

辽宁师范大学

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硕士学位论文

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女性主义视角下的翻译研究——女性主义翻译理论在《圣经》  
翻译中的体现

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## 摘 要

**内容摘要：**20 世纪最后 30 年是一个“女性主义时代”。在这一时期，关于女性的研究和研究成果如雨后春笋般涌现出来。当这一“文化转向”的支流与翻译相遇时，女性主义翻译便应运而生。它的产生并不是一种偶然，女性主义与翻译有着天然的历史渊源，在女性主义发展史上翻译做出了不可或缺的贡献；而女性因素的注入，给翻译带来了前所未有的活力。再者，女性主义翻译并非无源之水，拉康的精神分析理论、巴爾特的后殖民主义理论和德里达的解构理论给女性主义翻译提供了理论支持。

女性主义翻译理论是颠覆性的理论。其理论对翻译问题，如翻译定义、忠实观、译者地位以及翻译方法和翻译策略做了全新的诠释。这在根本上是对传统译论的反叛。正是由于女性主义翻译理论的这种新奇性、反叛性，她遭到了来自女性主义圈内、圈外的批评。这些批评主要针对其精英主义、女性译者只翻译女性作品以及女性主义翻译观的后殖民主义的特征展开。这些批评还包括了对女性主义《圣经》译本的批评，焦点是女性主义译者所提倡的不分性别语言。本文简短的探讨了《圣经》在女性主义翻译理论及方法指导下做出翻译探索。

西方新时期的女性主义翻译理论对中国翻译理论和实践的影响迄今甚微。从数量上看尚未形成规模。本文试图通过对西方女性主义翻译理论的概述及《圣经》的女性主义翻译探索的探讨，起一个抛砖引玉的作用，使得女性主义翻译能引起更多学者的注意，从而对中国翻译界活力的保持起微薄之力。

**关键字：**女性主义翻译，理论渊源，反叛，批评，不分性别语言

## Abstract

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The last thirty years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the era of feminism, during which feminist researches and research results emerged one after another. When feminism, a branch of “cultural turn” met translation, feminist translation came into being. Its appearance is no coincidence. Feminism and translation are of great historical and political relations. Translation facilitated feminist movements and made women heard in intellectual field during feminist development, while feminism offered great energy into translation. Moreover, feminist translation got its theoretical supports from Lacan’s psychoanalysis theory, Barthes’ poststructuralist theories and Derridean deconstruction theories.

Feminist translation theory is one of great rebellion. It presents a brand-new explanation of most of translation issues like definition of translation, status of translators, notion of fidelity and translation strategies and methods. This is basically a rebellion against traditional translation theories. It is just because of its novelty and total rebellion that it confronts a lot of criticisms of its elitism, women-to-women translation and post-colonial translation. The criticisms also include that of feminist versions of the *Bible* with the focus on the “inclusive language”. And, this paper just provides a brief discussion of the feminist translation of the *Bible*.

Feminist translation in western countries has little influence on Chinese translation theory as well as practices, since the number tells no satisfactory scale. This paper here just presents a brief discussion of the relevant issues of feminist translation searching for further research and more attention from scholars. Thus, energy and vitality can possibly last in China translation field forever.

**Key words:** feminist translation, theoretical foundations, rebellion, criticisms, inclusive language

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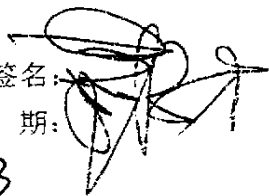
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## **Chapter one: Introduction**

### **1.1 Historical review**

The history of women taking part in translation can date back to the Middle Ages in Europe. The area which they were mainly involved in then was religion. For example, in England, during the Reformation, women were prohibited from writing, but they were permitted to translate religious texts. During that time, translation was the only means for women to take part in the intellectual life. Women have made great contribution to the development of translation. In the mean time, translation promoted women's cause to a great extent. For example, translation was an important part in the anti-slavery movement. From the beginning of the history, women and translation are closely related and exert interactive influence on each other. So, their association with each other is no coincidence.

The cultural context provided these two inborn partners favorable condition to a final combination. During 1980s, one of the most exciting developments is "the cultural turn". "This turn to culture implies adding an important dimension to translation studies." "The emphasis of translation studies changed to be on descriptive approach." "This shift emphasizes the reality of translation as documents which exist materially and move about, add to our store of knowledge, and contribute to ongoing changes in esthetics."(Simon, 1996:7) Under this trend, translators' identity is one factor considered. This legitimates women's insistence on taking a "gender" perspective in translation studies. Translation becomes a means to make women heard and visible. It is just a process of re-writing for women's political, ideological and social purposes; when analyzing translators' status or identity, "gender" perspective is taken. Rather than maintain the invisibility and subservience, translators shoulder a task to leave his or her generic traces on the work. In feminist sense, translators' fidelity should not show to the source text, but to a project. This project is engaged with a comprehensive system, semiotic, ideological, and political and so on. The translation is a result of any factor involved. In this process, translators can intervene whenever or wherever they like. If sometimes the source texts express ideas that are against women, they are allowed to correct this to establish a positive meaning. In fact, this project is aimed at equality to men. For the achievement of such purpose, feminist translators employed series of strategies and methods. Recovering the "lost" women works as well as women translators is the first strategy they employed. The efforts can also be found at a lexical level. They invent new words and new expressions. Wordplay is one usual means. This novelty is a total betrayal against the traditional ways. Besides these, they also add some footnotes, introductions, and accompanying essays. Because of their novelty, such efforts seem necessary. The most radical method comes from Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood(1995). She decided only to translate women's work, and even there she altered and intervened. She categorically verbalizes her political feminist standpoint - for her, translation is political.

New things always come across challenges. Feminist translation is no exception. The criticisms come from both inside and outside. Since their translation works are full of wordplays, neologisms, loanwords, and so on, it is criticized that this can only be accepted and understood by the intellectuals, the elites, which would silence women again. As to the intended action of white women to re-claim third world women's works, it is said, the work tends to show certain universality, "old colonial attitude is at work in the translation racket". (Spivak, 1992:187) It seems that women's identity varies through the world. Women should widen their views and take more factors, like racial ones into consideration. When considering the most radical assertion by Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood that women should only translate women's work, criticisms goes that the patriarchal features may not only result from gender identity, but also from something cultural. For those works which reflect certain feminine features, women translators can also work on it.

The last part of this dissertation is an examination of the feminist translation of the *Bible*. Their revision of the *Bible* is mainly on the patriarchal languages. The resolution they take is to re-claim the actual sources of the relationship between men and women, i.e. the biblical equality between men and women. They also replace those patriarchal languages with a kind of inclusive language. This is quite new, and really challenges the traditional versions. But this is greatly criticized as well. Some religious authorities like the International Commission on English in the Liturgy says: everything depends on the "right interpretation" which is the responsibility of the catechist or the homilist—not the translator, or the translating committee. So, the very original doctrines are defended here and they should be free from all ideological influence. Some feminist translators even say inclusive languages do not reveal the potentially woman-friendly aspects of the *Bible*, nor do they expose its unflinching patriarchy. Thus, their action runs counter to feminism's deeper goals and values. A definite new text is difficult to make. However, no area of biblical scholarship can today ignore the feminist challenge to meaning.

To be specific, feminist translation is most developed in Canada, where the bilingual condition provided perfect intellectual environment for the development. As early as the 1980s, scholars have already begun to pay special attention to feminist translation. After two academic meeting respectively called "Dialogue" and "Women and Words" at the beginning of 1980s, a women-specialized annual was established by four scholars, Daphne Marlatt, Kathey Mezei, Barbara Godard and Gail Scott. This is the beginning of more attention to feminist translation in Canada. Some more seminars were held in the following 4 or 5 years to carry on further discussion. Specialized works also came out later. To list some, *The Body Bilingual: Translating as a Feminine Rewriting* by Concordia professor, Suzanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (1991), *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* by Sherry Simon (1996), *Translation and Gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism"* by Luise von Flotow (1997), etc. In the first work, Lotbinière-Harwood asserted a radical view that translation is in fact rewriting. The second book is an emphasis of the cultural factors, especially "gender identity". It explored the translation under the influence of translators' gender. In the third book, von Flotow manages to unfold a

complex arguments about a revolutionary impact of gender on translation practice, history, and theory over the last thirty years. This trend didn't stop its foot in the new century. On March 8, 2002, the seminar "Voyages in Translation Studies" was held by Concordia University. A lot of papers are exploration of the gender issues in translation. Research is still going on.

Western feminist thoughts are influential in China, which was introduced into China in the early 1980s and really exerted great influence on Chinese literature writing. But, the research of feminist translation is still at a period of introduction. According to Mu Lei, there are only 27 papers and one specialized work about translation published in our country. A real trend has not been formed yet. (Mu Lei, [http://secwww.gdufs.edu.cn/felcsite/Article\\_Show.asp?ArticleID=706&ArticlePage=2](http://secwww.gdufs.edu.cn/felcsite/Article_Show.asp?ArticleID=706&ArticlePage=2))

## **1. 2 Writing process of the thesis**

The very beginning of the writing of this thesis is from the reading of Luise von Flotow's book, *Translation and Gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism"*, (1997) published by Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press. This book gave me a lot of insights into the feminist translation issues. The following months, some other papers on feminist thoughts, generic issues, ideological issues, etc. expanded my primitive knowledge. After learning some basic issues, I found four more specialized books in Beijing University library, among which Sherry Simon's book, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (1996) and J. Cheryl Exum's book *Fragmented Women* (1997) enlightened me greatly. Later, further information and materials are found on Internet. After all these preparations, I discussed my thoughts with my supervisor, professor Dong Guangcai. He gave me a lot of support and encouraged my studies in this field. After more than two months, this dissertation was finished. There must be a lot of flaws. Further improvement will possibly be made in future.

## **1. 3 Organization of the thesis**

This thesis is mainly divided into five parts. Chapter one is a brief introduction of the whole dissertation. Chapter two mainly talks about the history of feminism and the relationship of feminism and translation. Chapter three explores the theoretical sources, relative translation issues and the criticisms. Chapter four is a practical study, the translation of the Bible and chapter five is conclusion. The order is from historical order and from theory to practices.



