

国外翻译研究丛书之十七

# TRANSLATION AND GENDER

*Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'*

## 翻译与性别 ——女性主义时代的翻译

LUISE VON FLOTOW



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## 出版说明

近年来,国内翻译研究取得了很大进展,有关翻译研究的丛书也出了多套。不过,长期以来,国内引进的原版翻译著作匮乏,不少研究都是根据二手资料;另外,学习翻译专业的研究生人数越来越多,这种状况若继续存在,将十分不利于学科的发展和翻译人才的培养。鉴于此,上海外语教育出版社约请了多名国内翻译研究著名学者分别开列出最值得引进的国外翻译研究论著的书目,并对这些书目进行整理、排序,最终确定了准备引进的正式书单。该丛书涉及的论著时间跨度大,既有经典,也有新论;内容的覆盖面也相当广泛,既有翻译本体的研究,也有跨学科的研究。这套丛书的引进将会满足翻译专业研究生教学原版参考书和翻译理论研究的需要。

上海外语教育出版社谨以此丛书献给我国的翻译学界。

## 借鉴和创造

### (代序)

上海外语教育出版社自成立以来一直是我国外语教育最优秀的后勤部和侦调部。因为它不但为我国各个层次(尤其本科与研究生层次)的外语教育提供了多种高水平的教材、教参和工具书,而且还出版了多学科、多语种和多系列的中文版和外文版的学术著作,比如“现代语言学丛书”、“牛津应用语言学丛书”、“美国文学史论译丛”、“外国文学史丛书”、“剑桥文学指南丛书”、“当代英语语言学丛书”以及列入国家及教育部规划的人文社科重点项目的外国语言文学、文化等方面的图书等。为了适应我国现代化建设和教育改革的需要,还出版了一批国际金融、对外贸易、涉外保险、国际经济法、国际新闻和管理科学等方面的教材与专著。这些著作在外语的学科建设与学术研究以及复合型人才培养等方面都在发挥着强有力的侦察、调研和指导作用。这是外语界有口皆碑的。

随着中外文化交流的纵深发展以及我国现代化建设对人才的需求,对比语言学和翻译学近些年来在我国有了较快的发展,最突出的证据就是①外语类硕士博士点上研究对比与翻译方向的学生在逐年迅速增多,而且我们的高校已经有了翻译学院和翻译系(当然还太少)。②外语专业的学生考中文、法律等其他人文社科专业的硕士、博士以及反方向的走向已经起步。这种跨学科的人才已成为人才资源竞争的最主要对象,因此发展趋势定会看好。上海外语教育出版社为适应这种高层次人才培养和新学科建设的需要,不但积极出版国内关于对比研究和翻译研究的专著和论文集,最近又推出了原版“国外翻译研究丛书”,这套丛书时

间跨度从古代到现代,所选书目皆为译学发展史上有里程碑作用的名家名著,堪称译学经典。他们计划分批出版,以满足读者的需求。

这套丛书的出版首先可以解决国内翻译教学原版参考书多年匮乏的困难,真可以说是我国翻译教学与理论研究的及时雨。我想学习和关心这个学科的师生和其他人士定会对这套书的引进为之欢呼,为之祝贺。

这套丛书的价值还在于能大大促进我国翻译学科建设的发  
展。译学学科的发展依赖于研究者在三个方面的深入研究和结  
合。一是对本国译学的继承性研究;二是对外国译学的借鉴性研  
究;三是对翻译实践和翻译教学中新问题的探索性研究。只有这  
三者研究深入并结合好了,才可能从经验与技巧逐步升华为具有  
科学性的译学理论。这三个方面的研究,改革开放以来,在我国  
已取得了很显著的成就,这是有目共睹的。翻译学在我国已于 20  
世纪 80 年代末有了独立学科的初级形态,90 年代又有了新的发  
展,对学科的独立性以及理论体系的结构与功能有了更多的探  
讨。依照学科建设的规律和研究现状,我们尚需在上述三个方面  
加大研究力度,而这套丛书就是借鉴性研究的主要资源。从这个  
角度讲,这套丛书的引进也是我国文化基本建设的重要工程之  
一。

