

(Re)mapping the Inter-Philosophical Trajectories of Feminist Translation Theory and Praxis

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Abstract

The much celebrated and visibly interventionist Feminist translation theories and praxis that challenged the canonical norms of western translation theories more radically and heralded in the era of resignification in the field of gender and/in translation, is not an isolated upsurging of English experimental translation practices of Quebec feminist writings. Rather, like every text is intertextual in the poststructuralist frame work, the present paper seeks to argue that every philosophy is inter-philosophical, and the philosophical core of feminist translation is located in the theoretical premises of three major turns in literary and cultural studies i.e., poststructuralism, postcolonialism and feminism. Thus in the present paper an attempt is made to map the philosophical trajectories of poststructuralism, postcolonialism and feminism(s) to unearth those radical theories, concepts and categories that ultimately paved the way for the emergence of Feminist translation theory(s) and practice(s).

Keywords: Feminist Translation, Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism, Feminism.

Feminist Translation: An Introduction

Feminist translation, as the name suggests, is a self-consciously feminist and political approach to translation, translating, and translation studies (Discipline) that seeks to- a) interrogate the canonical norms of translating a text, b) investigate the issues of gender in/and translation, c) re-imagine the identity of the woman translator concerning the text and the author, and d) provide viable

strategies to produce a feminist translation of the text. Up until the last decade of the twentieth century, especially in the western (Anglo-American) context, translation (product) was judged based on 'fidelity towards the original,' 'transparency,' 'fluency' and 'easy readability' (Venuti 1995: 1). Such translation was seen as mere 'rewriting of the original' or the 'servile imitation' of the original to convey the precise meaning of the original text. Similarly, the body/figure that invested the intellectual labour in translating the text was also judged negatively by the reader, publisher and the market for any creative and critical intervention. Therefore, the figure of the translator remained hidden as the 'invisible Other' of the author. This secondary position that was given to translation and the translator provoked feminist translators to challenge the canonical discourses of translation theories.

Moreover, these feminist translators were convinced that there was a correspondence between women's position in society and the position of translation in literature, art and culture. Therefore, they started the debate of 'gender and/in translation.' As feminist researchers, one of the significant areas of concern for them was to reinvestigate the 'man-handling' of the translated text written by women authors. This they did by critiquing the phallogocentric nature of language that privileges the phallus and masculinity and undermine the female and femininity. Thus, it is part of their agenda to make the gendered body of the character and the translator visible inside the text through various strategies like, 'écriture féminine' 'supplementing,' 'hijacking,' 'footnoting,' 'wordplay,' 'prefacing' (von Flotow 1991: 74). In other words, they advocated for 'woman-handling' (Godard) of the feminist text by the feminist translator.

Furthermore, internationalising the woman writer's voice belonging to a foreign language and culture is also part of their agenda. And for this, they appealed to women translators to translate lesser-known women writers of different/marginalised source languages. Thus, with these agendas in mind, a group of academic feminist researchers and translators, launched the radical interventionist feminist translation in theory and practice in Canada. Feminist translation, over time, has significantly expanded its theoretical concerns to incorporate the issues of transnational

feminism and intersectionality and seems to have captured the market with its practical application of these theories, as can be seen from the increasing number of feminist translations and adaptations of texts. Feminist translation emerged from the philosophical core discussed above.

Feminist Translation: Philosophical and Political Genesis

Speaking of the philosophical core, feminist translation did not emerge in a vacuum. Like every text is intertextual, every philosophy is inter-philosophical, and feminist translation resulted from various philosophical/political turns in feminism and translation studies. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of various critical, political, and cultural theories that have been crucial in deconstructing every other essential notion about 'author,' 'text,' 'language' and 'meaning,' thus providing the required lens and scope to interrogate the foundational principles of translation theories and practices. Feminist translation theory(s) and practices, a radical-deconstructive-political-interventionist approach to translation/translating, also emerged at the confluence of such critical theories as, Postcolonialism, Poststructuralism and Postmodernism. It is therefore imperative to map the contours of the Postcolonial, Poststructural and feminist theories that shaped the philosophical trajectories of 'Feminist Translation Studies'.

