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Say Translation Is Art

Sawako Nakayasu

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Say this.

Say not this.

Say it again.

Like this.

Say it again say whatever it takes, whatever it brings, say this.

Say translation as open art practice as open as matter and anti-matter.

Say anti-translation as refusing, or not, to translate altogether, say not this.

Say anti-translation as not refusing to translate, just refusing to translate. Refusing to translate, like this. Say it again.

Say I've never heard someone divulge so much of their personal intimate life only to claim that their politics are private, say coded language, say language is code.

Say translation of private space.

Say public translation.

Say I share this shape with you, say your shape is your shape, like this.

Say nonbinary stance toward texts and translations.

Say who, you.

Say who, I.

Say translating in the dark. Say smuggled translation, illegitimate translation, illegal translation, undefinitive translation, unauthorized translation. Screw and unscrew the hegemony cap translation.

Say feral translation.

Say eros in translation, say I want to be translated by you, say but not you, say I want, I want, I want, I say.

Say translation oceanic as desire.

Say wild caged animal longing to be free translation.

Say I choose, say I choose this, translation a series of choices like any other moment of agency, say choose to luxuriate in the micro-erotics of choosing this word over that word, of choosing this word *and* that word, of breathing heavily into a space that may or may not have been there all along.

Say I tend, I incline, I lie down at your feet.

Say I bend, I love, I stretch, I break.

Say I bend language translation, I love language translation, I stretch language translation, I break language translation.

Say I am busy making.

Say I am busy loving translation.

Say I am busy code-switching translation, I am busy cross-dressing translation, I wear it with pleasure.

Say pleasure.

Say what is the smallest unit of translation, say word, say syllable, say phoneme, say orthography, say handwriting, say breath, say the particle of thought preceding articulation.

Say what is the largest unit of translation, say poem, say book, say all the books, say everything they ever wrote, say everything they never wrote, have yet to write, say the transit between everything they ever wrote and everyone who ever reads anything they ever wrote, or say something larger more vast.

Say what does queer liberation look like if it chooses not gay marriage but alternative structures of human relationships, say instead of book into translated book, say book into alternative structures of literature via translation, alternative structures of literature via translation.

Say that other thing, say ineffable, say possum, say tiger, say intergalactic creatures all afloat in the pre-choate digitas, say this is how they translate, say I you you me, I risk you me, say this and translate me.

Say white feminism grows up and out of itself into the fecund intersection translation.

Say to translate the thick river is only one choice out of many.

Say translation in lively defiance of the social desire to translate like everyone else.

Say, when Harryette Mullen reads from *Muse & Drudge* the laughter dispersed to different moments in different parts of the audience, translation.

Say, when Sarah Ruhl's play *The Clean House* begins with a joke told in Spanish, the pleasure of laughing in a theater alongside others is limited to those who can get the joke in Spanish, translation.

Say, when Gabrielle Civil inserts her body into images of canonical performance art, *Swallow the Fish* and *Experiments in Joy* translation.

Say, when Layli Long Soldier translates the governmental apology to Native American tribes, *Whereas* translation.

Say, when M. NourbeSe Philip translates the legalities that translated African lives into insurance money, *Zong!* translation.

Say Pauline Oliveros's *Sonic Meditations* translation.

Say James Turrell's light into physical material translation.

Say Butch Morris's structured improvisation translation.

Say Tehching Hsieh's durational performance translation.

Say Hito Steyerl's "In Defense of the Poor Image" translation.

Say Christine Sun Kim's "Degrees of Deaf Rage" translation.

Say Amber DiPietra and Denise Leto's *Waveform* translation.

Say Jose Munoz's "Wildness of the Punk Rock Commons" translation.

Say Paul Preciado's dildotectonics translation.

Say Carolee Schneeman's meaty joyful vaginal translation.

Say Jack Halberstam's *Queer Art of Failure* translation.

Say Raul Zurita's *Sky Below* translation.

Say Third Cinema translation.

Say “bad” translation.

Say “F” translation.

Say ephemeral translation.

Say misfit, unpopular, unloved translation.

Say *Sula* translation (TM).

Say assigning new values of beauty translation, glorious bad beauty translation.

Say meritless, ugly, bush pig translation, say bad beauty translation.