## **Chapter two: Feminism & translation**

### **2.1 Introduction**

There seems to be an inevitable link between feminism and translation. Their subjects, women and translators, share a common position in history. At the beginning of human history, *Genesis* fixes women's subordinate position to men: women are just "bone of bone, flesh of flesh". The translators alike are also under certain shadow of authors, which can be proved by the metaphor of John Dryden, the famous English translation theorist, that translator is slave to author, their definite master. Translator can only work on master's farm through some secondary work, while the fruit will doubtlessly be handed to his master. (Tan Zaixi, 2004:122) It is just this natural link between feminism and translation gives rise to the following discussion.

The following discussion is divided into three parts. The first part extends a brief picture of the development of feminism and its main concerns. Then comes an exploration of feminism in China. Last but not the least, this chapter's emphasis will land on a discussion of the interrelationship of feminism and translation.

Feminism went roughly through three stages. The first wave feminism (also called suffrage feminism) mainly strived for an equal treatment with that of men, including voting rights, education rights, and working rights. The second wave feminism added gender issue into their agenda. During this period, their main goal was to criticize sexism, sexist discrimination and patriarchic system. Thus, they aimed to pull out the root of their inequality to man and confirm the solidarity of the women all over the world. When feminism reached 1980s—1990s, former feminism confronted challenges, especially those from post-feminists, who took new perspectives, "resist" and "power", rather than "gender" in their struggle. In a word, feminism never stops its development. New theories are always being fostered.

Feminism in China is different from that in western countries. They were set under different background, having different conventions. Governments, as well as their partners, men, show different attitudes toward women liberation movement. It is just because of this different environment that feminism in China is less radical and is under great influence of western feminist traditions.

The third part is mainly focused on the interrelationship between these two parts: feminism and translation. Feminism brings in a new perspective—gender—into translation study and encourages a challenge, with the tool of language, against the former single and unshakable authority, the source text. Translation, in turn, provided an opportunity to let women be heard. Meanwhile, translation practices promoted feminist movement. However, translation in China benefited less from feminism. Feminist translation in China has a long way to go.

### **2.2 Feminism and its main concerns**

Feminism is roughly a social theory, movement and way of life informed by the rights, experience and interests of women. It advocates the political, economic and social equality of the sexes. Feminism is also the belief that society is disadvantageous to women, systematically depriving them of individual choice, political power, economic opportunity as well as intellectual recognition. Thus, feminist claims and feminist movement has been developing side by side. Their course can be roughly studied at three stages: the first wave feminism (1850s, 1860s—1920s), the second wave feminism (1960s) and the third wave feminism (1980s, 1990s—present).

Women became aware of their unequal status during their struggle against feudalism together with men. When the revolution ended, women were given no equal rights to men. Such consciousness grew into their struggle for economic and political rights. Equality was their main concern. They claimed,

“Woman is born free and lives equal to man in her rights. Social distinctions can be based only on the common.”

(<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/americanstudies/lavender/decwom2.html>)

Similarly, the English writer Mary Wollstonecraft argued against both Burke and Rousseau, defending the notion of natural rights, particularly rights for women, such as equal education. She insisted that women could not become virtuous, even as mothers, unless they won the right to participate in economic and political life on an equal basis with men. (Wollstonecraft, 2004) These frontiers, mostly from middle class, attacked various phenomenon of the time which gave rise to women’s inequality to men. Because of their efforts, more and more people began to be concerned with this oppressed and marginal group. However, their struggle still remains at the beginning stage. They still set men as their standard. Their goals are just getting equal treatments to men. The deep cause has not yet been dug out.

After the Second World War, various kinds of revolutionary movements were flourishingly carried out. It is just under such environment that feminist movement sprang up again. And, thus, the second wave was formulated around 1960s or 1970s. When the War was over, a lot of women returned to home again because the encouragement of a kind of femininity: women’s duty is to care for her family, bring up children, and please her husband. Therefore, women are fixed only in the field of family having no career, no higher education and no politically rights. Women were confused with their social condition and began to research into a deeper level. A new item, “gender” appeared thereafter.

In two essays, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex” (1975) and “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality” (1993), Gayle Rubin puts forward the concept of “gender” and elaborates that gender difference and sexual difference are related but are not the same. Sex, male or female, is about physical differences between the sexes, while gender, masculine or feminine, is about characteristics of behavior, demeanor, or psychology which feminism wished to claim are culturally constructed and conditioned and so ultimately arbitrary. It is a construct, not a natural or eternal category. Thus our thought systems, philosophies, and world views had to think of gender as a variable system, as something created and

alterable, not as a given. So, with the development of the society and our capacity to analyze it, we can “deconstruct” and redefine it.

“gender” theory was a great support for feminist struggles, because of which women realized that “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman.” (de Beauvoir, 1952:1) Betty Friedan (1963) condemns the discrimination and oppression on women by the conventional social systems and encourages women to smash the family bonds and strive for their own rights. These ideas tell their common view that women’s social identity or gender identity is the product of patriarchy and a war against patriarchy is necessary to gain women’s freedom.

The appearance of “gender” is meaningful. It is a milestone that marks feminists’ improvement in theoretical construction and its turn to social and cultural effects.

During this stage, it is believed that the category “woman” could unite all females, as it was considered the most significant sole and therefore the strongest categorical identification. Women were expected to have the same experiences and problems. Additionally, concepts were frequently set up as opposing dichotomies e.g. men/women, work/home. This may have been convenient for comparison, but it did not allow for overlay between these terms. (Mead, 1950)

The appearance of “gender” really caused a stir to feminist studies. But, with a couple of developments, the clear and simple feminist distinction between “sex” and “gender” has become confused: first, gender tended to simply replace all uses of the word “sex”, except for direct references to sexual activities. It is now common to find questions of the form, “what gender are you?” where the answer is clearly expected to be “male” or “female” rather than “masculine” or “feminine”. Second, “gender” feminists never did accept even physical differences with very good grace. So, they will never accept women’s physical weakness that they cannot lift and carry the fire hoses and ladders. Instead, they will say women will nevertheless have “equal opportunity” to be “firefighters”. Moreover, a few stories recently have been about schools removing urinals from the boy’s bathrooms, and telling the boys they should urinate like girls. This is to eliminate the sense of power that boys supposedly have in using their penises to direct urine where they wish.

In face of these dilemmas, feminists have been searching for new outlets. Firstly, “sex” and “gender” were redefined. It is suggested that sex is also a social category like gender, because people do have social expectations which are based on the physical body. Additionally, more detailed work in endocrinology and physiology made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between biology and cultural factors. Second, the dichotomies stressed by second wave feminist were problematic at times because it was so hard to separate women from men and other factors such as class. Being categorized as woman no longer supersedes other distinctions and roles. Class, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, etc, are also recognized as important characteristics that diversify the category of women; in other words it is acknowledged that all women do not have the same universal needs and experiences. One point we should mention here is the proposal of post-feminists that new perspectives, “resist” and “power”, should be taken instead of “gender” in order to go beyond the limitation of dichotomy set by “gender”. And, thus, pluralism and

difference are emphasized.

Western feminist theory is of pluralistic nature and ever developing. Its developing course tells that women's revolution lies not only on their own efforts but also on the construction of relative social and cultural systems.

### **2.3 Feminism in China**

May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement of 1919 is a milestone for feminist movement in China. From then on, women's consciousness increased. Compared with western feminism, feminism in China developed under different backgrounds. First, as what is said above, the second wave feminism in western countries sprang up because women were forced back home. They struggled against the discrimination from patriarchal society. China, however, was at the period of socialist construction, when women had already gone out of home enjoying equal payment to men. The society was calling for equality between men and women. Second, government authorities show different attitudes toward women liberation movement. In China, laws are set to guarantee women's equal rights to men in education, politics, economy, etc. Women are protected by special laws. But western people would see these protections as discrimination. So, there are few women rights protection laws, but, instead, anti-discrimination laws. Different conventions gave rise to different responses. Third, women's partners, men, show different attitudes toward women. In China, women's liberation was realized through the foundation of nation, not from men's hands. On the contrary, men are women's friends. The issue of women liberation was firstly put forward by some male masters like, Liang Qichao, Li Dazhao, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, etc.

Feminism in China, therefore, takes on different features from western feminism. On the one hand, it is less radical than western feminism. The time when feminist consciousness was awake is just when China was in face of national crisis, which required women to put nation at the first place and consequently, women missed the painstaking process of self-exploration. Even nowadays, we can see, its members are limited to a minority of intellectuals and female university students. They live a peaceful and stable life. They are fundamentally lack of the spirit of resistance. In addition, as what is discussed above, women can get the same job as men and government set strict laws to protect women. Chinese women have already been out of a marginal position. Feminists are scarcely oppressed and persecuted. In another word, taking part in feminist cause is of zero risk. The acceptance and establishment of feminist research in universities and scientific research centers is only carried out for the sake of comprehensive development or an opportunity to get promotion. Chinese "feminists" do not have to be avant-garde or totally destructive.

On the other hand, feminism in China develops under great influence of western feminism. From 1981, when American feminist literature was firstly introduced by Zhu Hong in the 4<sup>th</sup> issue of World Literature, feminism in China went through a course of introduction and application of western feminist theories. Western feminist theories are used to analyze women's status and oppressed positions in history and

nowadays and point out the root of women discrimination. One typical example of western influence is the imitation of western writings. One western feminist tradition is to write female body. They think female body is the source of women's creative energy, a largely unknown entity that has long been silenced and needs to be written. In "The Laugh of the Medusa", the first text by the French writer Helene Cixous to be translated into English, the author writes: "women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve/discourse..." (Cixous, 1976:886) Here, to establish women's identity is to take part in such "private writing". Some representatives are Chen Ran, Lin Bai, Wei Hui, Mian Mian, etc.