Poststructuralism and Translation Studies

'Deconstruction,' with its critical approach to theories of text, textuality, authorship, and originality, is one of the significant contributions of poststructuralism to the field of Translation Studies that challenged the 'secondary position' that was previously assigned to translation and heralded in the era of resignification of translation and assigning more value to Translation Studies as a discipline in the last decade of the twentieth century. As Rosemary Arrojo (1998) has rightly pointed out Translation Studies, under the influence of post structuralism, in the last decade of the twentieth century, took a philosophical turn to interrogate the established

boundaries in its age-old theoretical formulations, “as we regard translation as a form of transformation, we finally begin to move beyond the old stalemates which have paralysed reflection on the area for at least two thousand years” (25). According to Kim Wallmach (2006),

Poststructuralist approaches support a view of theory and practice as dialogically related, a view where neither concept governs the other but where both function as contesting and complimentary, as dialogical forces within the discourse. Theory and practice, in such a view, are not thought of as essences or discrete functions or operations; rather, they are seen to represent theoretical formulations of positions which in practice can be applied only temporarily and alternately (5).

‘Deconstruction,’ one of the critical concepts in poststructuralist theories, and popularised by Jacques Derrida, questions the stated boundaries established in language, in writing practices and reading strategies by pointing out the inherent contradiction that lies in specific theories; ‘definition’ of a concept itself delimits the proposition made by a specific theory:

The subject of translation theory has traditionally involved some concept of determinable meaning that can be transferred to another system of signification. Deconstruction questions such a definition of translation and uses the practice of translation to demonstrate the instability of its own theoretical framework. Deconstruction resists such a system of categorisation that separates “source” text from “target” text or language from meaning, denies the existence of underlying forms independent of language, and questions theoretical assumptions that presume originary being in whatever shape or form (Gentzler 147).

Thus this blurring of boundaries between theory and practice is crucial in expanding the horizon of Translation Studies to incorporate more radical, interventionist approaches to translation practice. Another vital contribution of poststructuralism to the discipline of Translation Studies is its radical revision of established concepts like ‘original,’ ‘work,’ ‘fixed meaning’ and ‘author’ unfolding new trajectories like ‘text,’ ‘multiplicity of meaning,’ “Death of the Author” and ‘free play’ and thereby deconstructing the hitherto status of translation as ‘mere imitation of the original’ and

reconstructing the identity of translation as “different text” (Derrida 1976, 1978; Foucault 1969; Barthes 1967, 71). Derrida’s critique of presence in “Des Tours de Babel” considerably complicates the notion of linguistic transfer that has been crucial to Translation Studies.

Similarly, the demystification of metaphor is another significant contribution of poststructuralism to the field of Translation Studies, as discussed by Kim Wallmach in her essay “Feminist Translation Strategies: Different or Derived?” (2006). Derrida deconstructed the concept of ‘metaphor’ that had been read as ‘semblance of ideas,’ while arguing for “difference.” Thus Derridean propositions of ‘difference’ interrogated the previously unquestionable ‘transcendental truth’ or the absolute notion of the truth in every aspect of knowledge formation, including translation theories. The canon of translation theory(s) that was built on the base philosophy of ‘absolute’ fidelity to the original, or translation as the shadow of original work was radically shaken by Derridean deconstructionist approaches, and an alternative ‘resistance’ discourse was theorised and popularised challenging the hegemonic discourse of ‘transparency’ and ‘fidelity’ in Translation Studies. “This revisiting and rewriting of metaphor as a trope of difference have prompted translation theorists influenced by the poststructuralist paradigm to revisit metaphors relating to translation, which in turn has led to the establishment of approaches to translation which have taken up the call for resistance to established norms” (Wallmach 7). Some of the foremost proponents of the “resistancy” approach to translation are Lawrence Venuti, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Susan Basnett. Venuti’s categorisation of “domesticating” and “foreignizing” translation technique itself was a departure from the earlier categorisation of “formal/dynamic” equivalence by Eugene Nida, and “Semantic/communicative” translation by Peter Newmark. Venuti’s advocacy for “foreignising translation” was a subversive approach that eventually led to the cultural turn in Translation Studies. Venuti’s emphasis on “ethnocentric violence” done to foreign culture in translation provoked deconstructionist postcolonial translators like Spivak to experiment with more radical forms of the English translation of foreign text emphasising the idea of “untranslatability” of the foreignness of the foreign culture.

