MOVING TOWARDS A FEMINIST PRACTICE OF TRANSLATION

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Feminism as an area of study has contributed significantly to variousdisciplines, translation studies being one such discipline, owing to its multifaceted nature. The most notable outcome of this interdisciplinary study is the Feminist Translation School in Canada, which brought gender into the mainstream translation theories. Feminist translation aims to subvert the patriarchal discourse in language and consequently, in translation.

The basis of this paper is the feminist translation theory and it demonstrates how these theories can be applied to the practice of translation. Can such an intervention or manipulation with the original text, as suggested by the feminist translation theorists, be applied to all kinds of texts, even those that do not represent a particular ideology? Interventionist translation strategies applied by feminist translators seek to make women more visible in language and challenge the patriarchal linguistic hegemony by making changes in the text, where it goes against the feminist beliefs. However, when a text does not lend itself to a feminist reading, is it justified to intervene and make changes in it, which may go against that which is intended by the author? And if at all, how much difference does a change in perspective bring about in a translation or a subsequent interpretation of the original; does the gender of the translator (whether the difference in the sex of the translator influence their subjectivity and perception regarding the text) or a local/transnational perspective result in alternative interpretations of the same work. Or as Flotow puts it:

> How do women use language? Is their different from men's? Do women carry out different communicative roles from those of men …How are women and men represented in conventional language? How is women's and men's consciousness moulded through language? How is gender difference constructed and reinforced in language … How is power enhanced or undermined through language? How are individuals or groups manipulated by language? Does gender difference in language also mean different kinds of access to public life and influence? (Flotow1997:8)

Lori Chamberlain, on the other hand, writes in "Gender and the Metaphorics of translation" that feminist translation should not restrict itself to the sex of the translator only. She goes on to say that "working within the conventional hierarchies … the female translator of a female author's text and the male translator of a male author's text will be bound by the same power relation: what must be subverted is the process by which translation complies with gender constructs. In

this sense, a feminist theory of translation will finally be utopic." (1988:472). This is made clear by the examples given by Meena T. Pillai below of two Malayalam translations, one by a male and the other by a female translator, both of whom fail to do justice to their respective feminist texts.

Feminist writings face several challenges in their representation even today. On one side, they tend to be "corrected" by politicised translators; at the same time, translators need to constantly re-innovate to do justice to the experimental nature of such writings. Tace Hedrick exemplifies this in "Mãe é paraisso: Gender, Writing and English-Language Translation in Clarice Lispector" that although the English translators of Lispector's "Uma aprendizagemou o livro dos prazeres" (1969) agree that the violation of grammatical norms has been intentional from the author's side, they have, however, made efforts to "normalize" the text, syntactically as well as gender wise. Judith Rosenberg claims that such bending of grammatical rules was the author's way of inventing language in order to "discovernew ways to rewrite the feminine, this gendered otherness, effected through her transgressive writing strategies, is "domesticated" and even erased by an androcentric posture on the part of some of her most important English-language translators toward the difficult rhetorical strategies and implications of her writing."(Rosenberg cited in Hedrick 2004:60). Mahasweta Devi's *Stanadayani,* which has been translated as *Breast-Giver* by GayatriSpivak and as *The Wet-Nurse* in an alternative translation, is another case in point here. The author prefers the version by Spivak since the intended irony is maintained there and not neutralised as in the latter (1993:182).

By either giving or denying a voice to a particular way of interpretation, translation merely reflects the power relations that exist in a language. These power relations are nevertheless not limited to languages but reflect the power hierarchies of a culture as well, where the dominant discourses are symbolised and emphasised by language. The onus hence lies with the translator to make the decision in favour of or against a particular discourse, where she is brought into the playing field as someone with her own perspective and viewpoint. The feminist translator in this regard carries an added social and political responsibility to carry forward this (gender) transformation in language.

1. Gender and Language

Since the 70s linguists have systematically explored the interaction between language and gender, especially from a feminist perspective. A partnership between feminism and translation studies was made possible owing to their engagement with language, their mutual distrust of existing hierarchies and gender-specific roles and rules defining fidelity.

At around the same time, gender and sex were juxtaposed in feminist discussions. Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1973:301) highlighted the difference between 'Gender', 'Sex', as well as the fact that gender is a social construct or how Flotow puts it, „the notion of gender evolved to complement and extend that of biological sexual difference (Flotow1997:5). So a person born with female sexual organs becomes a woman through socialisation, i.e. through the expectations and norms society places on her.