Compared with western feminism, feminism in China still has a long way to go. Its thoughts are relatively narrowed. In fact, not all contemporary female writers agree to feminism. As early as mid-1980s, Zhang Kangkang proposed that we need two worlds, women's inner world as well as that faced by both women and men. (Zhao Xifang, 2003:136) Western feminism is the outcome of industrial economy. Its theories should not be generally and universally applied in China.

## **2. 4 Interrelationship between feminism and translation**

For a long time, translation, as females, is fixed at a subordinate and derivative place. Females are just "property" to males. And translations are "echoes (in musical terms), copies or portraits (in painterly terms), or borrowed or ill-fitting clothing (in sartorial terms)" of the source texts. (Chamberlain, 2000:315) They are always described by referring to the other. In the binary paradigm, male/female, translators, be they male or female, have always bound themselves on the "female" side. So translation is just "feminine activity". In 1603, John Florio, the translator of Montaigne's *Essays*, dedicated them to the Countess of Bedford with the words: "So to this defective edition[...]since all translations are reputed females." Translation and feminism, with their shared experience, surely exerted great influence on each other.

### **2.4.1 The influence of feminism on translation**

Feminism is an ideological as well as cultural movement. Its influence extends in almost every field. As to translation, feminism contributes a lot to translation's resistance against authoritative source text and its language revolution.

During the second wave, feminists put forward the concept of "gender" and set their goals to overthrow patriarchy. This is a denial of the absolute and single authority and power center and a denial of their objectivity and universality. In translation, source text is the definite and single authority. Translators' duty is to "mirror" this authority, without any change. Feminists' struggle against traditional patriarchy inspired translators to question source text's single and absolute meaning. Such realization promoted further development in translation. One typical example is the rewriting of the myth of Pandora. The story traditionally tells how Pandora, the

first woman of the Greek creation myth and wife to Prometheus, opened a box out of sheer curiosity and unleashed all the ills of the world, including linguistic chaos. Pandora's Box is thus the symbol of devil. This story was rewritten by feminists, in which Pandora's Box which caused catastrophe to the world turned to be Horn of Plenty, symbolizing fertility. Littau stresses that the figure of Pandora is itself a translation. (Flotow, 2004:46) This rewriting is in fact a process of resisting against the authority, the traditional myth. Moreover, this rewriting reveals that there is no definite version of translation. Every text can be retranslated and every myth can be rewritten. This serial nature of translation indirectly deconstructs the traditional hierarchy between translation and original. At the same time, it emphasizes the variety of meaning.

Besides destruction of the traditional authority and emphasis of variety of meaning, feminism raised language revolution in translation. "a familiar rallying call of the 1970s" is "women's liberation must first be a liberation of/from language." (Simon, 1996:8) Because they think that "language does not simply "mirror" reality; it contributes to it." (Simon, 1996:9) Language is not only a tool for communication but also a manipulative tool. Some reformists changed the traditional language forms. For example, chairperson (=chairman), firefighter (=fireman), etc. However, the other radical feminists thought the opposite way. They thought the only resolution to realize language revolution is to carry out "a full-scale revamping of language". Translation, we know, is a process of interlinguistic transfer. The influence of feminist language view on translation is inevitable and understandable. But, meanwhile, new challenges were raised. One typical example is the translation of those feminist experimental writings. "Feminist writers have tried out new words, new spellings, new grammatical constructions, new images and metaphors in an attempt to get beyond the conventions of patriarchal language." (Flotow, 2004:15) When translating the female body, translators are in trouble that how to express this "new" female body in another society's patriarchal language. One good example is from Susanne de Lotbiniere-Harwood. When she translated "cyprine" in Brossard's *Sous La Langue* (1987), she created an English version "cyprin". "cyprine" in French means female sexual secretions. In English, we do not have an equivalent word but wet. Therefore, the coinage comes. Similar difficulties occur when translating puns and other experiments with language. Some common ways translators use is to coin new words and to reclaim old uses. But the first resolution always requires additional explanation and thus interrupts readers' thought in order to understand the new words. The reason for the reclamation of words' old uses is that "words that were once important to women, or that once expressed women's historical power and autonomy have been degraded in patriarchy". (Flotow, 2004:16) Take the French word "con" (originally referred to female's cunt) for example. Derogatory meaning developed later to refer to an obnoxious, cretinous male. The issue arose in Harwood's translation of Gail Scott's book *Heroine* into French, where the question "I wonder about the smell of cunt" had to be rendered "je me demande ce que sent le con d'une femme". The specification "d'une femme" was necessary since it could otherwise have referred to the smell of an idiotic male. The translator here let us see women's sexual body has been colonized

by male use and abuse.

### 2.4.2 The influence of translation on feminism

Despite its marginal status in history, translation supported and promoted feminism greatly through its development. It is through translation that women had access to the world of letters. Women's voices were heard thereafter. Furthermore, translation promoted feminist movements. During the sixteenth century, authorship was considered a distinctly male activity. Women, no matter how excellent she was, published only translation, not original writing: "this is the case of Margaret More Roper(1505-1544), daughter of Thomas More, of the Cooke Sisters, of Jane Lumley(1537-1576), and most notably of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke(1561-1621) , sister of Philip Sidney and revered patroness of letters." (Simon,1996:47 )Through translation, admission into the world of literature was first gained particularly by wealthy upper-class women. Translation was allowed to women because it was not seen as an expression of their personal viewpoint. The female viewpoint was thus both hidden and revealed behind the male authority, which did not directly challenge male control of that culture. Translation during the English Renaissance was one of the only public intellectual spheres women had access to.

While involved in literary culture, translation also provided women an opportunity for some degree of creativity. Some women chose to translate work that challenged dominant ideologies. One of them is Aphra Behn (1640-89), who emphasized in her preface that translation was a powerful tool. She intended her translation of Fontenelle's *La pluralité des deux mondes* to give women access to rationalism and science.

The period between 1600 and 1900 in Europe was a very fertile, productive time for women writers and translators. Many translations were published anonymously. Some originals pretended to be translations: that was as safe as hiding behind the "Anonymus". However, it was also a first refusal to think and act along the lines of binary oppositions: origin/authority and translation/mediation. Many women actively produced texts, either anonymously, or openly, or by writing under the pseudonym of "the translator".

Besides all these, translation was important to promote feminist movements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, in 1832, the translation of Wollstonecraft's tremendously influential *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (2004) into German by Henriette Herz (1764-1847) helped pave the way to the later women's movement in Germany. Another typical example is the French translation of Behn's *Oroonoko*, which is considered the first important abolitionist statement in the history of English literature. (Goreau, 1980:289) The translation of this key text is one important aspect of anti-slavery movement. "The translation of *Oroonoko* (published 1696) into French in 1745 by Pierre Antoine de La Place, for instance, had far-reaching consequences in French humanitarian thought, three years before the publication of Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*."(Simon, 1996:59) Though the translation, for its omission of certain key passages, diminishes the power not only of

the “style” but also of the political clout of the text, both the original and the translation were relatively radical in their criticism of slavery. (Kadish and Massardier-Kenney, 1994:26-61)

The discussions above are a brief picture of feminism history in western countries and in China as well as the interrelationship of feminism and translation. The influence of feminism on translation is only a general and brief statement. In the following parts, some detailed information about feminist translation will be illustrated.



## **Chapter three: Theoretical foundations and translation issues of feminist translation**

### **3.1 Theoretical foundations**

Feminist translation and practice isn't of no source. Some traces can be found in Lacan's psychoanalysis, Barthes' poststructuralist theories and Derridean deconstruction to build up its theoretical foundation.

#### **3. 1. 1 Lacan's psychoanalysis**

Despite its prejudice against women, Lacan's theory enlightened women a lot, especially its discussion of "Three Orders": the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.

The Real is the subtlest item in "Three Orders". The reason for this condition is that it occupies an undecidable position and Lacan (1994) avoided a final explanation. This item is always in terms of the impossible: the Real is that which is outside the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Lacan's notion of the Real has little to do with any assumptions about the nature of the world and with 'reality'. The Real can never enter the subjective world. Thus it cannot be directly felt or observed. The knowledge of it is just its appearance. The Imaginary and the Symbolic are fabricated to imitate the Real. The Real is impossible to see, or to hear since, in any cases it is 'always—already—there'. It is associated with the sudden, the disconcerting and the unpredictable. In the mean time, however, the Real not only doesn't disappear, but also directly exert influence on the Imaginary and the Symbolic. In a stricter sense, the Imaginary and the Symbolic is lack of the Real. It is just because of this absence that the Imaginary and the Symbolic has always been pursuing the Real. People stepping into the Imaginary or the Symbolic try to confirm or reproduce the Real. The reality comes into being thereafter.

In Lacanian sense, feminist translation is carried out in the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The absence of the Real and the fabrication of the Imaginary and the Symbolic enlighten and support feminist course. They make it possible for feminist movement and feminist translation to undergo reformative or radical reforms to make women heard and visualized. Also, the former endows the latter great hope in their course.

The Imaginary grows from the infant's experience of its 'specular ego'. It arises at the mirror phase (when child begins to realize it is different from others) and extends far into the adult individual's experience of others and of the external world. Lacan re-defines the Freudian 'ego' that 'ego' is related to one's imaginary which is connected to infants' mirror image at certain stage. 'ego' is identical with one's imaginary. So, 'ego' in the Imaginary is different from rational subject. This rational subject can be constructed consciously. This is just what feminist movement and

feminist translation strive to gain: to reshape women as the independent subject and be out of the marginalized position.