在新的世纪,文化(包括各类科学技术)会多方面快速深入人  
类的日常生活,各国之间的交流会空前深广,因此翻译的功能会  
逐步扩大,实用性翻译人才的需求量定会空前增加。这就要求我  
们除了做好高层次研究型人才的培养以外,还应十分重视实用性  
人才的培养和应用译学的研究。我想出版社一定会关注和引导  
译学建设的理论研究与应用的发展趋势。

杨自俭

青岛海洋大学六三居室

2001 年 3 月 28 日

## 出版前言

六十年代末七十年代初在美国兴起的女权运动对之后三十年内的学术与文艺发展都产生了深远的影响。女权主义思想在社会中的普及和蔓延,促进了语言的发展。两者的进步相互交织,相互推动。也是在同一时期,翻译研究逐渐被接纳为文化研究的重要部分。由此,文化间性别角色的差异,这些差异在语言中的体现和表达,以及通过翻译将这些表达植入不同的文化背景等种种错综复杂的问题与随之产生的评论就构成了本书的主要内容。

《翻译与性别》一书共分七章。第一章,作者开宗明义,简单地介绍了女权运动的背景、文化概念上性别的由来,以及“女性与语言”、“性别与翻译”这一对提纲挈领的问题。针对前者,作者更是引入改革派与极端派的观点进行详细比较。在第二章,作者探讨了性别与翻译行为的关系,指出女权思想和女权作品对当代翻译实践的深刻影响。她指出,首先,译者乐于搜集当代女性作品,并把它们介绍到自己代表的语言文化中。但在翻译过程中,作品语言的试验性往往会引发一系列技术性问题,譬如如何翻译与“身体”有关的词汇,如何将原文中带有女权色彩或含有特殊文化意义的词汇,原汁原味地转移到的语语言和文化环境中等等。其次,她认为处于女权时代的译者均显示出对文本政治取向的高度敏感,并采取各种方式有意抵制和消除原作中在政治态度上含混不清的表达。同样在这一章,作者也将目光转向历史上被遗忘的女性作品的翻译,探讨其可读性。在第三章,作者侧重理论分析,提出翻译行为中的性别意识将重新界定对译者“身份”的理解。在她看来,译者受到原作者女权思想的影响后,必定会在翻译过程中凸显“自我”的存在,在译文中融入个人的“主观创

作”，并对此心安理得。作者在第四章对许多相关的翻译批评作品作了研究，重新讨论了西蒙·博瓦尔的《第二性》，路易斯·拉贝的十四行诗以及萨福的散文诗的翻译。她同时考察了重要文本——例如《圣经》——的重译问题，指出凡是译文中对原文的误译或是部分的删减，都应当置于语言转换过程中的意识形态领域进行研究。在第五章，作者把一些将性别研究与翻译研究结合讨论的作品以及由这些作品产生的各种评论集中在一起进行分析。她谴责那些“女权主义旁观者们”(from outside feminism)在这一领域的沉默，同时赞扬了“女权主义内部成员”(from within feminism)的踊跃发言，因为她们“勇于面对女性与女性之间在文化和政治上的分歧，并能够针对某些极端的观点，提出一针见血的问题”。譬如，她指出，成员们对翻译论题中始终“不予触及”(inaccessible)的文本进行了讨论，并围绕典型的试验性文体提出了自己的疑问，即“这些文本之所以不被人问津是因为翻译引起的吗？”，“不同的社会团体与文化之间，女权主义作品的可译性如何？”，或是“这些女权作品对于翻译文化究竟意义多大，如果意义不大，怎样在翻译中使之产生较大的意义？”等等。此外，作者还注意到，第三世界国家的作家和生活在多民族团体内处于劣势的女性对第一世界的译者普遍存在不满，因为后者“打着‘女权主义’的旗号，实际上‘利用’(exploitation)并篡改了她们的作品”。那么，译者怎样才能让西方国家聆听第三世界女性的呼声，译者的角色该如何定位？她应该如何翻译，又为谁翻译？她的工作是否加重了对这些妇女的剥削，又或是在为实现全世界女性的奋斗目标贡献力量？这些都是作者所关注也期待更多学者关注的问题。第六章和第七章是本书的结束，作者展望了性别与翻译研究未来的研究角度、方向及其发展潜力。