Say Gurlesque translation (LG, AG), say Necropastoral translation (JM)

Say Outranspo, say Language Poetry translation.

Say no to SIDOLT translation, Standard Inferiorizing Definition of Literary Translation translation (DR).

Say make it better in translation (KW).

Say *Mud* translation (MIF), say Fast-Speaking translation (AW), say Mushroom Velada translation (MS), say *Technicians of the Sacred* ethno-translation (JR).

Say idiottranslator, idiot-translator, ignorant translator, ignorant schoolmaster translator, say emancipated translator (JR).

Say swerve, say post, say movement, say transit.

Say queer, say cruising, say punk, say jammed, say nonbinary say poly say trans+ or trans* translation.

Say inaccurate translation, unfaithful translation, say what good is the faithful if they are not much fun to be with translation.

Say conceptual translation, say open text translation, say avant-garde translation, say pomo translation, say poco translation.

Say translation as self-portrait, translation as repetitive self-portrait, translation as Frida Kahlo self-portraits, as Joe Brainard Nancy portraits, Cindy Sherman self-portrait translation.

Say self-translation as eliminating the myth of the original (RS), say translating into a language not your native language, say committing error in translation, say violating the integrity of that language, say opening up the fissures where other things can seep through translation (CS), say blessed are the cracked for they let in the light translation (GM). Say let in the light a different light translation. Say take space make space translation. Say translation as breathing room, say translation as breath, say translation as extension of life.

Say translation as process, say translation as pedagogy, translation as pastime, translation as navel gazing, translation as close reading, translation as language study, as therapy, as training, mouthing, wearing, playing, running, jumping, skipping, translation as amateur sport, translation as playing in a field, as dancing at a club (LNND), as not site but zone (EA), as porous, fluid syntax, translation verbs over all over the place nouns.

Say partial translation, half-assed translation, abandoned translation, mediocre translation, losers and suckers translation, nasty translation, bitchy translation.

Say unmarketable translation, say unremarkable translation, say unsellable translation, say unlikable translation.

Say rescue the translation from belligerent capitalism translation, from imperialist takeover translation, well-meaning neoliberal multicultural translation, from too much love is suspicious translation, from “Report to an

Academy” translation (FK), from “Eating the Other” translation (bh).

Say translation-speak of the subaltern (GCS).

Say translation as destruction and reconstruction, translation as rehearsal site for reimagining the conditions of literature (AB, EH), say translation as architecture, as site-specific architecture or post-architecture translation, architecture in the form of removal translation (GMC).

Say translation as conversation, as friendship, as intimacy (SC), as generous. Say counter-translation as correspondence. Say *Subsisters* translation (UW, SS). Say translation in e-mail, translation with parents, translation at the kitchen table (MK), translation in the process of finding queer love and learning the language of a country (Lesotho) within another country (South Africa) and mourning the loss of friendship and love (ZP).

Say chosen family translation counter to inherited wealth translation, inherited values translation.

Say remote translation, say close translation, say nomad translation (PJ), say constantly in flux translation, say real time translation, say incomplete translation, say translation in progress, say slow translation, say instant translation, say infinite duration translation, say mouth full of translation, body full of translation, translation in spite of and within the limitations of body, time, space.

Say their names, in and out of translation, the names of women killed in Mexico's drug cartel violence (MR, JH, RL).

Say their names, in and out of translation, victims of the massacre at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida (AC).

Say their names, in and out of translation, Black people killed by American police (CR).

Say vomit, say gagging, say choking translation, say I spent the entire summer of 2020 with low-grade fever and endless nausea, say this vomit-inducing country translation. Say my younger body drinking alcohol, body rejecting even a small amount by vomiting, they say women have trouble saying no, I envied my body's clarity in vomit translation.

Say race and racism, quiet translation of, say in Asia I learn to better understand it, to talk freely, say in 2017 I return to where I am from and learn anew how to speak, how not to say the wrong thing to the wrong person at the wrong time, say translating myself into silence, into poetry. Say a book full of translated vomit, gagging, choking. Say in the before of translation is silence, say in the after of translation is silence.