The affirmation of identity by mirror image is unstable. After all it is only certain illusionary matter. In order to gain a relatively stable affirmation, children have to go beyond the Imaginary and the 'ego' in the Imaginary. Language or symbol serves as the media then. With language's entering into daily life and mental world, children have to make use of language to confirm their own identity. In the end, children transit from the Imaginary to the Symbolic. Accordingly, ego changes into subject. In this period, children have to get over its dependence on mother and identify with father. Not only so, he has to set this other, mother and woman as its opposite side. So, stepping into the Symbolic means stepping into 'other people's speech', which will inevitably be of masculinity. Language denies individuality or femininity and the real subject. As Lacan (1994) believes, every word or sign in language consists of two parts: the signifier and the signified. According to Saussure, signifier and signified are identical. But Lacan thinks they are not corresponding to each other. And language is not based on the unification of the signifier and the signified, but a system constituted by various signifiers and their signification chains. As to this point, Lacan (1994) gives a simple example that male washroom and female washroom have the same facilities. The only difference is that the signs on the door are different, one is 'Men's', the other is 'Women's'. The signified, the facilities, are the same, but the signifiers are different. They are not one-to-one relation. The object is the same, but the understandings can be different.

The reality of language that language is of masculinity awoke women. This condition impelled women's exploration in the field of letters, especially experimental writing and feminist translation. They try to find those useful signifiers for their course. Lacan's language view offers feminist translation great theoretical supports.

### **3. 1. 2 Barthes' poststructuralist theories**

Roland Barthes is one of the pioneers of poststructuralists in France. Most of the key points of his poststructuralist theories can be found in his work, *S/Z*. *S/Z* abandons structuralist methodology. What it seeks to establish is not a method in the structuralist sense, but an attitude or approach. Structuralism emphasizes the commonness of language, leaving differences behind. Barthes alludes that structuralist narratologists try "to see all the world's stories...within a single structure" (Barthes, 1974: 1) Their analyzing work focuses on distilling the general structure out and applying it to all texts. To structuralists, meaning is objective, universal and definite. The uniqueness is stressed. Original meaning is inviolable.

In *S/Z*, Barthes (1974) discusses these matters in a new way. He says the nature of poststructuralist language can only be unstable. No meaning center unchangeable exists for Text. The "Text", indeed, is plural, playful and infinite. It has no boundaries and cannot, Barthes says, be bought as a work. It is an intertextual freewheel. It is a wandering world, not the "organized drift" of "classic" reading. In a striking image, "Text" is composed not of blocks but of "polyhedrons faceted by a word" (Barthes,

1974:14). That is, its significations, in the slow turning of “Textual” reading, produce an infinity of facets for examination.

As to the matter of the authority of author, he (1974) says, the authority carried by author does not exist. As soon as author puts down letters, meaning is out of control. Therefore, author is not the master but only a guest of his own work. He classifies literary works into two types: readerly and writerly. The first type of text allows the reader only to be a consumer of a fixed meaning, while the second turns the reader into a producer. The former only requires the reader to passively consume the text, but the latter requires reader’s creative contribution. The writerly text exists only in theory, though Barthes’ description of it suggests the texts of modernism: “this ideal text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifiers; it has no beginning;...we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one. (Barthes, 1974: 68) “In the Text, only the reader speaks”. (Barthes, 1974: 152) Universality is only a myth for texts. The nature of difference for texts is stressed by Barthes. According to Barthes, meaning is the outcome of difference. The number of difference is infinite. Thus ultimate meaning does not exist. The point of interpretation is not to find a definite meaning or to examine its universal structure, but to explore the work itself and the reading process. Interpretation is a process of examination which extends each signified and produces new signifiers. A metaphor is quite vivid: interpretation is like peeling onions, and text or work is just the onion which is consisted of many layers and is without kernel, center, and mystery. Text is only the unification of infinite surfaces.

The influence by Barthes’s poststructuralist theories on feminist translation can be seen when considering its resistance against traditional translation theories and methodology. Translation becomes “a game of signifiers”. Readers/translators create new meanings or re-produce the Text since the authority of author disappears, the meaning of source text is unstable and absolute equivalent translation is inaccessible.

### **3. 1. 3 Derridian deconstruction**

Derridian deconstruction is the upending of the Western metaphysical tradition, or, to be more precise, the hierarchies set by the traditional binary oppositions. It is just this tradition that provides the tools for a deconstructive response. Because of this, it is worth briefly considering the target of Derridean deconstruction—the metaphysics of presence, or somewhat synonymously, logocentrism.

There are many different terms that Derrida employs to describe what he considers to be the fundamental ways of thinking of the Western philosophical tradition. These include: logocentrism, phallogocentrism, and perhaps most famously, the metaphysics of presence, but also often simply 'metaphysics'. These terms all have slightly different meanings. Logocentrism emphasizes the privilege that *logos*, or speech, has been accorded in the Western tradition. Phallogocentrism points towards the patriarchal significance of this privileging. As Derrida (1984) says, Western philosophy is built on the basis of the binary oppositions or pairs. One part of that binary pair is always more important than the other, that one term is "marked" as

positive and the other as negative. Hence in the binary pair good/evil, good is what Western philosophy values, and evil is subordinated to good. He argues that all binary pairs work this way--light/dark, masculine/feminine, right/left; in Western culture, the first term is always valued over the second.

In his most famous work, *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1998) looks particularly at the opposition speech/writing, saying that speech is always seen as more important than writing. Anyway, the idea is that the spoken word guarantees the existence of somebody doing the speaking--thus it reinforces all those great humanist ideas, like that there's a real self that is the origin of what's being said. Derrida calls this idea of the self that has to be there to speak part of the metaphysics of PRESENCE; the idea of being, or presence, is central to all systems of Western philosophy, from Plato through Descartes (up to Derrida himself). Presence is part of a binary opposition presence/absence, in which presence is always favored over absence. Speech gets associated with presence, and both are favored over writing and absence; this privileging of speech and presence is what Derrida calls LOGOCENTRISM. Because of the favoring of presence over absence, speech is favored over writing. It's because of this favoring of presence over absence that every system posits a CENTER, a place from which the whole system comes, and which guarantees its meaning--this center guarantees being as presence.

What Derrida does is to look at how a binary opposition--the fundamental unit of the structures or systems we've been looking at, and of the philosophical systems he refers to--functions within a system. His basic method of deconstruction is to find a binary opposition. Show how each term, rather than being polar opposite of its paired terms, is actually part of it. Then the structure or opposition which kept them apart collapses.

Besides the matter of metaphysics, Derrida (2001) also discusses the meaning of language. He says language is of subjectivity. In the pair signifier and signified, signified traditionally occupies a superior position. The relationship between signifier and signified, or the words and objects or concepts, is not fixed, nor developed evolved. It is, in fact, random, arbitrary and is set down through usage. In metaphysics, univocity is the essence, or better, the *telos* of language. (Derrida, 1984: 247) To succeed in twisting free of the logocentric tradition would be to write, and to read. To destroy the tradition would be to see all the texts of that tradition as self-delusive, because using language can do what language cannot do. Language itself, so to speak, can be relied upon to betray any attempt to transcend it. (Derrida, 2001: 278-281)

Derridean deconstruction has its own methodological significance. Derrida doesn't seek to reverse the hierarchies implied in binary pairs--to make evil favored over good, unconscious over consciousness, and feminine over masculine. Rather, deconstruction wants to erase the boundaries between oppositions, hence to show that the values and order implied by the opposition are also not rigid. Deconstruction cannot limit itself or proceed immediately to neutralisation: it must, by means of a double gesture, a double science, a double writing, practice an overturning of the classical opposition, and a general displacement of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of intervening in the field of

oppositions it criticizes.

This method is generally called "Deconstruction", because it is just a combination of construction/destruction--the idea is that you don't simply construct new system of binaries, with the previously subordinated term on top, nor do you destroy the old system--rather, you deconstruct the old system by showing how its basic units of structuration (binary pairs and the rules for their combination) contradict their own logic.

The appearance of Derridean deconstruction enlightened feminist movement to see the deeper reasons of their subordination and inferiority to men. Their target turned to the social structures, or patriarchy. The methods of deconstruction enables feminist translators to re-read and re-translate the original text. Theoretically, they not only emphasize the deconstruction of traditional translation theories, but also try to construct their own theories. Through translation, they set the aim to strive for equality to men, not the superiority or oppression instead.

Besides the above philosophies, feminist translation is also influenced by other philosophies like that of Lyotard. His criticism of grand narrative in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) offered feminists great enlightenment. Foucault is as well a torchbearer for feminists. With these enlightenments and its own exploration, feminism is becoming more and more mature.

### 3. 2 Translation issues in feminist translation

Feminist translation theory is a relatively of comprehensive system, which discusses almost every aspects of translation as other translation theories. It, however, presents a fairly new picture different from the traditional understandings. This betrayal is necessary. In a patriarchal society, women are marginalized. As Verena Stefan, the author of *Häutungen*, the most influential radical feminist text written in German, says, "Language fails me as soon as I try to speak of new experiences. Supposedly new experiences that are cast in the same old language cannot really be new. (Stefan, 1978:53) When women read and communicate, they are always translating. In the literary field, women are usually ignored or deleted. Take the English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* for example. This version, *The Second Sex* came out in 1952, prepared by American professor of zoology Howard Parshley. In this version more than ten percent of the original materials are deleted without any mark. Large sections of text recounting the names and achievements of women in history have been cut from the English version. The names of 78 women—politicians, military leaders, courtesans and saints, artists and poets—have thus been eliminated. (Simon, 1983) These deletions are considered 'patriarchal translation' which causes a lot of confusion and is harmful to women's liberation. Translation tradition as well as their own circumstances impels feminist translators to do further research. Feminist translation here redefines the meaning of translation, the notion of fidelity, the status of translators, the translation methods, and etc. These are directed not at the original but at the feminist project, i.e. the reworking of meaning so as to reverse the effects of male social and cultural domination..