Similarly, Philip Lewis (1985)'s concept of "abusive fidelity" was another strategy that can be labelled as "resistancy" and that "values experimentation, tampers with usages, seeks to match the polyvalencies and plurivocities or expressive stresses of the original by producing its own" (Lewis qtd. in Venuti 2003: 252). Lewis's "Abusive fidelity" thus involves resistance to the ideology of hegemonic fluency effect that dominated translation practices of the West for ages in favour of a more radical interventionist approach. Thus, to summarise, poststructuralist revision of theoretical concepts like original, text, metaphor, author, fidelity, and advocacy for 'free-play,' multiplicity, difference and text built the foundation for the conceptualisation of more radical and interventionist feminist translation theory and practice in the academic circle of Quebec, Canada. For example, Barbara Godard, one of the first feminist translators from Quebec to have launched experimental interventionist translation practices, in her feminist translation of Nicole Brossard's *The Sea Our Mother* (1983) and *Picture Theory* (1986) says, "translation, in its figurative meanings of transcoding and transformation" (45). In defence of her feminist translation strategies, Godard in her essay "Theorizing Feminist Discourse/Translation". argues that the feminist translation is "women writing their way into subjectivity through a poetics of identity which might be called "transformance" (46). This idea of "transformation" of the source text is a challenge to the canonical discourse of "fidelity towards the original" in translation. And in order for the "transformation" to be possible, she advocates for the feminist translator to "perform" in other words, discards her "self-effacing identity" and instead 'woman-handle' the text by being the "active participant in the creation of meaning" and make herself visible inside the text by immodestly flaunting "her signature in italics, in footnotes - even in a preface" (50). While discussing her translation project of Brossard's *Picture Theory* Godard further maintains, "No final version of the text is ever realisable. There are only approximations to be actualised within the conditions of different enunciative exchanges. As such, translation is concerned not with "target languages" and the conditions of "arrival" but with the ways of ordering relations between languages and cultures. Translation is an "art of approach" (Godard qtd. in Simon 1995: 24).

According to Sherry Simon, “Godard presents a suitable mode for theorising feminist translation through translations, prefaces, research papers, and the translator’s diaries so that the translator is able to reveal the author’s gender identity – female or queer (22). The diary-keeping translation project of Brossard’s *Picture Theory* accentuates “the ongoing movement of writing and translation as “arts of approach” (24). According to Flotow, Godard’s “view of the feminist translators parallels that of the poststructuralist feminist writer: it is positivist, interventionist, political” (2006: 16).

Postcolonialism and Translation Studies

While poststructuralism emphasises the power of language to construct reality, postcolonialism focuses on the unequal power relations between the colonial and colonised nation-state in terms of cultural exchange and linguistic hegemony. In this postcolonial framework, culture vis-a-vis language is identified as one of the specificities to maintain this power relation wherein English and the Eurocentric world views with their construction of the binaries of ‘occident’ and ‘orient’ in their default template of ‘self’ and ‘Other,’ as Chinua Achebe has remarked, are interrogated continuously and problematised as hegemonic forces responsible for the marginalisation of its colonised cultural Other. This notion of ‘self’ and ‘Other’ is of particular interest to feminists as they question the unquestionable gender norms of the patriarchal society according to which man is always projected as the ‘self’, and woman as his subordinated ‘Other.’ Translation as a representative art has deeply been infected with this binary since time immemorial. Translation, unfortunately, in the traditionalist conceptualisation, was always seen as the ‘Other,’ or the shadow of the ‘Original’ work of the author. Similarly, postcolonialism, in its extended theories, not only problematises the existing clean binary that has been constructed between the colonial subject and the colonised Other, but it also highlights the problematics within the decolonised nation-state. Postcolonial theorists like Homi K. Bhabha challenge the existence of such clean binary as ‘Empire/Nation’ by pointing to a third space, the space of “liminality”. the “in-between” space, which is essential for Translation Studies. As Bhabha says, “we should remember that it is the ‘inter’ – the cutting edge of translation and renegotiation, the