正如本书所论述的：翻译与性别的研究实际就是文化互动研究的重要组成部分。因此，本书不仅对翻译工作者有启迪作用，也帮助那些关注女性发展、研究女权运动的学者以及众多的翻译爱好者及时了解国外文化和翻译研究的新趋势、新思想，以深化思考并进一步促进不同文化间的语言交流。



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## Preface

This work on gender and translation has developed out of my interests in feminist explorations of gender as a cultural construct and in translation as cultural transfer. Over the past thirty years, and as a result of the women's movement, gender issues have become entangled with issues of language. Over the same period, translation studies has developed as a part of the more general turn toward cultural studies. The complexities of translational gender relations and the resulting critical work are the subject of this book.

Gender studies and translation studies are both interdisciplinary academic fields. When they are brought into relationship with one another, a number of issues intersect: cultural gender differences, the revelation and formulation of these differences in language, their transfer by means of translation into other cultural spaces where different gender conditions obtain. Questions arise about the importance of gender politics in institutions, and the gender affiliations of the translator and the critic become an issue. Language is, of course, highly pertinent to both areas of investigation; discussions of 'patriarchal language' have played an important role in feminist research on gender, and language transfer is the basic element under discussion in translation studies. Given the political weight that both feminist thinkers and the 'political correctness' reaction have assigned to language, it is clear that gender must become an issue in translation.

It is important to note that although gender studies and translation studies may be contemporaneous fields of scholarship, their development has not been parallel. Translation studies has seen rapid development in Europe over the past decade, a development doubtless fostered by a political and economic climate encouraging cultural and economic exchange between different language groups. This has also been the case in Canada, where official bilingualism has been an important catalyst triggering translation as well as academic work on translation. In the USA, translation studies still plays a somewhat minor role, though the visibility of the field has recently increased dramatically through the efforts of a number of active individuals. Gender studies has developed differently, achieving the greatest influence in North America; the 'era of feminism' that began in the late 1960s and affected academic and public life as well as 'high' and popular culture has been instrumental in shaping the historical and scholarly context of its generation. Feminist work has entered and had an impact upon almost every academic discipline. In many parts of Europe, on the other hand, there has been less academic interest in gender studies. While much academic work on gender is imported from North America (and translated), gender studies, women's

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studies programmes or the like – which might encourage research into specifically European situations – are rare.

My purpose is to bring these two disciplines together, making disparate information available to students of translation on both sides of the Atlantic. By describing some of the links and inter-connections between gender issues and translation studies, I hope to inform, stimulate discussion and encourage further research into the intersections of these two fields. This objective reflects a feminist activist agenda on my part, as I demonstrate to what extent gender awareness affects international discussion, research and communication. But it also reflects an academic interest in cultural studies – in the differences between cultures and the individuals within them – and the way translation both promotes and hampers understanding and interaction.

In writing this book, I have assembled diverse publications gleaned from primarily North American sources. I have also used a number of unpublished materials, most of which are of European origin. These materials were produced for the 1995 conference of the European Society for Translation Studies held in Prague, at which I organized and chaired a session on gender and translation. Since they will not be appearing in the conference proceedings, I have considered it important to cite them extensively.

