

Dr Ewa Majewska

Instytut Kultury UJ/ Gender Studies UW

Reading the Feminist Writers of Color in Poland. Towards a Politics of Translation

In my lecture I would like to examine certain precautions, which might need to be considered while doing any act of cultural translation. As it has already been stated in most classical theories of translation, like the ones by P. Ricoeur and H. Gadamer, any kind of reading could actually be seen as an act of translation.

What seems interesting to me would be to see, what kind of complication a reading can face, when race and class issues enter the scene. Various feminist writers, including Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks and Audre Lorde have pointed to possible misunderstanding within the feminist circles. Gayatri Spivak, inspired by Walter Benjamin's classical essay „The Task of Translator” provides some excellent remarks for the translations within the community of women, yet – a community divided not only geographically, but above all – politically and economically.

I would like to re-read some of her suggestions in the context of reading the American feminists of color in Poland. As translator of bell hooks book „Feminist Theory. From Margin to Center”, Gayatri Spivak's „Can the Subaltern Speak?” and as a teacher in the cultural and gender studies, I find it particularly important to discuss some conditions of (im)possibility of such readings. I would like to suggest, that the often presumed „neutrality” and accessibility of these texts might be illusory, which should by no means be taken as simple impossibility. On the contrary – as Judith Butler suggested some time ago – it might be the practice of cultural translation, that makes the image of some kind of universality possible. I would like to see how that could work in the context of Polish/American readings of feminist texts.

Dr Ewa Majewska – lecturer/ adjunkt in the Institute of Culture, Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland; a feminist philosopher and culture critic. Author of „Feminizm jako filozofia społeczna. Szkice z teorii rodziny”, co-editor of two volumes concerning social movements and the politics of Polish transformation after 1989. Published in: Transverse, Signs, Obieg, Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki, Nowa Krytyka and many other journals and magazines.