

TRANSLATING AFFECT: PERFORMING THE PERSONAL

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Abstract: *In one tradition, affect refers to sensations before they enter languages as named feelings. But what are the implications for the process of translation if something (sensation) lies outside language? This is where the concept of cultural translation (always a part of the process but not necessarily always acknowledged in terms of its complexities) becomes central. The ways in which an emotion is articulated (translated into conscious speech) has everything to do with the components of a specific language and the belief system within which it operates. This short paper will set out some of these dilemmas by looking at the complex concept of the personal in women's writing. The personal has been a liberating concept for women in that it helped articulate women's differences as part of second-wave feminism. However, it has also functioned to trap women by reducing them to the personal and the domestic at the expense of their participation in the public realm. In this age of social media there are new technologies to facilitate expressions of the personal that we might use to frame and reconsider that mantra of the women's movement: the personal is political. What does this mean today? The paper will look at an example of the continuing challenges associated with women who speak in the name of or take on the trappings of the personal. My example is the Malayalam writer Kamala Das.*