### 3. 2. 1 Redefinition of translation

Translation has traditionally been looked upon as a secondary reproductive activity. This is associated with misogynist stereotypes of women, and it can therefore be argued that translation is described in gendered terms, negatively related to women. The translation is only rarely seen as an independent artistic work. It is almost associated with not very flattering terms such as “imitation”, “reproduction”, or even “distortion”. The original and translation are understood in dichotic opposites: production and reproduction, or creation and imitation. Even though we pay more attention to the function of translation nowadays, it didn't get rid of the subservient status. The relatively new copyright for translations is a result of the transformative development towards translation as original work. Although, this positive development does not necessarily or immediately change the status of translation as being perceived as less creative, noble, or ingenious as original writing. In this sense, translation can only be a copy of the original, or a mirror of the original, which feminist translators rebel against. They claim that there is neither identical text nor completely different texts in the world. The original is not an absolute “original”. All texts are marked by the writer or the translator's subjectivity. The difference between the original and the translation is inevitable. Translation can always help the original to go beyond time and space. Therefore, we can say, the original is dependent on the translation no more than the translation is dependent on the original.

In the traditional sense, translation is just a language-language transfer. Translation is worthwhile with its linguistic function. It's only a problem of merely finding verbal equivalents. With the cultural turn, more attention is paid on the social functions of translation. Translation is a problem of interpreting a text encoded in one semiotic system with the help of another. Intertextuality is extremely significant in this regard. The cat of translation is intimately related to the question of cultural identity, difference and similarity. Translation can carry across new concepts and exert great social impact. Therefore, feminist translators treat translation as a political activity. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, the translator of Lise Gauvin's *Lettres d'une autre*, argued in her preface, “My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women. So my signature on a translation means: this translation has used every translation strategy to make the feminine visible in language.” (Gauvin, 1989: 36)

Another highlight of feminist translation is its claim of their translation as rewriting. Instead of admitting their traditional mechanical role while translating, they stressed that translation is creation in itself, a piece of writing that is a recreation and not a reproduction. This feature can be drawn out of from the different translation of Brossard's “Ce soir, j'entre dans l'histoire sans relever ma jupe”. The deep and implicit meaning here is that the only way for women to enter history is to provide erotic service to men. A version goes this way, “tonight I shall enter history without t lifting up my skirt”. This more careful translation is criticized by Landa Gaboriau. He says this is not only lack of creation but also cannot express the woman's solemn and stirring feeling after struggling out of men's longtime impression and discrimination.

The translation produced for performance on stage, was, “tonight I shall enter history without opening my legs.”(Gaboriau, 1979:35) Here, the original’s meaning is no longer covered to discover but a series of discourse to be created.

The claims and rebellions above just unroll a brand-new picture of translation to us.

### **3. 2. 2 Notion of fidelity**

Traditional fidelity is built on the basis of binary poles: the original and the translation, the source text and its culture and the target text and culture. Fidelity is analyzed in terms of word-for-word vs sense-for-sense translation. Fidelity is traditionally the loyalty to the author’s intention in translation. As Thomas Drant, the sixteenth-century English translator of Horace, vividly described, to maintain fidelity is to shave the heads and pare the nails of captive women they wish to make their wives in order to remove all sighs of beauty from them. Fidelity is a must for all translation assessment for the original literary pieces. In order to escape from the fragrance of “infidelity”, translators would use every method to find out more about the writing background, purpose and feelings so that they could provide with the readers a more accurate piece of writing and make them feel precisely as the writers have foreseen.

Here, “loyalty” and “betrayal” seem to be the double personality of translation. In the history of translation, there seems to be no perfect standard to make a final judgment. It is hard to say what is really “loyalty” or “fidelity”. The definition may differ from person to person since it is quite subjective. Even this “loyalty” to the author is completely impossible because translator can in no way share the same experience or opinion with the author’s original intention. Let alone that the original is also at a distance from its originating intention, that there is never a total presence of the speaking subject in discourse. (Derrida, 1979)

Unlike the traditional understanding of fidelity, feminist translation brings forward its own explanation. “For feminist translation, fidelity is to be directed toward neither the author nor the reader, but toward the writing project—a project in which both writer and translator participate. (Simon, 1996:2) This project is engaged with a comprehensive system, semiotic, ideological, and political and so on. The translation is a result of any factors involved. Clearly, this project has its own purpose. “It is determined by both the position of the translator and by the specific demands of the work to be translated.”(Berman, 1995: 76) In order to remove the male domination, “they will react to the stereotypical positions of authority assigned to the masculine figures by reinstating the female figures and by reducing the male elements in translation. They do not consider censorship an option, i.e. they translate everything even if it does not please”. (Andone, 2003:139) In their theory, it allows translator’s subjectivity into the translating process. If sometimes the source texts express ideas that are against women, they are allowed to correct this to establish a positive meaning. In fact, fidelity in feminist translation is finally to search for the equality between men and women. It brings with itself very severe political purpose and

mission to accomplish.

### **3. 2. 3 The status of translators**

The metaphor “les belles infidèles” reveals translators’ status in history. They are fixed as the traitors just as women who potentially want to betray their husband. In fact, translators and women are both weak figures in history. When it comes to women translators, there is a double heritage of inferiority. Translators are “the ‘sherpa’ silently bearing the burden and following in the footsteps of the master; they are ‘ferryman’, transporting materials and running errands between cultures; their work is one of transition, and thus transitory.”(Flotow, 2004:36) Little attention is paid to translators in history. Even though some translators is distinguished in history, it is because of some other factors not their translating work. La Malinche, a Mayan slave who became the interpreter of Cortes, and who participated in the negotiations leading to the European conquest of Latin America, is a typical example to be remembered in history for some negative reasons that she represents the powers and the dangers associated with the role of intermediary. Translators are always at a secondary position. The consequences of this assessment are that translators should accept the original’s objectivity and uniqueness and remain totally loyal to the source text and the author. Through the whole translating process, translator’s subjectivity is totally excluded. Translators are regarded as secondary to writers for the assumed lack of creativeness on their part, just as that women are seen inferior to men. The position of translators in the past was no more than that of a parrot. Feminist translators will not and cannot take in the embarrassing status of being slaves to the writers and the source texts, who are transparent without a trace of identity to the receivers of the translation. Translation is successful only when it is the teamwork of both the writer and the translator. Translators make no more contribution to literary work than the writer. They are also creative, and they unconsciously apply their esthetic and ethic values in creating a new literary work.

Besides their subservience to the writers, translators are also featured by their invisibility. Invisibility traditionally means that the translator shall hide his or her manipulation of the translation. This is the outcome of the limitation of understanding and the absolute loyalty to the source text. Under this claim, a kind of transparent poetry is encouraged. The best version is that “it reads well” without any trace of being translated. Feminist translators, and women working in the wake of feminist activism, reject this stand. They want recognition of the work and recognition of the translator’s individuality, and are willing to move their work into the “light of accountability and responsibility”. (Koliass, 1990:217) What they intend to do is to establish their identity and insert their own subjectivity so that they can draw attention to the patterns of patriarchal oppression and thus reverse the effects of male social and cultural domination. It is under such circumstances that feminist translators develop some resistant and non-fluent translation style designed to reveal rather than conceal the presence of the translator as the intermediary between two cultures and languages. Such a translation method is partial but becomes less subversive by drawing attention



to the text as a product of both author and translator. Women translators are concerned only with a small fragment of cultural identity, i.e. to make the feminine element visible in language. Inevitably, a translated text reflects the translator's reading and this is a factor which empowers the translator. Ordinary readers can involve their own beliefs and values in the creative reading process. Traditional translators are exhorted to be 'objective', that is, not to let their own vision of reality show in the translation. Conversely, a feminist translator has to include her ideological convictions and rewrite the source text in her translation.

### **3. 2. 4 Feminist translation strategies and methods**

Every translation maintains specific strategy or method to translate. In fact, translation is concerned with "the ways of ordering relations between languages and cultures. Translation is an art of approach." (Godard, 1995a: 81) Generally, feminist translation maintains a resistant strategy in translation. But feminist translation is not aimed to subvert language rules from the very root, but to draw readers' attention to women's existence through these novel expressions. According to their claims, their methods can roughly be clarified into two streams: the radical one and the reformist one. Radical feminists viewed language as the instrument of oppression which needed to be completely replaced by a new and more feminine language. Reformists argued that only some reforms, like the replacement with "we" or "one" of the traditional "he", are needed to remove the apparent patriarchal markers. Another typical discussion of feminist translation strategy is that of Luise von Flotow. She mainly lists out three strategies: supplementing, prefacing and footnoting and hijacking. Supplementing is the compensation for the differences between two languages. Hijacking is a radical approach to totally feminize language. Following parts present a specific discussion about some representative issues.

**Recovering women's works** One of the projects that were born with feminist translation was the recovery of works that were "lost" in patriarchy. Since the dominant canon usually accommodates mostly privileged male authors, texts by women were frequently forgotten or disappeared. Feminists in our century all over the world have recovered lost work, and have thus gradually changed the literary canon. Work by women from earlier centuries is particularly difficult to unearth, and often literary historians and critics have to work together to make old texts available and accessible to today's readers.

Recovered works include a variety of texts: Texts of the French Revolution and Napoleonic period were translated into English. These translations demonstrate women's activism and political force during the French Revolution. To help the reader in understanding the context, the editors and translators addressed historical issues and explained discursive differences between then and now. *Women Writing in India* (1993) was a series that tried to capture other country's women's writing. Likewise, women collected and translated ancient poetry, as for example D. Rayor in her collection of lyric poetry by ancient Greek women.

Not only translations re-appear but also women translators. For example, in her book *Gender in Translation*, Sherry Simon lists a great number of influential women who also were translators and used their skills to dynamically interact with their own and foreign cultural environments.