Gender is usually expressed in terms of binary opposition, like "men" as opposed to "women", "dominant" against "subordinate" and so on. Flotow has compared it with a performance,„in which the individual discursively and often parodically struts his or her particular gender affiliation" (2007:100). It is not a fixed concept, and as opposed to sex, gender identity is continuously constructed with time. Judith Butler, on the other hand, was of the opinion that

gender, as well as sex, is a social and cultural construction (2011:xv). She criticised the universal binary division of gender into man and woman with fixed and invariable characteristics, even when these two categories could be seen as social constructions. The juxtaposition of the two genders emphasisedthe difference between them in terms of their status in society. Gender thus becomes a representative of the importance one enjoys in the society and determines their access to positions as well as the exercise of power.

Language and human cognition have a reciprocal relationship, that is to say, language influences human perception on the one hand and on the other hand, give it an expression. Language plays an important role in shaping and implementing the social concept of gender (2007:94). Thus our social reality is shaped in the way we use language. Sociolinguistics as well as Women's Studies intensively engaged themselves to show how most languages of the world demonstrate gender-specific prejudices and sexist structures. They investigated the language use according to gender, the etymology of words, sexist lexical entries, metaphors or linguistic behaviour in partnerships. Luise F. Pusch, for instance, argued for the German language, how in all kinds of conversations women are suppressed by men (1984:9). Tamara M. Valentine established the same for Hindi in the 80s by saying male speakers initiate a conversation much more often than their female counterparts, who rather play the role of maintaining the conversation. Furthermore, the representation of gender in language, the individual usage by both the sexes and the manner in which gender differences are expressed through language were also analysed, as well as the way in which language influences human perception.

Robin Lakoffunderlined how women's peculiar style of speaking reinforces their secondary status in society and by using this style they are contributing to maintaining the male dominance and their subordination. Although her assertion was for speakers of English language, this holds true for other languages as well. This perspective proposes that women aresocialised to function differently in different situations, „as professionals in the "real" world, and as powerless speakers in interpersonal communication" (2008:435). Studies were undertaken in other languages,which made similar assessments of language being a male construction and serving their purpose in order to exclude and oppress women. These studies also proved, how male generic terms are used to refer to both genders. The female term often has a negative connotation (e.g. an effeminate man) and is used only when the group is exclusively female and never if there is even one male in a group of ten. In Hindi, lexical terms reflect strictly defined gender roles and hierarchies. The male term is used to show love, as in the case of *beta*("son"),used for girls or young women or *sahib*,to show respect as in *doctor sahib*. In these cases, the terms elevate the status of the person being referred to. A case in point would be, how the former Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi was called "the only man in the cabinet" to show her ability to run the country. Kachruand others point out how in Hindi many proverbs endorse and reinforce the male superiority and female subordination, eg. „vyaapariikosharm, raajakonarm, striikosharmwaaliihonaacaahiye […] joruukaamarnaaaurjutiikaTuuTnaabaraabarhai" (2008: 436).

In English, this dichotomy is demonstrated in the word pairs "master"/"mistress" or "dog"/"bitch", where the first term almost always has a positive association and the second a negative. Although English is considered a gender-neutral language, the use of generic masculine words like mankind, man-made, founding father, chairman or male pronoun 'he' shows that this is not the case. Luise F. Pusch makes similar claims for the German language, by saying it is comfortable, clear and unproblematic for men. It would be catastrophic if men were referred

using female designation terms since female terms are as absurd as female clothes for men (1984:7f).

2. History of Feminist Translation

Feminist translation or gender sensitive translation as an area has developed the most in Quebec. It began in the early 1970s, when women authors in the region, as part of the women's movement, decided to explore power relations and its effect on translation and female translators began to theoretically discuss their work. This could have been in the light of the language reforms, the bilingual nature of the region or the spread of feminism and acceptance of other sexualities as well as gender identities. This kind of environment allowed writers to experiment with their works, as well as translators to apply translational strategies to bring that process of transformation in translation. Nicole Brossard, a leading French Canadian formalist poet and novelist, made use of the radical feminist theory in her works to present the world from a female point of view. When a work openly rejects patriarchal language, itbecomes necessary for translators to develop or adopt new translation strategies, which can carry forward this transformation.

