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Book Review

Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives edited by Olga Castro and Emek Ergun

Publisher: Routledge

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Reviewed by

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Currently, there are hardly any works that explicitly claim the political title “feminist” or “activist” while fully exploring feminist translation. Without necessarily embracing and recognizing the transgressive or reactionary processes of translation in feminist movements and activisms, existing collections generally explore the “connections between gender and translation or women and translation” (p. 2). This essay collection suggests that the important role of translation in the trans/formation of feminist politics requires more analytical recognition. Hence, the authors put the “F word” back into the discussion in their chapters, focusing on the roles of translation in the development of feminisms.

The editors also claim that the recent Feminist Translation Studies (FTS) scholarship fails to reveal the current cross-cultural increased amount of attention given to feminist translation. They point out this gap “not only perpetuates the false impression that feminist translation is exclusively on and of the west, but also discourages further knowledge production on and of non-western realities by keeping new scholarship deterred or invisible” (p. 3). However, the book is still in English, and Europe and Anglo-America still take a large space in the collection. The very gap regarding FTS scholarship produced in non-hegemonic languages that they are criticizing remains a crucial one.

The essays collected in Olga Castro and Emek Ergun’s *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives* seek both to address some major gaps in FTS and to inspire “the formation of new connections between translation studies, feminist theories, queer theory,

linguistics, anthropology, postcolonial studies, history, philosophy, cultural studies, globalization studies, comparative literature and critical pedagogies" (p. 4). The essay collection is organized into three sections: Feminist Translation in Theory; Feminist Translation in Transition and Feminist Translation in Action. Theoretical frameworks in the feminist translation are the main focus in Section I, while case studies framed in different geohistorical contexts are detailed in Section III. The second section of this collection takes the form of a roundtable conversation that serves as a hinge and brings together seven leading scholars across disciplines as they discuss and share their opinions about what feminist politics of translation means to them.

As explained by the editors in the introduction, this collection is devoted to emphasizing the roles of translation in the making of the feminist transnational. They hope to re-envision "the future of the transnational as a polyphonic space where translation (as a feminist praxis) is embraced as a tool and model of cross-border dialogue, resistance, solidarity and activism in pursuit of justice and equality for all" (p. 1). In doing so, the editors argue for new, innovative feminist approaches to the study of translation in the era of transnational feminism.

The essays in Section I, "Feminist Translation in Theory", propose inventive theoretical frameworks for feminist translation practice and study. José Santaemilia, in "A Corpus-Based Analysis of Terminology in Gender and Translation Research: The Case of *Feminist Translation*," engages in a corpus analysis of the key terms used to define the field, focusing particularly on the usage and definition of "feminist translation" over the years. As Santaemilia put it, "in order to better understand where the field currently stands and is heading, we need a critical look at its key terms" (p. 6). The chapter presents an overview of the main concerns, debates, and current status of FTS in academia. In "Transnational Feminist Solidarities and the Ethics of Translation," Damien Tissot draws on the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, Etienne Balibar, and Judith Butler. The author argues that, when conceived *in translation*, the universal can be a useful tool to achieve the project of politics and ethics of translation. Readers of this chapter will learn about what he calls "a feminist ethics of translation," which sees translation as a way of "recognising and embracing the differences of the Other without fetishising them" (p. 6).

On the topic of English hegemony, María Reimóndez raises accusations that "an Anglo-Euro-centric epistemology is privileged over other kinds of knowledge" (p. 45), highlighting the shortcomings of the feminist translation praxis. The author proposes the notion of polyphony with references to Mikhail Bakhtin to argue that "the goal of feminist and postcolonial translation is to create a space for multiple voices to be heard" (p. 44). Similarly, Lola Sánchez, in her case study of the titles selected for publication in the Spanish book series *Feminismos*, reveals that while the presence of feminist knowledge/voices from other parts of the world is inexistent or scarce, most

of the translated works are from countries with imperial powers (the US, the UK, France, Italy, and Germany).