**Text Work** Feminist translators do a lot of text work like neologism or alteration of target-language grammar to make women visible in the text. Susanne Lotbinière-Harwood employs a number of different tactics to adjust English to her feminist and artistic ideas. Let's take the word *cyprine* from Brossard's *Sous la langue* to illustrate. *Cyprine* in French means female sexual secretions. It is not in any dictionary. Women are deprived of any access to this word. Lotbinière-Harwood finally refers to the Greek etymology of *cyprine* and creates an English version 'cyprin' with an explaining note. Another example is in her translations of Nicole Brossard's *Le Désert mauve* (*Mauve Desert*). Responding to Brossard's own gender-marking of the text, she constantly sought new ways of transferring these gender-marking to English: "My translation spells 'author' 'auther', as a way of rendering the feminized *auteure* pioneered and widely used by Québec feminists; and renders the beautiful *amante*, lesbian lover, by "shelove". To further eroticize the foreign tongue, "dawn", a feminine noun in French, is referred to as "she" in the sentence "Dawn attracts, this is certain, dawn fascinates. She is at the edge of night, at the edge of the soul a quiet certitude, an appeasement of the eyes smitten with changes and utopias." Y being gender-specific about the characters' interpersonal relations in a way English grammar does not normally allow, these feminization strategies make it possible for target-language readers to identify the lesbian the text. (de Lotbinière-Harwood, 1995:162)

**Correcting the text** Maier and Levine both translated texts of male Cuban or South-American writers, which frequently confronted them with issues of sexism and misogyny. They still decided to further translate the texts and make them accessible to other readers. To weaken the effects of the discovered sexism, they undermined the texts here and there, but not really radically. They also apologized for changes they made, assuming that it is not their right to interfere with the "father's" work. Other translators censor sexist or misogynist texts by simply not translating them, as for example Lotbinière-Harwood. This is probably also a result of the politicized atmosphere in Quebec in the '80s and '90s: She decided only to translate women's work, and even there she altered and intervened. She categorically verbalizes her political feminist standpoint - for her, translation is political.

**Metatext** Footnotes, introductions, and accompanying essays are also used strategically to explain translator's strategies in feminist translation. This is also one strategy proposes. In these prefaces the translator's sense of self shows their consciousness of the fact that they leave traces on the text they worked on. Some see themselves as actual co-authors of the (new) work, some still keep the old obedience, and describe themselves as "ferryman", or "Sherpas", following and carrying everything for their masters. However, with these prefaces, the translator also reaches the (woman) reader, and thus supports the dissemination of feminist thought. It is also a counter-movement to those male translators who do use strategies to emphasis

certain parts or words or contents in their translations, but who very often do not find it necessary to bring the “how” and “why” of their changes to the reader's attention. It is the decision to pass knowledge and experience on to the readers, be they women or men.

### **3.3 Criticisms**

Compared with other translation theories such as functional translation theory, feminist translation theory is quite young in this field. Its resistance against the “patriarchal translation” is inevitably violent. In order to subvert the former conventions and discrimination, they employ some radical approaches, like interventionism, experimental translation, wordplay, non-translation and so on. These go the opposite way to the traditional ones. While somebody is praising their pioneering spirit, some others bring in some criticisms. Flotow (2004) illustrates the criticisms roughly in two parts: criticism from outside feminisms and criticism from within feminisms. She quotes Eugene Nida's discussion about “gender neutrality”, saying that “there are no cognitive models to form a basis for understanding such gender neutrality.”(Nida, 1995: 21) What he tries to make understood is that social change can only be achieved on a sociopolitical level not through language. Rita Felski's and Robyn Gillam's attacks on feminist experimentalism are also referred to that that experimental translation has little political effect and is thus meaningless. The complicated wordplays make the already difficult source material even more obscure. Besides these criticisms, Gayatri Spivak raises the issue of neo-colonizing. She says the translation of the Third World women's literature tends to homogenize them, and thus result in neo-colonizing. The whole process is Eurocentric. Now, let's develop a discussion of criticisms focused on the typical features of feminist translation.

#### **3.3.1 Elitism**

Feminist translation is first of all featured by its elitism. Their translation works are full of wordplays, neologisms, loanwords, and so on. These literary works require certain knowledge of both original language and target language, and the readers should be interested in linguistic work. This makes the text difficult to read. But, after all, these strategies, which are intended to make women visible in the text, are faithful to women in the wider frame of feminism and are really a practical work of feminism, an application of feminist theory. However, the elitism has also its own disadvantages. First of all, its range of readers is limited to some educated ones. Thus, it deprives other women of an access to the work. Meantime, it indirectly covers the feminine factors in the text. Women in the text are unexpectedly excluded and silenced. Second, since the study of these works requires a lot of time, the acceptance of the idea and the social and political effects may reach the society even later. Felski comments that “it is impossible to make a convincing case for the claim that there is anything inherently feminine or feminist in experimental writing as such; if one examines *l'écriture fé*

*minine*, for example, the only gender-specific elements exist on the level of content, as in metaphors of the female body. (Felski, 1989:5) And she goes on to say that French feminism overestimates the political effects of language games. Moreover, she asserts, the focus on experimental work “limits oppositional culture to the reading and writing experiments of an intellectual elite”. (Felski, 1989:6) She argues in support of writing that reflects the experiences, histories, and biographies of women in different parts of the world, in different racial and class groups and at different historical periods. This writing is as important as experimental work since it reflects and promotes feminism as the social movement it is, and moves it into a more popular public sphere.

What she criticizes may be true in reality. But, we should treat feminist translation in a more tolerant way. Its struggling object, we know, is patriarchal traditions, which we feel more comfortable and easier to follow. What feminist translators try to remove is a deep-rooted tradition. Their way is just to the opposite direction of our habitual thinking. No matter from the inner women or outside women, that is, men, they would inevitably face great pressure. A position is not easy to gain in ideology field. Their strategies are radical. And this is why people always find feminist translation works difficult to understand and time-consuming. There are cases when the reader does not see sexism or misogyny in a text. A feminist translator could help to overcome this blindness or numbness by raising their consciousness to the subtleties of the text. Many experimental works by women are excellent “reads”. A text is really inspiring if it can “wake people up” and help people realize certain things about their language that they previously never noticed. A social change cannot go no wheels during its development. We cannot deny feminist translation just because it’s time-consuming to get favorable effects.

### 3. 3. 2 Women-to-women translation

Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood is a radical feminist translator. She asserts a translation of literary works only by women. In her opinion, women’s work can only be translated by women. She argues that “Francoeur was the first and last male poet I translated. During the three years I spent on his poetry, I realized with much distress that my translating voice was being distorted into speaking in the masculine. Forced by the poems’ stance, by language, by my profession, to play the role of male voyeur. As if the only speaking place available, and the only audience possible, were male-bodied. I became very depressed around meaning.” (de Lotbinière-Harwood, 1995:64) For her, to translate a male is to stand at his point and speak in masculine tone. She even goes a step further and says that translating texts written by men is harmful to women. Thus femininity is removed or at least reduced to a great extent. While translating, she intervenes into what she thinks not right.

Lotbinière -Harwood’ s assertive tone contrasts with Carol Mairer’s. When she was interviewed by Pilar Godayol Nogué, she said, “I don’t want to translate work by women exclusively.”(Nogué, 1998:157) For her, the type of work she chooses to translate depends on situation. But the most important fact is that she wants to translate the text. She isn’t sure the text’s abrasion arises because he is a man. The

society or the deep-rooted conventions may be more responsible in this respect. The standard she sets up to choose a text to translate is that the text presents analogous kinds of textual challenges, the text that presents difficulties similar to the ones she worked with in Armand's writing. When she translate a book by Severo Sarduy, *Escrito sobre un cuerpo*, which is by a man, however, she found that it's a book by a man who does not identify himself solely as a man. In many ways he identifies himself as a woman, and so as a transsexual, or as a ... She says it depends on how you categorize Sauduy with respect to gender.

As to the harmfulness of translating the works by a male, Maier argues that Lotbinière-Harwood does not address some questions like: what are the limits of safety and risk? What are the specific constraints? What about translating when one senses a strong feminine identity in his language?

### 3. 3. 3 Spokesman of the Third World women

One strategy of feminist translation is that they try to rediscover the forgotten or lost works both by the women in Europe and in the Third World countries. One example for the latter is the anthology *Women Writing in India*. This is a magnificent collection of writings, the result of a major scholarly effort to rediscover forgotten texts and to re-excavate the foundations of the Indian literary establishment. While translating, "translation takes place where two, invariably unequal, worlds collide." (Traru and Lalita, 1993: XX) Here, the inequalities between the worlds are represented. "There is often a reductive process in pay when local, regional languages are turned into versions of international idioms like English." (Simon, 1996: 32) What has been gained is just a reader-friendly work that did not look like an orientalist one. What is lost here is the variety of the regional languages. The work tends to show certain universality. Gayatri Spivak argues in "The Politics of Translation" that a kind of postcolonial attitude is employed in the process of translation. She formulates extensive criticism of the "with-it translationese" used for third world literature and the ideology that makes possible such careless, homogenizing work that "literature by a woman in Palestine resembles, in the feel of its prose, something by a man in Taiwan". (Spivak, 1992:180) With the development of feminist liberation ideology as well as their desire to remove racial bias, a strong anxiety thrived. Therefore, such works serve more the readers' or the Europeans' reading curiosity than the reality of the third world women's real life. What is worse is that, Spivak implies, Anglo-American feminists seem to want to read third world literature as documentary and realistic depictions of life. Third world literature is taken for the reality of their life. She criticizes what she calls the "old colonial attitude is at work in the translation racket". (Spivak, 1992:187) Translations are done to comply with the publisher's convenience, with classroom convenience (accessibility/readability), and with the "time convenience for people who do not have the time to learn. (Spivak, 1992:185) In other words, easy-reading translations are produced.

Actually, the focus of the above discussion is that whether there is a universal identity for the women all over the world. The answer is negative. Women's identity

varies according to their races, ethnicities, classes as well as sexualities. Thus, while translating, the source texts should not be selected by uninformed academics who cannot or do not distinguish between resistant and conformist work, often laboring under the false assumption that anything women writers will do. While translating the third world women's works, feminist translators should be conscious that they should avoid the demonstration of the source texts into a kind of universal mode. To translate the variety is translators' work, and to work towards the understandings if the readers', even though it requires some time and some patience. Women's solidarity cannot be achieved through a remove of the variety.

