The translator's willingness to add humouristic elements when and where possible forms part of a larger-scale strategy aiming to preserve the humouristic dimension of the source text and the political agenda inextricably linked to it. In *Egalia's Daughters*, when the linguistic and/or cultural constraints in English mean that a wordplay cannot easily be kept in the same place as in Norwegian, the translator often gives up on it in the specific clause or sentence but compensates for this loss with another wordplay in close proximity. Thus, towards the beginning of the book, Petronius enters the principal's office and is greeted by the "*forværelseherren*" ("*forværelse*" ["reception"], "*herren*" ["mister"]). Presumably due to the gender-neutrality (at least in terms of morphology) of the words "receptionist" and "secretary" in English, the gender-specification of the source text is not kept, and the translation simply speaks of "the secretary" (p. 56). But at the end of the same paragraph, the translator introduces a wordplay absent from the original text, by coining the neologism "damename" to translate the real-world Norwegian word "*etternavn*" ["surname"].

60 A few chapters later, as Petronius is on board a ship in an attempt to live out his dream of seawom life, the text uses the word "*kvinnskap*" in analogy to the word "*mannskap*" (["crew"], see Section 2):

> "Det var femogtyve kvinne ombord. Sjefsdykkere, dykkere og alminnelig **kvinnskap** iberegnet." (p. 82)
> [There were twenty-five women on board. Chief divers, divers and general crew included.]

Rather than attempting a wordplay on the English "crew", problematically ungendered for the purpose of the translation, Mackay instead chooses to subvert the verb "to man," often denounced as sexist:

> "The vessel was **wommed** by twenty-five sailors: chief divers, divers, and the usual crew." (p. 73)

61 This compensation showcases again the creative aspect of the translation, a necessary condition for it to live up to its feminist translation project: as Simon [1996: 138] points out, "the process of meaning transfer often has less to do with *finding* the cultural inscription of a term than in *reconstructing* its value" (emphasis in original).

62 Similarly, the reference to men through their partner's profession in the source text would make less sense in English, as women are not typically referred to in this fashion in real-world English. Mackay therefore translates "*Herr direktør*" as "*Msass Bram*", coining a new form of address, "Msass", rather than subverting a fixed phrase. This form of address relies on the coinage of *-ass*, an invented masculine suffix created in analogy to the feminine suffix *-ess*. This neologism mirrors the coinage of *-ann/-annen* as a male suffix in analogy to *-inne/-innen*, used in other places of the source text, and has the additional benefit of coming with comical associations in English. Here again, the translator makes the most of his creative license, using the suffix wherever the real-world English equivalent would have an -ess suffix rather than trying to use it

systematically in the same places as the source text. "*Elsker* [lover] is thus translated as "mastrass," "*prinsen*" ["the prince"] as "princeass" and "*løvehannen*" ("*løve*" ["lion"]) as "lionass". The obvious ridicule associated with a word such as "princeass" leads the reader to question the political implication of the use of the suffix -ess in words such as "princess" and "lioness", formed on their masculine equivalent. Here again, the translator uses humour as a way to undermine the real-world assumption that the masculine form of a noun should coincide with its default form, the feminine form being a mere derivative.

3.5. Taking stock

63 Overall, the results of our analysis illustrate the centrality of the governing principle of gender reversal to female-as-norm in Brantenberg's work, which serves as the basis for its satiric humour and associated political agenda. This principle often trumps the linguistic specificities of both source and target languages, but is here so deeply embedded in the source text's lexical creativity that it poses considerable translation challenges. *Egalias døtre* is indeed a perfect illustration of Maher's [2014: 265] claim that "form and content [...] may be inextricably linked in a literary work, with each requiring the translator's careful analysis and attention".

64 There can be no doubt that the translator does just that, striving to fulfill the activist potential of the text – which is after all the goal of feminist translation (Godard [1984], Flotow [1991]). Quite possibly emboldened by the author's approval and collaborations, Mackay makes great use of his creative license, to the point that the amount of lexical creativity – especially at the beginning of the novel – can end up confusing the reader, defeating the source text's point. For the more persevering English-speaking readers undeterred by the first few pages, however, the translator successfully ensures that they also end up "laughing at patriarchy" (Barr [1989: 90-91]) and its would-be "normality". Just as advocated by Simon [1996: 36], this feminist translation goes beyond a mere transfer of meaning; it adopts the inextricably linked ethic and aesthetic principles of the source text and even enriches it, highlighting the subversive dimension of its humouristic approach and the political agenda lying behind every pun.

65 The very possibility of a successful translation of Brantenberg's novel, driven by the shared goal to undermine patriarchal language and society in spite of different linguistic means at hand, inscribes *Egalias døtre* in international feminist thought and illustrates the key role and immense potential of lexical creation and humour in the feminist struggle.