Cornelia Möser, in "Gender Travelling across France, Germany and the US: The Feminist Gender Debates as Cultural Translations," reconfigures translation "as a productive act of meaning-making ... [that] undermines dichotomous gendered ideas about translation (when conceptualized as a copy, secondary and feminine), original (when conceptualized as authentic, primary and masculine) and nationality (that is conceptualized around claims of 'authentic' and 'pure')" (p. 80). The author analyzes the travels within feminist debates on "gender" in France, Germany and the US, exploring the productivity of translation. She also invokes scholars, such as Edward Said, Walter Benjamin, and Naoki Sakai, to emphasize the creative potential of translation for feminist knowledge production. The first section is concluded by Ergun and Castro's chapter in which they present the theoretical framework behind their vision of feminist translation as a promising pedagogical tool and explain how it can be practised in different courses that aim to promote equality and help students appreciate differences.

The second section of the collection is a cross-disciplinary roundtable chapter where seven prominent feminist scholars—Richa Nagar, Kathy Davis, Judith Butler, AnaLouise Keating, Claudia de Lima Costa, Sonia E. Alvarez and Ayşe Gül Altınay—engage in a discussion about a variety of issues linked to the feminist politics of translation. This chapter demonstrates the rich epistemic potential of interdisciplinary studies and conversations on feminist translation. The participants explore the essential role of translation in the development and success of transnational feminist activism. As Butler states, "there can be no solidarity without translation, and certainly no global solidarity" (p. 113).

The book's third section opens with Justine M. Pas and Magdalena J. Zaborowska's essay, where the authors analyze the feminist translation strategies used in English translations of interviews conducted in Polish, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil, and Hindi for the *Global Feminisms* project (GFP), an oral history project initiated at the University of Michigan, the US. The chapter illustrates how GFP's translational strategies help explain to the readers the complexity, diversity, and legitimacy of international feminisms. In the next chapter, Annarita Taronna studies Italian writer Joyce Lussu's activist translations and her intersectional feminism. Taronna discusses how Lussu has challenged the prescriptive translation norms with her translation method. In Lussu's translations, concerns of local and global equality and justice prevail over preoccupations with "faithful" linguistic transfer.

In "Donne è bello and the Role of Translation in the Migration of 'Consciousness-Raising' from the US to Italy," Elena Basilio presents an analysis of "Un programma per le femministe:

prender coscienza" which was published in *Donne è bello*—a 1972 volume comprising a selection of translated essays of US-American radical feminists by the Italian feminist collective "Anabasi". This chapter underlines the important role played by translation and translators' strategies in the diffusion of radical feminist practices from the US to Italy. Similarly, focusing on the cross-border travels of feminist theories, Sergi Mainer contextualizes the historical and geopolitical development of anarcha-feminism and translation from Germany to Spain.

Rebecca S. Robinson, in her essay, attempts to explore how movements, such as SlutWalk, translated into other receiving cultures by examining the Moroccan case. The author focuses particularly on the translation of its controversial use of "slut" in the title of their campaign. In doing so, this chapter proves the dialogic power of translation and that SlutWalk was transplanted in Morocco to trigger public debates about street harassment and related gender norms. In "The Translator and the Transgressive: Encountering Sexual Alterity in Catherine Millet's *La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.*," Pauline Henry-Tierney highlights the relevance of feminist translator. Henry-Tierney's analysis explains the subjective transformative experiences of the feminist translator by employing theoretical concepts devised by thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. In the final chapter, Serena Bassi examines the Italian localization of the US-based "It Gets Better" (IGB) campaign. The chapter offers practical lessons for students of translation to rethink translation as a form of activism to construct their own identities.

The essays in "Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives" set out to be a major contribution to the field of Feminist Translation Studies. The diversity of voices and visions expands the definition of feminist translation from the conventional framing to a more intersectional one. The information covered in this volume provides the student of translation studies some additional and welcome relief to feminist theories and practices, enlarging their focus of feminist politics beyond a gender-only agenda. The volume will no doubt be valuable to those relatively new to FTS, as it provides innovative models and insights that are vital in the study of translation in the era of transnational feminism. This collection of essays is indeed a useful reference book for FTS.

Reference

Castro, O., & Ergun, E. (2017). *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*. Routledge.

Author's bio-note

John Chi Chon FONG obtained his B.A. in English Studies from the University of Macau where he worked as a Research Assistant over the summer. His research interests include feminist translation, gender and language.