Language, on the one hand, reflects society and its structure, insomuch as power relations come to the fore. On the other hand, it goes beyond its role asa means of communication and faces the risk of being utilised for the purpose of manipulation.In "The Politics of Translation" GayatriSpivak writes that language is symbolic to the working of the gendered society and the feminist translator should realise this (1993:179), as well as use make use of translation to achieve the larger feminist agenda of women's solidarity.

The feminist theory argues thatthe "correct" or standard language is used to maintain patriarchal linguistic hegemony,by using such expressions which promote their interests. This happens for instance by training the consciousness from an early age to accept masculine as the norm and all the other genders as 'different' or less important as well as the dominance of masculine speech (Tannen1994:9). Another school of thought to which scholars like Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva belong, argues that conventional language is a major factor which contributes to the oppression of women.

Other scholars have drawn parallels between women and translation studies, saying their status and representation is comparable from a social and linguistic perspective. Both emerged in the 1970s when the gendered role of language which favouredthe patriarchal discourse came under observation; both are considered secondary, a translation is considered "inferior to the original", whereas a woman enjoys only a secondary status in a patriarchal society. Both have to stay faithful to the original or their more important counterparts. "Both feminism and translation are concerned by the way <<secondariness>> comes to defined and canonised; both are tools for a critical understanding of difference as it is represented in language" (Simon 1996: 8). The way feminism seeks to end the domination of women by men, feminist translation aims to question the power of the original over the translation, by questioning the relevance of terms like "dominance", "faithfulness/fidelity" and "betrayal" (1991:81).

Feminist translation theories place translation on a par with the original, dismissing it to be secondary and derivative, the same way feminism rejects a male dominance. "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). The term "translator's invisibility" as coined by Venuti (1986), where the translator makes the translation easily readable by adhering to the norms of the target culture, say by using

domestication strategies, is deconstructed by feminist translators, as they see themselves as the "co-authors of the new work", a work which bears their characteristics, a certain "translator's effect", which a translator leaves on it as a gendered individual.Carol Maier holds the view that the "translator's quest is not to silence but to give voice, to make available texts that raise difficult questions and open perspective …They must become independent, 'resisting' interpreters who not only let antagonistic works speak ... but also speak with them and place them in a larger context by discussing them and the process of their translation" (Maier cited in Chamberlain 1988:471).

A feminist translator plays the role of an active text producer by adopting interventionist strategies which include manipulating with the original with the intention ofmaking the feminine visible and challenging the phenomenon of a patriarchal language.The two main approaches adopted to reach this goal are the reform approach and the radical approach (Flotow1997:8). The reform approach seeks to properly present women in language and not bracket her together with "man". This is ensured by making use of a non-sexist and gender-sensitive language, for instance in job designations. The radical approach, on the other hand, alters the language completely, in order to present the uniqueness and singularity of women, who are usually excluded as individuals from the conventional standard language. It aims to create a completely new female-oriented language for women by criticising and altering the existing language. Nicole Brossard has been known to apply this approach in her works.Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood calls this intervention a political activity, which she uses while translating for the purpose of making the feminine more visible in language and language speak for women. Other translators known for applying these practices include Luise von Flotow, Barbara Godard, and Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood among others.

Flotow suggests that interventionist feminist translations should "correct" texts to include the female genderandchallenge the patriarchal nature of the language. The best-knownexample that makes use of this approachis the feminist translation of the Bible, where women are specifically added to most contexts, whereonly men are mentioned. In addition, there are cases where the feminist translator has come across texts,which conflict with her identity, and has then as a reflection of her background or ideology, made deliberate changes in the text and influenced it. Carol Maier, when translating Octavio Armand's poetry "*that mocks women*", made her feminist views known with the help of an essay that accompanied the translation.Similarly, when Sharon Bell, who experienced racism in her personal life, translated parts of the *Translating Slavery* anthology,changed the term "savages" in one example, since she found it too offensive. Suzanne Jill Levine argues that by making changes in such a text the feminist translator is not being unfaithful or "betrayer", but undermining the patriarchal discourse.

In addition to the feminist translation studies, there is the gender debate in translation. Gender consciousness is often absent from language and expression since it usually depicts a whole group and the individual has no place in it and gender aspects are either not acknowledged or considered non-existent. Similar to the feminist approach, the proponents of a queer approach want to coin a new language, which is fair to all the identities. Suggestions for such a gender-neutral language include using the plural (they/their), using a gender-neutral term (person instead of man), using verb forms instead of a noun, or avoiding terms which have a stereotypical meaning attached to them. The strategies of feminist translation theory are carried over to the gender debate.