Feminist translation theory is not a perfect one. Its other claims also confront criticisms. Some say, when feminist translators try to use a gender-reduced word, some negative effects are produced. For example, as time goes, people tend to use "chairman" for the male one, while use "chairperson" for a female one. The former gender mark never disappears. Language is of no neutrality. Neutrality is not practical. There is no cognitive evidence for common readers. They are used to treating men as the center. If feminist context is out of hand, people are apt to think of men first. Perhaps even more explanations are needed to carry out this feminist plan. Besides this, feminist translation is also accused of its possible eroticism. The translation of those experimental writings, especially those descriptions of women's body, is easy to be taken as erotic description. This novel way of asserting women's dependence and identity in some way satisfies men's curiosity to gaze into women's world. Moreover, feminist translation theory also employs some violent vocabularies, like hijacking, to establish their theory. Another binary system is possible in their frame. Feminist translation still has a long way to go.

## **Chapter four: Feminist translation in practice: feminist rewriting of the *Bible***

The *Bible* is of great importance to Christianity which is also one of the most important works in human history. As one of the most important foundational texts of our western culture, the *Bible* remains a major point of reference and for that reason is open to challenges of interpretation and of translation. Translation is an act of interpretation. It is just because of its importance that each major religious denomination has its own approved translation of the *Bible*. These versions of *Bible*, like the Septuagint, the Vulgate, the Authorized Version and Luther's *Bible*, acted as bridges in the passage of the Judaic heritage into a succession of new linguistic and cultural universes. Nowadays, the *Bible* is a document of contemporary relevance, a message which speaks today with same force and pertinence as it did in biblical times.

In feminist frame, the *Bible* is seen as the very source of women's inferiority. Since man was created first and woman derived from him, women can only occupy a role as the second sex. Moreover, women were greatly damned. "The *Bible* teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced." (Stanton, 1972:7) "Whatever the *Bible* may be made to do in Hebrew or Greek, in plain English it does not exalt and dignify woman." (Stanton, 1972:12) For feminist translators, to produce a new version of the *Bible* is to affirm a new state of biblical truth, or to subvert traditional understanding of women's inequality and subordination to men.

It is just because of the *Bible's* great importance and position in history as well as in daily life, feminists gave the *Bible* a brand-new interpretation different from the traditional versions. The whole process of re-translation, we should say, is a reflection of feminist translation claims. Translation is no longer just "imitation", "reproduction" or even "distortion", or, in other words, a copy of the original, or a mirror of the original. We could clearly find the traces of the translator's subjectivity. Translator is visualized, and translation is given an equal status with the original version. Moreover, this kind of translation is endowed with the clearer purpose. If the whole thing is carried out as has been expected, this feminist rewriting will greatly facilitate feminists' cause to strive for a better living environment, for which they employed many methods, like novel wordplays and metatext explanations, which poses great challenges to the traditional *Bible* versions and a flood of criticisms are destined to come. These criticisms mainly aim at its novelty and doubt their right to step into this area of the translation of the *Bible*. Religious authorities attack such inclusive language not only for the sake of their authorized rights, but also the fundamental issues of dogma. It just seems that such practice of inclusive language is impossible.

The readers may even be puzzled at the meanings because of the novelty of such practice. The following is a brief view of the patriarchal features of the *Bible*, feminist rewriting of the *Bible*, which is mainly reflected in terms of its inclusive language, and the consequent criticisms of the feminist intervention into this divine world.

#### **4. 1 Patriarchal features of the *Bible***

The *Bible* is by no means gender-neutral. It presents from beginning to end a thoroughly “androcentric” perspectives. For the most part, the *Bible* records the names and actions of men, uses male examples, and assumes a male audience, and in general focuses on men and their concerns while leaving women in the background. Thus, “people can scarcely avoid thinking of God as a male person.”(Haugerud, 1977: i) In addition, the consequent uses of masculine pronouns to include women exclude women from full participation in Christian belief. We see, the genealogies of the Old Testament rarely mention wives or mothers. Often when a woman does appear in a narrative she is not named, but is referred to only as the wife of a certain man (e.g. Noah’s wife). Besides this, in Genesis 3:23-24, we read that God sent Adam out of the garden of Eden, but the text says nothing about Eve being driven out. Obviously we must understand that both were exiled, but the writer seems fit to describe this event in terms of Adam’s exile. In language use, it is also featured with masculinity. “he”, “man” are used now and then to refer to both men and women. While referring to God, the expressions are “God the Father”, “the Lord our God”, the exclusive use of the pronoun “He”, and so on. These expressions might confine God to one sex. These features may be one official source of women’s subordination. So, feminist revisions of the *Bible* just want to change this situation, the language in which these features are expressed. Feminist translators just “seek to read the Bible against its patriarchal frame and through critical engagement with the text, challenge sociocultural stereotypes.”(Simon, 1996: 113)

#### **4. 2 Rewriting of the *Bible***

Translation is in fact a process of interpretation, which feminists tightly hold while re-translating the *Bible*. This rewriting mainly focuses on two aspects: reclaim women’s equality to men in the *Bible*, which is actually a kind of metatext work and their words effort in the invention of a new language, inclusive language, from which we can figure out women’s determination in their efforts to spread their claims and the unimaginable difficulties they would face from insiders and outsiders.

##### **4. 2 .1 Reclaim women’s equality to men in the *Bible***

Are women really unequal to men in the *Bible* from the very beginning? Haugerud asks, “When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John and invited them to become (according to the King James and other versions) “fishers of men”, did Jesus mean that they would set out to catch male humans only? Or were women to be



included? If the former, then Christianity is really for men only and women would do well to shun it. But if Jesus meant to include all people in the invitation to a new way of living, and there is ample evidence that he did, then the correct contemporary English translation of these words is “fishers of women and men”. (Haugerud, 1977: i) Feminist translators insist, “All persons are equally loved, judged, and accepted by God.” (*Inclusive Language Lectionary*, preface) Some evidences can be found in Genesis 1: 27. Creation entails the equal birth of men and women: “So—God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Revised Standard Version) Since woman is created with the rib out of man and is a “flesh of flesh”, woman is unequal to man. However, a brand-new interpretation of the word “rib” came up. The explanation goes this way: Hebrew word “sela”, the term at issue here, is the same word used elsewhere for the “side” of a hill, or the “side” of a tabernacle. So, the same English word was used for the same Hebrew word. Thus, it is inferred that woman was built from the side of the Adam. Therefore, a conclusion is reached that woman begins where man ends she is his limit, and vice versa. There is a “side by side” relationship. Women are equal to men in the very beginning.

#### 4. 2. 2 The use of inclusive language

“Inclusive or non-sexist language aims at replacing non-motivated use of masculine vocabulary by neutral terms: ‘father’ by ‘parent’ when the sex is not specified, ‘brother’ by ‘brother or sister’, and so on”. (Simon, 1996: 124) It is a style of writing that adheres to certain rules that were first proposed by feminist language reformers in universities during the 1970’s, and which have been accepted as normative in many schools since about 1980. The rules prohibit various common usage which are deemed to be “sexist”, as for example the use of the word “man”, and the generic use of masculine pronouns, in referring to persons of unspecified gender. A number of new words were also recommended, as for example “chairperson”, “spokesperson”, etc., as substitutes for the “sexist” words in common use. One example of inclusive language is that of the translation of “bene-ha-adam”. It is commonly translated as “sons of men”, which is charged with its literariness and incorrectness. It is argued that this version unconsciously exclude women. The real meaning here should be “mankind” or “the human race”. Feminist translators didn’t distort the content or meaning of the original text, but they dug the correct one out so that the translation would indicate everyone, including women, on earth. Other examples are *ashre ha’is* (“blessed”), a singular collective, which should be translated not as “Blessed is the man” but “Blessed are those”.

The concerns of inclusive language are roughly classified into three focuses: the language of human beings, language about Jesus Christ and language about God. “God the Father”, “Son of God”, “Son of Man”, “Brethren” are replaced with “God the Father and Mother”, “Child” or “Child of God”, “The Human One”, “Sisters and Brothers” or “Friends” or “Neighbors” respectively. The application of inclusive language is aimed to produce a book that speaks to “young and old, male and female,

and persons of every racial, cultural and national background". (*Inclusive Language Lectionary*, Preface)

This strategy of inclusive language seems to be necessary in modern context. With women's consciousness to be independent and equal to men, a remove of the chauvinist aspects is required. The publications of some new versions like *Inclusive Language Lectionary* are inevitable.

#### 4.3 Criticisms

Feminist revisions of the *Bible* confront a lot of criticisms because of its novelty in the exploration of approaches. The publication of the *Inclusive Language Lectionary* gave rise to extensive and heated debate about the role of gender within the *Bible*—and about the parameters within which translation must operate. First criticism concerning feminist version of the *Bible* comes from that of the religious authorities. The International Commission on English in the Liturgy is a group responsible for translations of biblical materials, the production of lectionaries and other Church instruments for English-speaking Catholics in 26 countries, to integrate gender-sensitive language into these texts. They argue that Jesus may once again invite Peter and other apostles to be "fishers of men" instead of "fishers of people". It is claimed that there is nothing in the church's sacred texts that would allow prejudice or discrimination on the basis of gender or race. Everything depends on the "right interpretation" which is the responsibility of the catechist or the homilist—not the translator, or the translating committee. So, the very original doctrines are defended here and they should be free from all ideological influence. When masculine reference to God, the words "he", "him" and "his" were eliminated either by repetition of the word "God" or by grammatical changes such as using "who" instead of "he", the versions are accused of being "inaccurate, unhistorical, unidiomatic and wooden." Their deletion of Divine masculine pronouns in the Cathedral sends the wrong message, promoting a confused and self-contradictory religious culture. Feminist revisions cannot be accepted in religious field, because, as what is commented, such revisions may challenge the fundamental issues of dogma. When the owner rejects any further development from outside, the reformers would really be caught in certain trouble.

