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## INNOVATIVE THINKING IN TRANSLATION THEORY: EMPOWERMENT OF TRANSLATION

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### Abstract

This paper examines some of the remarkable paradigm shifts that have occurred in the field of translation theory in the 1990s and the following decade. As such, it traces the innovative thinking on translation that has emerged during this period. The shift from essentialist views to nonessentialist thinking inspired by poststructuralism, especially deconstruction, is the first that captures attention. This has caused the binary oppositions such as original/translation, literal/free, alienating/naturalizing, etc., to lose ground and give way to new conceptualizations. The cultural turn in translation studies in the first half of the 1990s is an outcome of this paradigm shift. Moreover, the relations between translation and ideology, power, and identities have begun to hold a significant place in translation theory. Another important change has occurred in the thinking and discourse on the role and status of the translator and the ethics of translation.

**Keywords:** Empowerment of translation, translation theory, paradigm shifts, the role of the translator, deconstruction.

### Introduction

Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere observe that “The growth of translation studies as a separate discipline is a success story of the 1980s” (Venuti 1995: vii). In response to this observation, Rosemary Arrojo asserts that “if translation studies had not been radically influenced by non-essentialist notions of language and culture, it would not have become ‘the success story of the 1980s’” (1998: 47). This assertion is more visibly valid for the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century because during this very period the “non-essentialist notions of language and culture,” which were conceptualized by poststructuralist thinkers, have exerted a more prevalent impact on translation studies.

Indeed, innovative ideas that have empowered translation during this period have mostly come from poststructuralist circles, whose contributions have transformed translation theory importantly and led some other disciplines such as postcolonial studies and feminist studies to come up with their own translation theories. In connection with these developments, this period has also witnessed the opening of many translation programs all over the world, a proliferating interest in the subject of translation, and “a flood of scholarly publishing” (Venuti 2000: 333), which have all together led to the evolving empowerment of the field. Even such popular concepts of translation as “(in)visibility of translation,” “translation as (re)writing,”

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“authorial role of the translator,” “interventionist translation,” “translation as resistance,” “foreignizing translation,” “identity-forming power of translation,” “translator as agent,” and “translation as transformation and meaning production” indicate the importance translation has gained.

Obviously, these developments in the field of translation have led to remarkable paradigm shifts and as such they deserve to be studied deeply. Accordingly, I intend to provide a historical overview of some strands of this innovative thinking (with a focus on poststructuralist tendencies) in translation theory. With the advent of the cultural turn (or poststructuralist) in translation studies in the first half of the 1990s, translation began to be “frequently theorized as a cultural political practice that might be strategic in bringing about change” (Venuti 2000: 338). This naturally led to a competition between Descriptive Translation Studies and Cultural Studies, but recently this competition seems to have evolved into synthetic and eclectic approaches which consider descriptive and cultural perspectives inseparable and operating on a “a hybrid theoretical ground” (Calzada-Pérez 2003: 20). This indicates that many translation scholars and theorists have begun to consider translations not only as texts but as contexts and intertexts. In other words, the common view is that translations are not produced and consumed in a vacuum but within certain social, cultural, and political circumstances. This change in paradigm may be primarily attributed to deconstruction, which, I think, has influenced all postmodern approaches including postcolonial and feminist translation theories.

In line with Anthony Pym’s (1998) view that translation history should focus on significant changes that have a connection with translation, my paper will examine some important changes that have taken place in the realm of translation theory in this postmodern age. The first change that captures attention, as I have foregrounded above, is the one from essentialist views and dichotomies to nonessentialist and nonhierarchical thinking inspired by poststructuralism, especially deconstruction. This has caused the binary oppositions such as original/translation, literal/free, adequate/acceptable, alienating/naturalizing, etc., to lose ground and give way to new conceptualizations. Moreover, the relations between translation and ideology, power, and identities have begun to hold a significant place in translation theories. Another shift has occurred in the discourse on the role and status of the translator and the ethics of translation. The translation theorist that has been most influential in foregrounding the issues related to this shift is Lawrence Venuti. His concepts of “invisibility,” “foreignizing/domesticating translation,” “translation as resistancy,” and “ethics of difference” have brought a fresh vigor to the field.