Translation thus becomes a political practice according to the feminist translation theory. By making conscious decisions, a translator either reverts to the traditional gender discourse, thereby

becoming a collaborator in the process of oppressing women as well as people with unconventional identities or she finds new ways to carry forward this transformation in the translating process. With the latter, she decides in favour of a change and ensures that a new consciousness is created for all kinds of identities. This happens with the help of different approaches and translation strategies, which are used consciously by the author to reach the respective goal.

2.1 Indian Context

SachidanandaMohanty, who has translated a number of Oriya women writers argues that although there has been much research on the role of gender in translation theory, not much has been done regarding the translation of women writers from regional languages (2009:68).The anthology *Ayoni and Other Stories*, a collection of stories dealing with various women's issues, translated from Telugu by Alladi Uma and M. Sridhar, however, make an important contribution in this context.Meena T. Pillai compares in her article "Gendering Translation, Translating Gender: A Case Study of Kerala" two Malayalamtranslations, namely Simone de Beauvoir's *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*andMahasweta Devi's *Draupadi*and argues how they fail to produce the desired effect, which leads her to conclude that like most other languages, Malayalam shows gender specific prejudices and legitimizes the male logic through its idiomatic and symbolic references. Feminism here, like elsewhere, has been limited to the academic discourse and has failed to achieve a politically emancipatory function. It has also faced resistance and the spread of Marxism has not contributed much in its favour. This is reflected in vernacular literary tradition as texts, which destabilise the cultural and ideological norms or question the dominant discourse are not translated. Famous authors like Hélène Cixous, Adrienne Rich, Chandra TalpadeMohanty, Ruth Vanita, TarabaiShinde or IsmatChugtaiare not yet translated in Malayalam (2009:6). And even when a prominent feminist like Beauvoir was translated, the translator diluted her message by deleting various sections or deliberately mistranslating it and adding a lesbian tone to the work. Beauvoir speaks with a male voice in Malayalam and expresses male desires.

Hence the choice of text is not the only deciding factor to categorise a translation asfeminist, but also the way it is translated and used to break the existing norms. The gender of the translator does not matter as Pillai's next example shows. Pillai compares here the Malayalam translation of Mahasweta Devi's Draupadi with the English one by GayatriChakravortySpivak, to point out the difference between a feminist and a non-feminist translation. Spivak's translation is accompanied with a translator's foreword, where she explains her motives and approaches for the translation process and also to give the process of translation an emancipatory function (2009:12). Pillai concludes with

> Thus while the former re-reads and re-writes Devi in order to assert her agency in both determining and gendering meanings, the latter, as though acquiescing to the cultural and social pressures of a target audience for whom women's issues are of no great concern, fails to evolve strategies to make the feminine subject visible in language […] translating gender should be undertaken as a politically conscious act, subverting the notion of 'feminization of translation' (2009:13).

3. Feminist Translation Strategies

Flotowmentions three levels on which the category of gender can be researched in translation studies: "by focusing on gender as a sociopolitical category in macro-analyses of translation phenomena, such as the production, criticism, exchange, and success of works, authors and

translators;by examining gender issues as the site of political or literary/aesthetic engagement through micro-analyses of translated texts; and by shaping the theories applied to or derived from translation praxis."(Flotow cited in Baker/Saldanha2011:123).Shealso suggests different strategies by which a translator can intervene in and apply the feminist practices of translation to a text, such as "supplementing", "prefacing and footnoting" and "hijacking".

Supplementing adds additional elements to a text and compensates for the differences that exist between two languages or cultures.Flotowprovides here the example of Barbara Godard's translation of Nicole Brossard's novel *L'amer*. The title is a neologism as well as a play on words in French with three different terms: *mère* (mother), *mer* (sea) and *amer* (bitter), which depicts the bitter experiences of motherhood and reveals the writer's engagement with the patriarchal mother. Godard linked the translation of the three words in English: "The Sea Our Mother" and "Sea (S)mothers and (S)our Mother" to produce "These Sour Smothers" (Flotow1997:15).

Prefacing and Footnoting are strategies used by the feminist translators to make their presence felt in the text by reflecting on their work. Preface usually has a didactic aspect, where the work of the author and the translator are discussed and put into context. Various problems faced while translating a text,such as a clash of ideology or the presence of puns or neologisms are discussed here,and the strategies used for translation are explained. The translator thus draws the readers' attention to the translation process. Many translators are known to apply this approach in their work by using forewords, translators' note, introduction, for example,Brossard's translation of MarleneWildemann's*la lettreaèrienne* provides intertextual references and explains the connotations and neologisms occurring in the original.