Conclusion

66 It is not easy to assess the effects of humour, since all readers differ and respond differently. Moreover, feminist wordplay as deployed by Brantenberg, whose impact may be rendered more difficult in translation, requires a special readership, a readership that is patient and willing enough to understand, interpret and make the connections, often a so-called "elite" or academic readership. Literary feminist humour of the 1970s has been described as "didactic" (Mackie [1990]), which does not always make it accessible or popular. Indeed, as Leng [2016: 1] intimates "the general public [which is] weary of a movement marred by stereotypes of 'man-haters'" has turned to

comedy, performance, TV series and other action hits where feminist humour is more accessible and palatable. While Leng [2016: 3] seeks to recover “a history of humour in feminism”, which she does with reference to various groups, actions/happenings and performances from the 1970s onward, she does not refer to wordplay in literary texts. But her intention to “combat the recurring erasure of humour from feminism” (Leng [2016: 3]) is also what underlies this article on Brantenberg’s *Egalias døtre.* By studying and analysing the humouristic elements and strategies of the source text, we lay bare its political goals, and by examining the English translation we ask how functional and effective such transfer can be when it comes to the complexities of wordplay. By focusing on humour in feminist literary art, we are reconstructing one facet of the consistent presence of humour within feminist activism and culture over the past four decades.

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NOTES

1. This is a collaborative transnational text: Luise von Flotow wrote the introduction and Section 1, Ida Hove Solberg wrote Section 2, and Enora Lessinger wrote Section 3 and the concluding sections.

2. « Si nous continuons à nous parler le même langage, nous allons reproduire la même histoire. Recommencer les mêmes histoires… Si nous continuons à parler le même, si nous nous parlons comme se parlent les hommes depuis des siècles, comme on nous a appris à parler, nous nous manquerons ».

3. Both the English translator and the current French translator of Brantenberg’s book, for example, are men: Louis Mackay and Jean-Baptiste Coursaud, respectively.

4. Throughout this section, translations of Norwegian vocabulary are as direct and explanatory as possible (in other words, the English translation from 1985 was not used for reference in this section). The use of brackets signals that the translation given is an existing equivalent, whereas more explanatory and literal translations, for instance of neologisms, are signaled by the use of the approximation sign.

5. “Every significant translation is grounded in a project, in an articulated goal. This project is determined by both the position of the translator and by the specific demands of the work to be translated” (Berman [1995: 76] *in* Simon [1996: 34]).

6. « [C]et humour féministe, qui porte le *topos* du roman et vise essentiellement à remettre en question les perceptions de la lectrice par le biais du ridicule, du sarcasme et de l’exagération, appelle un projet de traduction féministe ».

7. « Les problèmes de traduction, déclare-t-elle, étaient énormes : vous devez le repenser dans chaque nouvelle langue. […] Beaucoup de mots/phrases/idées se perdent dans la traduction anglaise, parce qu’en norvégien il y a en général plus de termes à référence genrée qu’en anglais… Certains mots, cependant, sont des gains. Comme ‘ladsel’. Des ‘ladsel’ en détresse. ‘Lordies and gentlewim’ est une expression comique sans équivalent dans le texte norvégien ».

8. While the third-person singular possessive pronoun is systematically gendered in English for animated being (his, her), this is not the case in Norwegian: depending on the syntactic organisation of the sentence, it can be either gendered (*hans, hennes*) or gender-neutral (*sin*).
9. The Norwegian text, on the other hand, reads: “*Det er tross alt menn som avler barn*” (1): “It is after all men who breed children”.

ABSTRACTS

This contribution explores humour as a means of resistance against patriarchal authority in Gerd Brantenberg’s *Egalias døtre* (1977), a work of feminist science fiction, and its translation into English by Louis Mackay (1985). In this Norwegian gender-bender, humour serves as a facilitator for critical thinking: the coinage of a playful and subversive matriarchal language undermines and ridicules at once the male-as-norm premise that operates in everyday language. This article reflects on the literary tradition the novel belongs to and the key role of lexical creation in the feminist struggle, before analysing the means and effects of lexical creativity in the source text and its translation, from compounding and neologisms to gender-inverting idioms. The results of this contrastive analysis show that the all-important female-as-norm principle at work in the novel, combined with structural differences between source and target languages, lead the translator to make full use of his creative license. By resorting to compensation as a creative translation strategy to create similar effects throughout the novel, he ensures that the English reader also ends up “laughing at patriarchy”, thereby “[breaking] the rules” of patriarchy (Barr [1989: 90-91]).

Cet article explore la dimension subversive de l’humour dans *Egalias døtre*, un roman de science-fiction féministe de l’autrice norvégienne Gerd Brantenberg (1977), ainsi que dans sa traduction en anglais par Louis Mackay (1985). Dans ce roman qui met en scène une inversion totale des genres dans la société, la création d’une langue matriarcale ludique et dérangeante à la fois permet de révéler et ridiculiser la domination masculine à l’œuvre dans le langage au quotidien. Notre contribution revient sur la tradition littéraire dans laquelle ce roman s’inscrit et sur le rôle clé de la créativité lexicale dans la lutte féministe, avant d’analyser les outils et les effets de cette créativité dans le texte source et sa traduction. Les résultats de cette analyse contrastive révèlent que l’usage du féminin comme genre non marqué dans le roman, ajouté aux différences structurelles entre le norvégien et l’anglais, conduisent le traducteur à faire plein usage de la licence créative dont il jouit. Son recours à la compensation comme stratégie de traduction créative permet au lectorat anglophone de « rire du patriarcat », et ainsi d’en « [briser] les règles » (Barr [1989 : 90-91]), tout autant qu’aux lecteurs du texte original.

INDEX

Mots-clés: créativité lexicale, humour, linguistique contrastive, traduction féministe, études de genre, néologisme, norvégien
Keywords: lexical creation, humour, contrastive linguistics, feminist translation studies, gender studies, neologism, Norwegian

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