Second, feminist deletion of the generic masculine nouns and generic masculine pronouns in a gender-inclusive sense tends to go extremes. Such usages are not merely figments of "sexist" English translations; they are a normal feature of the original languages, just as they are normal in English and many other languages. In most cases the inclusive intent of the writer is obvious from the context, and when the intent is not inclusive, this is also obvious enough from the context. The interpreter must not proceed mechanically with the idea that every occurrence of *adam* and *anthropos* is to be understood in a gender-inclusive sense. For example, when people are numbered in the *Bible*, it is the men who are numbered, in Matthew 14: 21, we are told that "those who had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children," and likewise Matthew 15: 38 mentions "four thousand men, beside women

and children". In Acts 4: 4, it says "Many of those who heard the word believed and the number of the men was about five thousand." So, feminist translators should be wary of their substitution.

The third aspect of criticism is focused on the naming of God. Feminist translation used "God the Father and Mother" to take the place of "God the Father" or "Father". They argue that "How much more sense does the addition of Mother make to the translation of Father given both the presence of female images for God within the biblical text and the attenuated individualism of Father Language in contemporary English usage."(Thistlethwaite, 1987: 538) The opponents of such revision argue that "'God the Father' does not mean that God is a father, but that he is like a father. Therefore, according to modern sensibilities, God could just as well be like a mother as like a father."(Achtemeier, 1991:5) Moreover, the addition of Mother following the Father, still implies a hierarchy that female comes after male. Even though they reverse the order, an equality advocated by feminists cannot be realized. On the contrary, a new binary logic may be established.

Some criticisms also come from the feminist scholars and theologians. They argue that "Inclusive-language translations do not go far enough in either of the (contradictory) directions favored by feminist translators. They do not reveal the potentially woman-friendly aspects of the *Bible*, nor do they expose its unflinching patriarchy. They stand in ideological ambiguous territory, seemingly provoking more confusion than they resolve." (Simon, 1996:129) Their action runs counter to feminism's deeper goals and values. These adjustments are viewed as cosmetic touches which do not touch the "really tough stuff—the biblical constructs that support patriarchal Christianity" and that support quietism and acquiescence. (Hutaff, 1990:72) They suggest that the best "feminist". New Testament translation is the one which paradoxically most highlights the patriarchal and androcentric nature of the text, in an effort to "mimic and mock the loud male voice and tone, turn up the volume on its evasions and lies and guilt, put dots and slashes to mark the gaps and omissions". (Schaberg, 1990:77)

The translation of the *Bible* began as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. People have long before accepted the traditional versions of the *Bible*. Moreover, the *Bible* is not like other ordinary texts. After all, this text bears with itself many religious beliefs and dogmas. Things become more complicated when they are involved with religious matters. The difficulties and dilemmas feminist translators will face, in this way, is rather predictable.

The fact we should emphasize is that a definite new text of the *Bible* cannot be achieved. Nevertheless, feminist efforts to put their ideology into the biblical text cannot be ignored. Maybe it is just a cue to fuel other ideological pressures on the biblical text. Language is continually developing, and since new archaeological and other discoveries are constantly being made, responsible translation work never ends.

## Chapter five: Conclusion

The last thirty years in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is considered to be the feminist era. During this period, the “gender” perspective was brought into translation field, in researching as well as in analyzing. Feminist consciousness has been fully waken up and come into a strong force in the world. When feminism met translation, the latter quickly becomes the former’s only and the most important medium. From the discussion in chapter two, we see the combination of feminism and translation came into being because of the conventional prohibition of women stepping into the writing and publishing field. However, women have been able to use this disadvantage against the prohibitory system and to create a voice of their own through translation. Moreover, they translate not only to gain access to literary life but to change the norms and gradually be accepted within the literary system without using the pretext of translation. In feminist translators’ view, translation is no longer a copy or a “slave” of the source text. Translation also plays a vital role in contributing to the afterlife of the source text. Translation is not only introducing new texts, authors and devices, but also introducing them in a certain way as part of a wider design to try to influence the evolution of literatures. One typical example is that of Hermann Broch’s work, *The Death of Virgil*. With the efforts of its translator, Jean Starr Untermeyer, the work went beyond the limits of languages, regions and cultures, and was accepted by American readers, thus their efforts, to be more exact, their translation, promoted world’s progress and development. The interaction between feminism and translation is positive. Translation promoted feminist course as well as the literature; meanwhile, feminism gave translation a brand-new perspective.

After discussing the theoretical foundations of feminist translation in chapter three, feminist translation found the logical supports. This can be seen as the relevance of feminist translation to the traditional ones. In such a patriarchal society, such exploration is understandable. After all, it has to face the pressures from the system of patriarchy. Besides, there are actually such similarities between feminist translation and those theories referred to in chapter three. However, another fact we have to face is that this exploration seems to come from only one side, i.e. the feminist translators. Those male theoreticians, like Derrida, never comment directly on feminist translation theories, or even never cast an eye on it. A further explanation is needed to illustrate such matters.

Nevertheless, feminist translation is really a thorough re-examination of translation issues. From the “gender” perspective, feminist translators give new definitions. With their overt subversion, translation gets rid of its former subservient and passive position. Translators are endowed with a legal right to intervene and leave traces in the translated work. Moreover, feminist translation theory has enriched translation studies with new insights into the process of translation and into the translator’s identity. Feminist translation has reformed such concepts as difference,

fidelity and equivalence in translation and has challenged the view of the translator's invisibility. Therefore, translation ceased to be a passive linguistic transfer from one language into another and becomes an active process influenced by the translator's identity, views of the world and environment.

Considering its translation strategies and methodologies, feminist translations are radically called rewriting. In order to subvert the whole patriarchal tradition, feminist translators tried to rewrite some mythologies and authoritative works, like the *Bible*. As to the corrections of the *Bible*, the focus is on its patriarchal language. It is claimed that this kind of language is the very cause of women's subversion. So they try to replace the generic language with an "inclusive language". This is a courageous innovation in the field of the *Bible* translation. New things are always challenged by traditional things or those authorities, like the leading churches. Their challenges are inevitable here. The conventional versions of the *Bible* have been there through almost all the human history. The original version are explained and re-explained and thus stereotypes are firmly established in everyone's mind. The acceptance of new concepts and understandings is time-consuming. And another problem is that it is not sure whether these feminist reforms can result in the intended purposes, i.e. an equality with men. Can this inclusive language cover women's identity instead? Whether the Christian doctrines can be changed and whether a new type of binary logic can be formed? These questions should be shed some doubt on. After all, their methods are apt to be much too radical. Some outcomes are only results of impulse rather than reason.

### 5.1 Major findings

After all these discussions above, it's time to list out some findings:

(1) Translation does not develop from inside, but from outside. Feminist development is one typical example. Its appearance is not out of a single study of translation skills. Cultural factors, like political, ideological and racial factors, play a much more crucial part in the cause.

(2) Feminist translation theory is still quite young. Its mature still needs time. For the limited time, it cannot resolve some problems, like those charges by Tosemary Arrojo (1994), i.e. "opportunism", "hypocrisy" and "theoretical incoherence".

(3) Feminist translation put new insights into the translation studies. "gender" perspective is taken to analyze translators' identity, their position as well as their work. New standard is apt to come out.

(4) The last thirty years in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the feminist era. After that period, the interest didn't wane and production didn't slacken or cease all together. Many younger academics and especially students are exploring gender issues as they approach the study and analysis of translation from various different angles. This was obvious in the substantial number of papers that looked at gender during the recent graduate student symposium *Odyssee de la traductologie / Voyages in Translation Studies* held at Concordia University (March 8, 2002). The trend can also be followed at the University of Ottawa School of Translation where there is a PhD thesis in

progress on women as translators of scientific texts in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Michele Healy), a recently completed study of hitherto invisible women translators in France (Andree Sirois), a Master's thesis on the translation into English of Ingeborg Bachmann's "Simultan", a piece on the fragmentation of a woman's psychology through loss of language in her work as simultaneous interpreter (Sherri Meek), and an upcoming book edited by Jean Delisle, the current director of the School, entitled *Portraits de traductrices*. And these are only the "women" focused projects; one M.A. project recently linked queer issues and translation through a lexicological study of "gay" terminology, its treatment and development in a series of dictionaries (Matthew Ball), and there is at least one queer / cultural studies piece of work coming up soon. On the international conference scene the topic continues to develop as well—with a conference in Valencia Spain in October 2002, one in Graz in spring 2001, one in Norwich, England in the fall of 2000. Nevertheless, the combination of gender and translation, we should say, continues to be a productive area of research. (Flotow, <http://orees.concordia.ca/numero2/essai/Von%20Flotow.html>)

## **5.2 Limitations and suggestions for further study**

Even though I looked through a lot of materials and books, either Chinese ones or English ones, the materials are still very limited. And for the fourth part, the materials are mostly second-handed. When there are some personal comments, they are quite arbitrary. Time permitted, some comparison with the original text should be made. Probably, some new discoveries can be made.

If possible, it is suggested that some further studies should be made. Firstly, we should say, feminist translation cause is to large extent carried out at the theoretical level. This new and young reformer needs more practical proofs to straighten its back. Certainly, this may take a long time. Whether it can enhance women's gender status as it declares to strive for can only depends on time. And, when we analyze this theory, we should do more case studies. Theory comes from practice and goes back to practice. We have to test it in the real context. Meanwhile, the feminist translators should be aware of the possible difficulty their novel practice would bring to their readers. In addition, the reforms made in language don't seem enough to subvert the deep-rooted traditional patriarchal thinking. Language reforms can only be a catalyst to arouse deeper researches. Another aspect we should not ignore is its inevitable destiny of being confined by the patriarchal binary patterns. Although feminist translation theory strongly resists them, it is likely to set up a new women-centered language system instead of the men-centered one. Maybe, another item or theory system is needed, under which a new item was invented, that is, "androgyny". This concept is first put forward by the famous feminist literary critic and writer named Virginia Woolf in her book *A Room of One's Own* (1929) This is an imaginary and ideal item. Can feminist translation theory rest upon such item, which is against our natural attributes? This is one question we should bear in mind in further study.

The above discussion is only a beginning to see into the feminist translation and its relative issues. It makes no claim to exhaust the whole issues and opinions in this

**part. Anyhow, something is sure that feminist translation will exert great influence in the coming years in the area of translation. And its research results is surely treasure to human culture.**

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