Again under the influence of deconstruction, translation has begun to be considered as a decision-making process that requires responsibility. As such it is also a creative activity, a production rather than a reproduction. Interestingly, along with the task of the translator, the task of the translation scholar is foregrounded as well, and an introspective and self-critical perspective has begun to be adopted at the beginning of the new millenium:

As practising translators or scholars, it is vital for us to ‘deconstruct’ and expose the ideologies of ‘others’. However, it is of equal importance that we turn to the field of TS with a critical—and constructive—mind. It is only in this way that we will achieve real progress. (Calzada-Pérez 2003: 18)

#### **From Essentialist Views to Nonessentialist Thinking**

Rosemary Arrojo argues that “the only sound universal principle to maintain is exactly that of the refusal of any absolute universal” (1997b: 22). As a practising deconstructionist, her view is based on the deconstructive notion of language as an entity that cannot contain any essential meaning because meaning is not an essence *per se*, and it does not have an origin or beginning prior to language. It is “an effect of language, not a prior presence merely expressed in language” (Davis 2001: 14). In other words, there is not an absolute or transcendental relationship between words and concepts. A word cannot mean anything by itself but signifies only in relation to other words. That means there are no texts, but only intertexts based on some

other intertexts that came before. Again that means there are no writings, creations, and originals but only rewritings, recreations, and translations.

First of all, such a perspective has the potential to undo all the binaries in language that create artificial hierarchies pretending to be absolute essences. These pretentious 'absolute essences' are just illusions. As for translation, the hierarchical dichotomies between author/translator, original/translation (copy), faithful/unfaithful, etc., are merely textual constructions that may be easily deconstructed. They are grounded on:

the typically essentialist belief in the possibility of forever stable meanings and texts. It is such a belief which has allowed, for instance, the establishment of a clear-cut hierarchy between original writing and translation which usually attributes to originals and their authors all that which is denied to the translator's work and other forms of 'reproduction.' (Arrojo 2003: 166-167)

Because language is an arena of power relations where different ideologies, identities, and interests are in an incessant struggle to hold the status of truth in people's imagination, and because it shapes our thinking and behaviors, it may bring into being both ethical and unethical relationships. This applies to translation as well: "All language use is [...] ideological. Translation is an operation carried out on language use. This undoubtedly means that translation itself is always a site of ideological encounters (which often turn 'sour')" (Calzada-Pérez 2003: 2). An example for this would be the role translation played in European colonialism and imperialism, which I will examine under the section entitled "postcolonial translation theory."

According to poststructuralist thought, we cannot think or make sense of the world without language, and if everything that enters language is a socio-cultural construction, not a universal essence, then there are no texts which may be considered 'original,' but only intertexts produced in a specific historical context. That is why:

No single conception or law of translation can ever be unanimous, immortal or universal for the simple reason that it will always belong to a certain time and space and, thus, cannot avoid being a reflection of the circumstances, interests, and the priorities of those who formulate and accept it. (Arrojo 1997b: 10)

This argument draws on Derrida's idea that "There is nothing outside context" (Davis 2001: 9), which is evidently the underlying tenet of deconstruction. According to Derrida, the biblical story of the Tower of Babel is an indication of the non-essentialistic nature of language and meaning. To elaborate, the Shemites tried to build a very tall tower that would reach heaven and allow them "to make a name" for themselves. Both building the tower and making a name are attempts to reach a universal language that would secure an ontologically stable and absolute relationship between words and concepts. However, as the story shows, such a thing is never possible. Anything that enters language cannot be fixed or absolute. This points to the view that all concepts are always based on some other concepts that existed before. That means every concept has a history, and this history can be subjected to a genealogical analysis which brings about its deconstruction. Like a palimpsest, "every sign carries with it traces of all the meanings that have been attached to it in different contexts" (Koskinen 2000: 54).