Say *Fuck the Police* translation, say Public Enemy translation, say Tribe Called Quest translation, say Blackalicious translation. Say TLC's "No Scrubs" written on an old envelope in the car translation. Say Jok'Air, on va turn up toute la nuit translation.

Say Defund the Police translation, say divesting from racist brutality and investing in social services translation, say priorities preferences customs inclinations values of importance and investment can shift because they need not stay the same in translation.

Say just because it is common and normal to translate and prioritize the sense and meaning of a poem at the cost of its sound and music, or to translate this poem and that poem but not the book in its entirety, say priorities preferences customs inclinations values of importance and investment can shift because they need not stay the same in translation.

Say microtranslation, say for example translate only one component of a poem, translate only the syntax, translate the syntax in its entirety, say translate the entire sonic landscape of the poem, say translate the spirit, the kinetics, the ghost that haunts it, say leave behind, leave out, alter the sense, say no they would never do that, would I do that, say I would do that, say do that to me, do that to me.

Say the more time I spend writing and translating and making art, the more they all blend into each other. Say the more time I spend being human and knowing and caring about other humans, the more the conventional structures of human relationships blend and regroup and reinvent those structures. Say new structures of language articulated via the LGBTQIA+ community opening the door to new formulations for structures of literature.

Say translation is opportunity.

Say I'm sick of too many conversations about source and target, author and translator, foreignizing and domesticating (LV, FS).

Say nonbinary stances toward translation sitting with and alongside both extremes, say on one end the magic of translation allows me to read the work of Alejandra Pjarnik and Ursula Andkjær Olsen and Dorothy Tse, and then say on the other end the ambitious comparative literature student reading in two, three, four languages because if one is to read seriously one must read it in the original, say all of it together alongside.

Say two-legged human being, female, lesbian, musician, composer, among other things translation (PO).

Say what you can do to help, if you'd like to, is to call your families your bosses your landlords your friends, everyone you know, and come out of the closet as queer translation (CAC).

Say overcoming heteronormatively naturalized desires by learning to recognize all naturalized desires such as the desire for a certain kind of beauty in translation (PP).

Say desire wears the mask of naturalization, say translation is a process of denaturalization which is also a means of decolonizing desire.

Say suspicion in all that appears to be natural translation, all that appears to be compulsorily able-bodied translation (JM, JG), say I translate with my body, say my body is not the same as your body (KB), in fact, say my body produces bags of shit, one heat-seeking bag of shit and another heat-seeking bag of shit translation, translation into and out of continuous inferno,

translatable bags of shit, because we cannot scream we translate (DB).

Say translation as a means of denaturalizing desire in language as rehearsal for denaturalizing decolonizing and overall flat-out liberating desire in real, actual, lived life, hooray.

Say fluent easy legible clear lucid readable translation, say yes and but.

Say translation at the edges of perception, say do you really want to be defined by your limitations translation.

Say aesthetics over politics translation, say politics over aesthetics translation.

Say nation state translation, say I'm over that nation state translation.

Say back translation from the colonial language original to the home language translation, writing in a colonial language already a translation before having been written at all (YS). Say treacherous translation, translation both pointing out the gulf and trying to bridge the distance (SBS). Say I refuse to translate (DMC).

Say I'm not here just to close the distance translation.

Say shift in parameters translation, say sense is not everything translation, say translate just the sounds, just the syntax, just the awkwardness, just the wildness, translation no more impossible than art.

Say ambient translation.

Say magical neo-translation.

Say outsider translation.

Say diasporic translation as a means of widening conversation about race (JK).

Say distributed centrality translation that washes away the notion of the margin (LS).

Say Ultratranslation (JH, JP).

Say dialect translation, say spoken translation, say accent translation, say second language translation, stepmother tongue translation, Taylor Mac and Judy translations.

Say here not here, there not here translation.

Say how now corrupt loyalty fidelity to what translation.

Say vomit translation, say diarrhea translation, say logorrhea translation.

Say I translate because I vomit, I vomit because I translate, and yet and yet.

Say how infinitely complex any move for liberation must be translation (AL).

Say break and rebuild everything via translation.

Say free translation, I say it, I do translate like that and also like this but there is more to that story translation, more to that arc, art, ball in the air translation I pitch it to you still in the air translation.

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