in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes it possible to begin envisaging national anti-nationalist histories of the ‘people.’ And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha qtd. in Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 6). Similarly, Bhabha’s advocacy for “supplement”. in his essay “DissemiNation”. that “cumulates and accumulates presence,’ that “coming after the original” that “compensate for minus in origin” (154) is crucial in the understanding of feminist translation theory and practice. For example, Luise von Flotow, a feminist translation theorist, in her seminal essay “Feminist Translation: Context, Theory and Practice”. discusses various strategies used in feminist translation, i.e., supplementing, prefacing and footnoting, and hijacking (74-79), in order to “make explicit, what is implicit in the feminist text.” According Flotow, “‘Supplementing’ is one of the most positive aspects of translation” that “compensates for the differences between languages”. or constitutes “voluntarist action” on the text” and through which the source text is “matured, developed and given an afterlife” (74-75). ‘Supplementing’ offers “poetics of visibility” and “aesthetic of female subjectivity” for female translators seeking new direction and perspective to engage with feminist writing.

Postcolonialism further questions the homogenous totalitarian identity of the postcolonial subject as envisaged in the colonial discourses. It emphasises the plurality of identity of the subject, which is directly connected with the subject’s location and positionality in history(s) and discourses. This slogan of the ‘plurality of identity’ coincides with the third wave of feminisms’ rejection of any essentialist construction/representation of women of the “Third world” as only ‘victims’ of patriarchy. “Intersectionality” or the existence of various other identity markers like race, caste, class, nationality, ethnicity, religious affiliation, sexuality was brought into the feminist discourse culminating in replacing ‘Feminism’ with ‘feminisms,’ the micro, and the plural. Central to such theories are bell Hooks, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sherry Simon and Luise von Flotow. Spivak’s theories are of particular interest to the context of the study as she speaks from the interconnected space of gender, feminism, postcolonialism, poststructuralism, and translation. In the tradition of

transnational feminism, Spivak criticises Western Feminists “translate” of non-western women’s work, without understanding and acquiring first-hand knowledge of their language, culture, and positionality. For Spivak, the ‘erotic,’ ‘the intimacy,’ the complete ‘surrender’ to the text is more important in translation than the traditional ethics of translating a text. According to Spivak, in translation, “first, the translator must surrender to the text. She must solicit the text to show the limits of its language, because that rhetorical aspect will point at the silence of the absolute fraying of language that the text wards off, in its special manner” (Spivak qtd. in Simon 2005: 136). Regarding the politics of translation, she says, “the task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay” (181). Spivak is an interventionist deconstructive postcolonial feminist translator, both in theory and practice, and this positionality of Spivak can be easily located in her translation of Mahasweta Devi’s *Imaginary Maps* (1995). *Imaginary Maps* is a metatext: a compound of the English translation of Bengali stories, a lengthy preface by Spivak, and interview of Mahasweta Devi herself; the result being that both Spivak and Devi are the co-producer of the translated text. Spivak’s diatribe on the first world feminists’ approach in “apprehending” their third world counterpart, in her translator’s note, her deliberate use of foreignising technique, i.e., abrupt syntax, retention of tribal dialects, her discourse on empire, culture and identity, her tirade on the decolonised nation-state and the condition of the subaltern can be found in her translation of Mahasweta Devi’s short story “Draupadi”. the story of the state-sponsored sexual violence (gang rape) of the tribal Naxalite woman Dopdi, and her insubordination.

Similarly, von Flotow in her essay “Disunity and Diversity: Feminist Approaches to Translation Studies”. highlights the prevailing disunity in feminist work and scholarship concerning translation, and traces it to the “identity politics” and “positionality” and “historicity” of the translators that is based on the contextual and cultural difference (3). She discusses the various criticism ‘feminist translation’ has been subjected to since its conceptions, i.e., “mainstream translate of the third world material (as Spivak

accuses)". "Elitist translation" (as Robyn Gillam criticises) and as "Hypocritical translation" (as Rosemary Arrojo argues) (4-6). Flotow concludes, referring to Linda Alcoff, that this disunity/difference is strategic, based on factors like: "identity politics (the writer/ critic's identity has an effect on their perceptions and writing), positionality (the effect of this writing is relativised by institutional, economic and other factors), and historical dimension (perceptions/interest/topics change with the time as does identity)" (4). In another essay "On the Challenges of Transnational Feminist Translation Studies". she discusses the hegemony of English and its impact on the circulation and acceptance of feminist discourses. She points out the consequences of the dominance of the English language and Anglo-American/European Feminists in Global translation field as follows:

The marginalisation of large segments of feminist thought worldwide; the isolation of those researchers who work on/in national or linguistic peripheries; the requirement for researchers from other languages and cultures to rely on and work in "structures outside their social framework" in order to read and publish; gatekeeping functions of English-publishing, which not only privilege materials written by English-language researchers, but control the form and content (themes and topics) to be published; the tendency for unilingual anglophone scholars to feel their unilingualism relieves them of any "obligation to know about others' work" which causes them not to see the need (or be unable to) open up to "other perspectives and cultural realities". which is a major impediment to transnational work (Descaries qtd. in Flotow 2017: 177).

Taking clues from Tymozcko's call for "international" translation studies, she advocates for "transnational" feminist translation studies that evokes "concerned usefulness, helpfulness, shared and collaborative communication across and despite borders and languages to promote mutual interests" (von Flotow 2017: 175).

Thus the postcolonial turn in translation studies not only rejects a narrow understanding of translation as the 'Other' of the original, but also interrogates the complete "domestication" of the 'cultural Other' (the foreign language text) by the dominant English language

in “exotropic” translation from India; cultural meaning cannot be located in dictionaries but, “in the process of negotiation” and “in an understanding of the way language is tied to local realities, to literary forms and to changing identities” (Simon 2005: 131). Feminist translation is one such testing ground for cultural meaning, “in emphasising the crucial historical and ideological role of gender in language, by underscoring the role of subjectivity in framing and reclaiming meaning, feminist translators foreground the cultural identity of women” (Simon 2005: 134).

Feminism and Translation Studies

Similarly, the confluence of Gender Studies, Feminism, and Translation Studies opened up new possibilities for understanding gender in/and translation in its metatextual, paratextual and textual reading of translated text on the one hand. It provided innovative strategies for interventionist translation practices to make translation gender-conscious on the other. Though it would not be wrong to say that feminism as a whole has contributed to the development of Feminist Translation Studies, it is Elaine Showalter’s framework of “gynocriticism”. and the French feminists’ engagement with the nature of language (their critique of phallogocentric language, and their emphasis on the need for a different language to represent the realities of women’s lives) that have been influential in shaping the agendas of feminist translators. Showalter’s “gynocriticism”. the second phase in feminist criticism, is seminal because it proposes a female-centric framework to trace female writers’ presence in literary historiography in the West. A gynocritic orients her excavation towards woman as writer, reader, and character, different from a feminist critic whose primary concern is to provide a critique of male-defined female realities in literature:

Feminist criticism has gradually shifted its centre from revisionary readings to a sustained investigation of literature by women. The second mode of feminist criticism engendered by this process is the study of women as writers, and its subjects are the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution

and laws of a female literary tradition. No English term exists for such a specialised critical discourse, and so I have invented the term 'gynocritics.' Unlike the feminist critics, gynocritics offer many theoretical opportunities (Showalter 1981: 248).

Showalter draws attention to the gynocritical tradition established by critics like Patricia Spacks's *The Female Imagination*; Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*; Mary Ellmann's *Thinking about Women*; Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*; Ellen Moers's *Literary Women*; Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*; Nina Baym's *Woman's Fiction*; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*; and Margaret Homans's *Women Writers and Poetic Identity* (1981: 248). For example, Simone de Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, which is often referred to as the 'Feminist Bible,' said, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (1949: 301). This statement falsified the acclaimed and unquestionable transcendental truth about the female body that was designed and shaped in men's literature and suggested that the woman is a cultural construct and not a biological being, "no biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilisation as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine" (1949: 301). Her French feminist successor Helene Cixous in her essay "Laugh of the Medusa" (1976) suggests that a "woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. A woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement" (875). Cixous proposes 'écriture féminine' in which a woman should break away from the phallogocentric man-made language and write herself. "By writing herself, the woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from" (880) and "which will not only "realise" the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" (880) and this political act would be her "shattering entry into history, which has always been based on her suppression" (880). Cixous made this

battle cry that “women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetoric, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve—the strength of women that, sweeping away syntax, breaking that famous thread (just a tiny little thread, they say) which acts for men as a surrogate umbilical cord” (886).