My perspective has, of course, been defined by my own experience and my limitations: a North American bilingual, bicultural (immigrant) background, academic work in French, German and Québec literatures during the 'era of feminism', and literary translation. There is doubtless much material I have not been able to refer to, for instance work produced in Scandinavian countries. Still, the amount of contemporary material I did have access to has sufficed to provide an overview. The book is divided into seven chapters, starting with a historical introduction that summarizes the way the women's movement has problematized language.

In chapter 2, I examine the influences that feminist thought and writing have had on contemporary translation practice. I look at a number of 'technical' questions such as translating 'the body' and translating feminist wordplay or cultural references. The question of translators as censors of politically questionable material is also raised here, since translators in an 'era of feminism' have developed forms of resistance to texts they consider dubious. This chapter is also concerned with the translation of 'lost' women writers and the 'readability' of these authors since there exists no tradition of reading them.

Theoretical developments are the subject of chapter 3, since the practical issues discussed in chapter 2 have had an effect on more abstract concerns in translation. Gender awareness coupled with translation has brought about

a revision of the normally 'invisible' role a translator plays. Taking their cue from the feminist writers they translate, translators have begun asserting their identity and justifying the subjective aspects of their work. A concomitant revision of the discourse on translational relations has led theorists to rethink metaphors such as *les belles infidèles*, which are used to describe translation in terms of gender hierarchies, and to rewrite such fundamental 'translation myths' as that of Pandora's box.

Chapter 4 presents critical work on translation. Not unlike the feminist practice of rereading, revising and supplementing canonical texts, this critical work rereads and reconsiders translations – of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, of Louise Labé's sonnets, of Sappho's lyric poetry. It also looks at the efforts of translators who undertake retranslations of such 'key texts' as the Bible. In discussing the reasons for re-translations and criticism – for example, glaring mistranslations or deletions – such work points to the ideological aspects of language transfer. A related element in this chapter is the recovery of 'lost' women translators and the re-evaluation of their work from the perspective of the gender-conscious 1990s.

In chapter 5 I discuss some of the criticisms addressed to work that combines gender issues with translation studies. Given the clearly partisan approach of feminist work, criticisms 'from outside feminisms' are to be expected. It is interesting that they often take the form of silence, a condition this book seeks to counteract. Criticisms 'from within feminisms' are more productive, raising issues of cultural and political differences *between* women and confronting certain 'radical' positions with pertinent questions. One type of question addresses the problem of translations that remain 'inaccessible', for instance in the case of experimental texts. Does the problem lie in the translation? How translatable is feminist writing from other societies and cultures? How meaningful is it to the translating cultures, and how can it be rendered so, if it is not? Third world writers or less-advantaged women in multi-ethnic societies have also raised questions about the 'exploitation' and misrepresentation of their texts in the name of 'first world feminisms'. What exactly is the role of the translator in making the voices of third world women heard in the West? How should she translate? For whom is she translating? Is she merely contributing to these women's exploitation, or is her work a meaningful contribution to international feminist goals?

None of these questions have been fully explored or answered. This book raises them for a readership that may be interested in further pursuing the intersections of gender and translation, a vast area of research and development in the comparatist, intercultural and supranational approaches that translation studies fosters.

Finally, chapters 6 and 7 offer some remarks on future perspectives and

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a concluding statement, respectively.

My work on the intersection of gender and translation was made possible by a generous post-doctoral fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, which I wish to gratefully acknowledge. Without this funding I would not have been able to spend the time necessary to put this book together. I also wish to acknowledge the reading skills of Anthony Pym, series editor, whose detailed comments on the 'facts' I accumulated, my interpretations of these facts and my sometimes convoluted syntax were usually appropriate. Taking the position of a European student of translation, he queried a number of my North American assumptions. Thanks also to colleagues Sherry Simon, Jean Delisle and to series publisher Mona Baker for their support and interest; and thanks to Jane Batchelor, Karin Littau, Eithne O'Connell and Beate Thill for presenting their work at the Prague conference and making it available to me afterwards. Finally, thanks to my family of four for learning to live in relative independence.

