

Translation and gender---reading on Louise Von Flotow, Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'

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Abstract: The combination of the western feminism and the research of translation have brought the intense impact on the traditional translation theories and the conceptions of practice, which has achieved the plentiful theoretical achievements. The book, Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism' of Louise Von Flotow, studied the influence of the gender research to the practices of translation and the translation theories under the social cultural context in the 1970s. This paper attempts to have a review of the book.

1. Introduction

Flotow is a Canadian translator, she is also a famous researcher of feminism. Since the second wave of women in western countries in the 1960s, and gradually moved from the edge to the center. Feminism gradually moves from the edge to the center as a sharp social and cultural discourse rising from the western world. Contemporary western feminists turn their eyes to the text and want to reconstruct the new relationship of equality between men and women through deconstructing the traditional male-centered discourse. At the same time, with the popularization and spread of feminism in society, translation studies have gradually been accepted as an important part of cultural studies. Flotow is one of the leading feminist researchers. In her book 'translation and gender: translating in the 'Era of feminist' in 2004, she gave a comprehensive overview of the feminist perspective in translation studies. Based on the translation circles in North America and Western Europe, this book explores the influence of gender studies on translation practice and translation theory in the social and cultural context of the women's liberation movement in the west in the last 30 years of the 20th century. This is a very meaningful exploration of feminist translation studies by Flotow, which has brought profound influence on feminist translation studies. [1]

2. The brief introduction of the Book

The book is a seven-chapter book. In the first chapter, the author briefly introduces the background of feminist movement, the origin of gender in cultural concept, and the two major problems of "feminism and language" and "gender and translation". On the first question of gender and language, Flotow mentions the views of reformists and radicals and compared their views in detail. Reformers believe that our idioms are expressions of social development, and we should accept these idioms as long as these idioms have good intentions and these idioms develop or change according to our divivable ways. The radical view is that idioms are an important cause of women's oppression, and women should learn about their subordination status by learning idioms. [2]

In the second chapter, the author discusses the relationship between gender and translation behavior, and points out the profound influence of feminist thoughts and works on contemporary women's translation practice. She states that first of all, translators are willing to collect contemporary female works and introduce them into the language and culture which they represent, but in the process of translation, the language of works often cause a series of problems. For example, how to translate words related to "body" and how to transfer words with feminist color or special culture into the target language from the original text. In the translated version produced in this way, women no longer take the traditional image of "lovers", but participate in social life as

independent and self-sufficient women. Moreover, this kind of "body translation" breaks the audiences' expectations, even breaks the limit of their acceptance of body language in the environment at that time, and this kind of translation speaks out the words that buried in the original author's heart and the original author doesn't express. [3]

In the third chapter, the author focuses on the theoretical analysis, she puts forward the gender consciousness in translation behavior will redefine the understanding of the translator's "identity". In her opinion, the translator, under the influence of the original author, is bound to highlight the existence of "self" in the translation process and integrate personal "subjective creation" into the translation. The purpose of feminist translation theory which was considered as female rewriting is to make women visible. Translation theory reveals to us people's increasing gender consciousness and makes people pay attention to the translation effect of the translator's gendered processing behavior in the text. This kind of behavior often appears in the form of annotations and comments in the translation. By changing the traditional sexist metaphors (such as the translation of *les belles infideles* is beautiful pagans) and reinterpreting the mystery of translation (the Babel of language and the legend of Pandora's box), feminist theorists have raised political questions about language and cultural differences and the morality of translation. [4]

In the fourth chapter, the author studies many related translation criticism works, and discusses Simon Beauvoir's *the second sex*, Louis labbé's sonnets and Sappho's prose poetry translation. Diane Rael analyzes the works of Sappho, a Greek lyric poet, from the perspective of feminism, Sappho's works translated by Richard Lattimore. According to Flotow, Rael pays much attention to the translation of incomplete fragments in Sappho's works and thinks that Lattimore often rewrites the original text from the perspective of patriarchy. She also investigates the problem of retranslation of important texts such as the Bible, which led to the female rewriting of some standard texts. [2]

In chapter five, Flotow explores many criticisms on the perspective of feminist which reflects on translation and translation studies. According to the source of these criticisms, Flotow divides them roughly into two types, First, criticism from outside of the feminist academic community. This kind of criticism tends to take an "objective" approach to academic and writing and accuses feminist translations lack the objectivity which is necessary for academic research. The language reform advocated by feminism aims to achieve "gender neutrality", but it is questioned by such kind of criticism, which believe that the real reform should be the reform of social and political rather than the reform of language. The second type of criticism comes from the interior of feminism which studies ranges gradually enlarge, the approval of gender plays a key role. [2] Flotow condemns the bystander "feminist" in the field in this chapter, and praises the active participation of the internal members of the "feminist", because they "have the courage to face the cultural and political differences between women and women, and they are able to put forward their own questions to some extreme problems.

Chapter six and chapter seven are the end of the book, the author expects the future of gender and translation studies in research Angle, direction and development potential .In the end, Flotow looks forward to the development trend of feminist translation theory, and thinks that it may be further expanded in three aspects: "identity politics", " positionality " and "historical dimension".

3. Comments

The aim of the book is to broadcast a young discipline that lies between gender studies and translation studies, and the author wants to face readers on both sides of the Atlantic, the examples in the book mostly from North America and Western Europe. The content of the book is concise and the author tries to show us the revolutionary impact of gender issues on translation practice, translation history and translation theory in the past 30 years. However, due to the wide range and limited length of the book, some of Flotow's views are not deep enough. For example, some translations are not sufficient. And this book is based on translation studies in North America and Western Europe, the main points are also from the European translation field, which may lead to one-sidedness, for the book doesn't mention other areas and other nations, and Flotow seems to

consider gender as the main categories by feminist analyses and this category is only divided by the ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences existing among western women.

In spite of this, this book can be regarded as a masterpiece of feminist translation studies. Through her translation practice and translation theory, Flotow shows a young discipline that lies between gender studies and translation studies to readers. In her opinion, gender has brought a revolutionary impact on translation practice, translation history and translation theory in the past 30 years. In her view, a cultural environment which is favorable to female translation emerged in the 1970s during the women's movement, the movement brought gender into the realm of academic discussion and redefined language as a powerful political tool. From the perspective of translation studies, she provides us with a new perspective on translation, thus it greatly expands the horizon of translation studies. It also provides a comprehensive overview of feminist translation studies. Moreover, the feminist translation method proposed by her plays a good guiding role for those beginners.

4. Conclusion

The feminist translation theory advocated by Flotow overturns the traditional thinking of marginalization of translations and translators in translation theory, and confirms the translators' subjective status and the unique value of translated works, she also believes that translation is also a kind of creation, and advocates the use of a series of translation strategies and methods to "rewrite" the original text. Feminist translators are no longer satisfied with the "transparency" and "invisibility" required by traditional translation theories. Instead, various strategies are adopted in translation practice to highlight the status of women in the text and highlight the translator's feminist style in the translation. In addition, I think what post-colonial studies and what feminism studies have great similarity, feminism is to overturn patriarchal discourse power discourse, and it is a kind of theory which weak groups challenge authority discourse. In the same way, the post-colonial theory not only become the dialogue strategy between the third world and the first world, and makes the edge culture to rediscover itself and the future of national culture ". [5]

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