The third strategy described by Flotowhijackingis a controversial practice of feminist translation as it is rejected and criticised by many scholars, who have termed it hypocritical and elitist. Hijacking is understood as direct intervention in the textto change the original and to "distort the text into speaking too forcefully in the feminine" (2011).Flotow described it as a practice, where the translator gives herself permission to make her creative work speak for itself. This she achieves by collaborating with the author as well as challenging them.Flotow reformulated it in 2005 and called it a conscious intervention in the text to incorporate feminist politics where there are none or when they are not noticeable. It also means the appropriation of a non-feminist text by a feminist translator (Simon 1996:15). She gives the example of Lisa Gauvin's*Lettresd'uneautre,* which was translated by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood. Even though the writer is a feminist herself, the translator still intervenes in the text to "correct" it and to avoid the generic masculine.Through this open manipulation of the text,Lotbinière-Harwood undertook a political activity, which was directed at making the language speak for women. This strategy is particularly risky. In the above-mentioned example, it worked since the author was willing to give up her textual authority in favour of the translator's radical one towards the language.

Françoise Massardier-Kenney argued that feminist translation studies did not develop any new strategies and used the old ones instead. She divided these strategies into two categories: author-centric (collaboration, commentary, resistancy) and translator-centric (recovery, commentary, parallel-texts). Commentary rejects the notion of an opposition between the writer and translator and supports the collectiveand creative nature of translation. It makes use of a preface, translator's note or footnoteswhich accompany the feminist translation(Massardier-Kenney 1997). The translator employs these metadiscourses in the translation practice to make her presence felt, to explain references or aspects of the source culture. Resistancy was introduced by

Venuti and describes the strategy of translating a text in a way that it maintains its foreignness by using lexical ambiguities, neologisms or fragmented syntax. Recovery refers to the practice of publishing women's writings, which have remained excluded from the literary canon so far.The strategy of working with parallel texts is choosing those works in the target language which are created in a similar situation.

4. Criticism

Feminist Texts are criticised because of elitism and it is accused that they are only meant for an educated readership instead of the general public (Flotow1997). It is also argued that feminist translation makes a text more complicated by adding word plays, which becomes difficult to interpret by the readers.

Another point of criticism is that such changes are unnecessary in a text which does not go against the feminist values and by making a text feministthe translator adds an extra meaning to the text and deliberately changes the voice of the author so as to suit their feminist and political interests and agenda. Rosemary Arrojo terms the intervention by Levine while translating Infante's text as "castration" and "invasion". She further uses the terms "opportunism", "hypocrisy" and "theoretical incompetence" with regard to texts that use the feminist approach by manipulating the texts so as to only highlight the feminist message and position in it or by adding such contents where there is none (Arrojo 1994). She further questions the lack of fidelity to the original here and calls the hijacking strategy violent.

Lefevere who is a representative of the Manipulation School also questions the rewriting of the original based on ideology and suggests that it implies manipulating with the original whether intentional or unintentional. The reader thus has to watch out for such changes made in the text as "behind every one of his selections there is a voluntary act that reveals his history and socio-political milieu that surrounds him; in other words, his own culture" (Álvarez/Vidal 1996:5)

Besides the gender identity, which brings all women together, there exist a multitude of individual differences amongst them. The feminist works and projects until now were grounded in the universal notion of women, ignoring the historical, social and cultural experiences of women from the third world. Or it failed to take into account important factors like race, class, social or cultural context, which was later questioned by poststructuralism. The latest research on language and gender has moved from this essentialist and dichotomous conception of gender and put the generalised view that has dominated so far in the feminist discourse into question.

Conclusion

Feminism began as a sociopolitical movement, which aimed to challenge the dominance of patriarchy and the power relations which gave women a subordinate role.It strives to provide equality to women at all levels and to put an end to gender domination. For this purpose, it analyses and criticises the power relations that exist between genders.

The above mentioned feminist translation strategies are applied with the purpose of making women visible in literature, to criticise the silencing of women, to promote a gender consciousness as well as to question the linguistic patriarchal hegemony. The feminist translation studies provide women with a visibility that was denied to them earlier. The feminist methods of translation thus intend to place women on par with men and translation with original, as well as to uncover and recover such works, which were lost in the past because of patriarchy.

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