Thus Cixous’s endeavour to find a new language for women to redefine themselves is crucial for feminist translation and its agenda to make the body visible inside the translated text. Similarly, Dale Spender argues that “language is manmade;” it is phallogocentric and heteronormative and, therefore, cannot give a faithful representation of a woman’s life. Moreover, it is through the conscious manipulation of this language, by ‘constructing realities’ through language, that a man asserts his superiority over woman, “language is our means of classifying and ordering the world: our means of manipulating reality. In its structure and its use, we bring our world into realisation, and if it is inherently inaccurate, then we are misled. If the rules which underlie our language system, our symbolic order, are invalid, then we are daily deceived” (Spender 1980: 2-3). Luce Irigaray, another of the trio of ‘French feminists,’ uses the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis to demonstrate her critique of phallogocentric language. She suggests, like Lacan, that the ego is formed through the presence of the phallus in the male body and the woman’s subjectivity is formulated through the lack of it; the presence and absence of the ‘overdetermined’ phallus is responsible for the projection of male superiority and female inferiority. Irigaray, therefore, beckons for a woman to scrutinise her body through the “speculum” and reconstruct her subjectivity through her sexuality. According to Irigaray, a woman’s sexuality is deliberately mystified or reduced to only intercourse, “she is reduced to a function and a functioning whose historic causes must be reconsidered: property system, philosophical, mythological, or religious system – the theory and practice of psychoanalysis itself – all continually, even today, prescribe and define that destiny laid down for woman’s sexuality” (1985: 129). She believes that it is only through the application of “speculum” that “enables femininity through female genitals, like two lips, the metonymy of the

doubleness of text and body, showing feminine multiplicity” (Wu 2013: 24) a feminine text, a “self-sufficient (w)hole”. “a vision without cohesion” (Johnston qtd. in Wu 2013: 24) can be produced.

The theory of “écriture féminine” moves to another level in Julia Kristeva’s, the last of the trio of French feminists, enunciation of the semiotic and symbolic language in her two essays “The Speaking Subject” (1985) and “The System and the Speaking Subject” (1986). According to Kristeva, ‘symbolic’ refers to “system of meaning (as structuralism and generative grammar study it) – a language with a foreclosed subject or with a transcendental subject-ego” (Kristeva 1985: 217; Wu 2013: 24) and ‘semiotics,’ functions through “genotext” and “phenotext” (Kristeva 1986: 28; Wu 2013: 24). The symbolic, in the Kristevian framework of understanding language, is associated with pattern, control, dichotomy, repression, and rigidity and therefore phallogocentric; the semiotic, on the other hand, is female centric in nature, and operates in the realm of “displacement, condensation, metonymy, metaphor and continuity” (Kristeva qtd. in Wu 2013: 29).

This Anglo feminist theory of ‘literary female continuum’ and ‘gynocriticism’ and French feminist theory of “écriture féminine” found a symbolic echo in feminist translation theories of Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow and Barbara Godard, Susan Bassnett, Carol Maier and Suzanne Jill Levine. For example, Sherry Simon in her work *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (2005), while tracing the genesis of Feminist translation, unravels that it was the Renaissance “translatress” who with their subversive act “challenges the confinement of women to the purely private sphere, and gains them admission into the world of letters” (46) and therefore they are the precursors of what is, later on, came to be known as ‘feminist translation.’ Thus reoccupying spaces which were traditionally gender-marked, for Simon, is vital to the question of identity formation as in the case of Renaissance translatress. Similarly, von Flotow in her essay “Translation and Gender: Translating in the ‘Era of Feminism’ while exposing the “man-handling” of texts like Simone de Beauvoir’s *Le deuxième sexe*, *The Bible*, and the works of Sappho and Louise Labé, by their male translators, sought out to make the translations of women’s