# 1. Historical Background

When Simone de Beauvoir wrote in 1949 "on ne naît pas femme, on le devient" and when E.M. Parshley translated this in 1953 as "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman", both Beauvoir and Parshley were talking about *gender*. Though the term did not actually come into use at the time of these texts, it was undergoing rapid development twenty years later, and its users and adapters often referred back to Simone de Beauvoir's work on women's socialization.

## The Women's Movement and the Idea of Gender

In the mid to late 1960s, as post-war feminism began to develop a certain momentum along with many of the other protest movements of the time in Western Europe and North America, the notion of *gender* evolved to complement and extend that of biological sexual difference. Since biological sexual difference hardly seemed adequate to explain the differences in men's and women's societal roles and opportunities, grassroots women's movements and scholars developed and employed other tools and analytical categories in order to understand these discrepancies. Anglo-American feminist writers and theorists began to refer back to Beauvoir and explore the questions raised by her aphorism. Beauvoir suggests that a baby born with female reproductive organs does not simply grow up to be a woman. She has to turn herself into a woman, or more correctly, she *is turned* into a woman by the society she grows up in and in response to the expectations that society has of women. The final product 'woman' is a result of education and conditioning, and differs according to the dominant influences she is subject to in the culture, subculture, ethnic group, religious sect, in which she grows up. Early feminist use of the term *gender* referred to the result of the social process that turns young females into girls, and later into women. This process instills into girls and women the physical, psychological and sociocultural attributes that are typical of a particular time and culture and which, as a rule, differ substantially from the attributes of the men of the same period.

It needs to be stressed here that *gender* refers to the sociocultural construction of *both* sexes. Feminist thinkers of the late 1960s and early 1970s developed the term in the interests of examining and understanding women's socialized difference from men, and their concomitant cultural and political powerlessness. More recently, though, *gender* studies have been examining the construction of male attributes and attitudes that are



typical of certain societies and cultures at specific historical moments. Results of such studies have appeared in a number of essay collections (Kaufman 1987; Brod 1987). Other contemporary approaches criticize *gender duality*, the idea that there are only two types of encultured gender which correspond to the two biological sexes (Butler 1990); theorists and writers working in the area of gay and lesbian studies focus on the gender complexities raised by homosexual contexts and practices such as cross-dressing or transvestism. For the purposes of this book, however, the main focus will be on ideas of *gender* applied in the women's movement and in women's studies in order to understand and then undermine, or strategically exploit, the effects of gender identity in women.

The women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s focused on two aspects of women's difference. First, it tried to show how women's difference from men was in many ways due to the artificial behavioural stereotypes that come with gender conditioning. Since these stereotypes were artificial, they could be minimized. Second, the movement de-emphasized differences between women, stressing instead women's shared experiences, their commonality, their solidarity. In other words, it viewed gender as a form of deliberate cultural conditioning that needed to be criticized and rejected, but that also transcended individual cultures and could bond women into a political force (Eisenstein 1983). This led to the "ideological and political conviction that women were more unified by the fact of being female in a patriarchal society than [...] divided by specificities of race and class" (Eisenstein 1983:xvii). The idea of gender as a largely negative aspect of women's conditioning could thus be strategically and politically exploited to bring women together.

Gender was understood to be the basis of women's subordination in public and private life, and was viewed as an phenomenon affecting all women – in the household as well as in the workplace, everywhere from the pink-collar ghettos of the corporations, via images of women in the media, to government or educational agencies establishing policies affecting women. It was a part of everywoman's life. Activities criticizing the gendered aspects of everyday life kept the issue in the public eye; interest and support were galvanized by media events such as the disruption of the Miss America Pageant in 1968, where the trappings of stereotypical femininity – dishcloths, steno pads, girdles and bras – were thrown into a 'Freedom Trash Can' (Morgan 1968:62-67).

The establishment of women's studies' initiatives developed from this sense of women's commonality as well as from the realization that women were excluded from large parts of public and academic life. It marked a new development toward the implantation of feminist ideas in the academy