writing ‘visibly’ feminist through practices like “translating women’s body, recovering women’s lost works, asserting the translator’s identity, revising the rhetoric of translation, reading and rewriting existing translations” (von Flotow 1997: 49-60). Flotow invokes the French feminists’ theory of “écriture féminine” or “writing the body” to develop her theory of “translating the body.” Susan Bassnett, another postcolonial feminist, argues for an “orgasmic theory of translation, the result of elements [that] are fused into a new whole in an encounter that is mutual, pleasurable and respectful” (Bassnett qtd. in Simon 2005: 13). Carol Maier and Suzanne Jill Levine, both advocate for a “subversive translation practice whose main aim is to expose and rewrite oppressively male misogynistic texts” (Santaemilia 2011: 62). While Maier prefers to consider her translation as “woman-identified” or “woman-interrogated”. Levine argues about her ‘subversive’ stance that her authors “see their originals already as translations of texts and traditions as well as of realities; each in his own way is a parodist, a creator-commentator. Dethroning language’s dominion over meaning, touching upon the gaps between language and meaning, they have also, in a sense, de-throned the author. As collaborators or self-translators, they are self-subverters” (8). For Levine, “translation from within feminist discourse is production, not reproduction, and nothing is sacred within that symbiotic if not parasitic relationship between translation and original composition” (7). Similarly, Jose Santaemilia believes that one of the significant achievement of feminist translation theory is the articulation of “genealogy of women translators” revealing three key facts:

- I. that, throughout history, women translators have shown what we can tentatively call a strong ‘female’/‘feminine’ solidarity;
- II. that a far more number of these women translators can be considered unambiguously, as ‘proto-feminist’ translators;
- III. that translation has been in the hand of women, a tool for creative writing, a subversive substitute for channelling women’s creativity and women’s desire for self-expression (2011: 66).

Conclusion

Thus the critical landscape provided by both Anglo-American and French feminist literary theories and theories of language helped the burgeoning of feminist translation theory and practice. The search for a) alternative reading practices for women's work; b) radical writing strategies using the language of women's body and sexuality; c) to create a rupture in the normative understanding of gender in literature and language; and d) to rediscover the lost women writers and make their work public, necessitated a new and radical approach to translation theory and practice, thus germinating the seed of English feminist translation of Quebec experimental feminist texts.

Feminist translation, an offshoot of feminist writing, was conceptualised, theorised, practised and popularised by a group of feminist translators and academics in Quebec, the French dominated area in Canada and in English in the 1970s and 80s as a response to the problems mentioned above. These Québécois feminist writers and English translators, empowered by Derridean notions of "deconstruction" and "difference". postcolonial formulation of "supplementing" and French feminists' philosophy of "écriture féminine". launched specific interventionist writing and translation practices with their agenda to problematise the hitherto neglected area of gender in/and translation. These translators, i.e., Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow, Barbara Godard, Kathy Mezei, Susanne De Lotbiniere-Harwood see themselves more as a collaborative producer of the translated text than as a mere imitator reproducing the sense of the "original" text in the target language. They aim to provide a critique of 'man-handling' of women's texts in translation thus, recovering the lost woman author in translation; to make the translation a gendered text by making the body of the woman visible; making the silenced woman speak in translation thus challenging the traditional notion of "fidelity towards the original" in translation; and to make the invisible translator visible through various interventionist translation practices such as "supplementing", "prefacing", "footnoting", "hijacking" and "wordplay", thus, democratising the literary canon to incorporate the name of the translators, through whom the majority of the world's knowledge and text have been disseminated and made accessible to an audience

as large and heterogeneous as we are today. Thus the figure of the feminist translator that emerges in their translation discourses can be summed up as, to quote Mellissa Wallace, “Translators as “Writers” of Wrongdoing” “Translators as Re-readers and Re-writers”. “Translators as Transgressors”. and “Translators as Political Agents” (67-70). About Canadian Feminist translation, Luise von Flotow writes, “it is a phenomenon intimately connected to a specific writing practice in a specific ideological and cultural environment, the result of a specific social conjuncture. It is an approach to translation that has appropriated and adapted many of the techniques and theories that underlie the writing it translates” (1991: 74).

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