Derrida states that "every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences" (Davis 2001: 13). Hence meaning comes out of the difference between signifiers. In other words, signifiers acquire meaning in relation to other signifiers and signifieds never become essences. There is always a before and after of concepts. This brings us to a notion that Derrida has conceptualized as *différance*, which simply suggests that meaning is produced only by signifiers—in an endless chain—which differ from and defer to each other. As Kathleen Davis rephrases Derrida's remarks, *différance* is "the spatio-temporal differential movement of language" (2001: 15).

Another fundamental notion in deconstruction is Derrida's observation that "the language we speak is already structured by the conceptual field of oppositions manifested in Western metaphysics" (Davis 2001: 17). The infamous binary oppositions that have become the indispensable building stones of Western philosophy are based on artificial boundaries pretending to be real. One member of the binary is deemed 'real,' 'absolute,' or 'present' and the other is considered as 'unreal,' 'supplementary,' and 'absent.' Deconstruction analyzes the relationship between the binary oppositions by interrogating their history, undoes the hierarchical structure extant, and indicates that binary oppositions are only contextual constructions. As Kaisa Koskinen observes:

Deconstruction, in particular, can be seen first and foremost as a continued project of dismantling the binary oppositions and revealing, maybe even celebrating, the ambivalence that modernity sought to suppress. In a sense, the key word of deconstruction is *pharmakon*, implying the coexistence of the cure and the poison in the same drug... . What is essential is not to reverse the hierarchy (even though the reversal is a necessary intermediate step in the process) but to accept the inseparability of the two poles. They only exist in relation to each other. (2000: 93)

Accordingly, even the distinction between the signifier and signified is constructed and institutionalized. However, since stability is important for Derrida, this distinction is a useful distinction because without it "No translation would be possible" (Davis 2001: 23). Moreover, "the division between 'original' and 'translation'" is also "constructed and institutionalized" (Davis 2001: 16). If we combine this idea with the view that meaning is not an essence, we may conclude that every act of signification is indeed a sort of translation. Lawrence Venuti, basing his conception of translation on deconstruction's non-essentialist definition of language and meaning, precisely advocates this perspective:

Both foreign text and translation are derivative: both consist of diverse linguistic and cultural materials that neither the foreign writer nor the translator originates, and that destabilize the work of signification, inevitably exceeding and possibly conflicting with their intentions. (1995: 18)

If the Shemites had been able to build the tower and make themselves a name, i.e., if meaning and the relationship between the signifier and signified had become absolutely fixed, there would be no need for translation. Thus, what makes translation possible is meaning's not being transcendental and ontologically determined. What is more: "The possibility of translation guarantees impossibility of there being only one, hegemonic version of history [...] Thus [...] translation ensures the possibility of an ethical relation between different cultures and languages" (Davis 2001: 4).

Derrida's lecture "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" is a deconstructive reading of the ossified Western discourse on the concept of translation. He does this reading through Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, which is a very suitable context for his argumentation because "everything in the play can be retranslated into the code of translation and as a problem of translation" (Derrida 2001: 183). He makes a "genealogical analysis" of the Western concept of translation by digging out the denotations, connotations, and hierarchizations that have been inscribed in its genes and that have made it an indivisible self-identity. Derrida, however, does not stop here. He propounds his own concept of translation, which he terms as 'relevant' translation. Relevant translation is not based on preconceived formulas but on decisions, and "the possibility of a decision depends upon its undecidability" (Davis 2001: 93). In other words, if one follows a previously established way of solving a problem, then "nothing is decided," but one can use his will power and discretion and can shoulder responsibility "only in the face of undecidability" (Davis 2001: 93). As such, relevant translation is connected with an ethics of difference which requires the translator to set up a responsible relationship with the other:

When a translator, or translating culture, reaches to translate a 'foreign' text, both the translator and the foreign become co-defined; they do not, as such, pre-exist this gesture. Each initiating gesture, specific of course to its historical moment, designates identities (i.e., the text, the translator, language, culture, etc.) that emerge through exclusions. That which is excluded in order for these identities to emerge is the 'wholly other'. The irreducibly foreign, then, does not lie waiting in the source text, but *becomes* with the conception of the translation. Only relevant translation in the deconstructive sense ... can respond—be responsible to this 'other', which by definition lies outside the translator's system of logic. The more translation reaches toward its obligation to the 'other', the more it resists totalizing forces that aspire to the annihilation of difference. (Davis 2001: 106)

A notion that captures attention in the conceptualization of Derrida's relevant translation is the term "aporias," which signifies the gaps or passages where decisions are made. To quote from Davis, they are "non-passages or impossible passages" (Davis 2001: 106). Perhaps, that is why, Derrida calls translation a "sublime and impossible task" (Derrida 2001: 174).

According to Derrida, the economy of relevant translation is based on two laws: property and quantity. The law of property aims to transfer all the denotations, connotations, and implications of a word or a text in translation, and the law of quantity aspires to achieve quantitative equivalence (in terms of the number of words) to the original (Derrida 2001: 180). Undoubtedly, it is almost impossible to find an exactly corresponding word in a language for a word with multiple meanings in another language. By the same token, it seems impossible to translate a text from one language into another keeping the number of words equal. Thus it seems that these two laws are absolute and cannot function by themselves alone. This naturally implies that they can only be meaningful when they get into a relationship, when they cooperate. I think, that is why, Derrida says, "nothing is translatable; nothing is untranslatable" (2001: 178). Again, that is why, he argues that relevant translation has "a certain *economy* that relates the translatable to the untranslatable, not as the same to the other, but as same to same or other to other" (Derrida 2001: 178).

Derrida seems to criticize those who have not been able to establish an appropriate relationship between these two laws of relevant translation. To illustrate, he observes:

To make legitimate use of the word *translation...*, in the rigorous sense conferred on it over several centuries by a long and complex history in a given cultural situation, the translation must be quantitatively equivalent to the original, apart from any paraphrase, explication, explicitation, analysis, and the like. (Derrida 2001: 179)

This brings to mind that people dealing with translation may have usually paid attention to the quantitative aspect of translation at the expense of the qualitative aspect, which signifies rendering all the possible connotations and meanings of a word. Thus while glorifying and elevating quantitative translation, the self must have excluded the other or what Spivak has called "rhetorical silences" (2000: 399).

Although "all translation implies an insolvent indebtedness and an oath of fidelity to a given original" (Derrida 2001: 183), i.e., although a translation is never complete and its debt is never entirely payable, Derrida seems to have produced a successful translation in terms of the economy of relevant translation. His translation of Hegel's *Aufhebung* and of Shakespeare's "seasons" in the clause "When mercy seasons justice" (from *The Merchant of Venice*) into the French word "relève" indicates how he has managed to translate a polysemous word from German and another one from English into an almost equally polysemous French word. As he discusses: "my choice aimed for the best transaction possible, the most economic, since it allows me to use a single word to translate so many other words, even languages, with their denotations and connotations" (Derrida 2001: 198).

In his essay "Des Tours de Babel," Derrida interprets the biblical story of the Tower of Babel in connection with Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "The Task of the Translator" and theorizes on some of "the so-called theoretical problems of translation" (1985: 175). The first thing that captures attention in his essay is the special emphasis he places on the proper name "Babel" and its translation "confusion," which coexist side by side in the story. The juxtaposition of a proper name and its translation (a common name) offers significant implications about the nature of language and translation, but before discussing these implications, I must make a few remarks about the story itself.

The story relates that the Semites' attempt to construct a tower that would reach the heavens and enable them to make a name for themselves has not reached consummation and is never to be achieved. YHWH does not allow them to fulfill such a dream by imposing his name "Babel" and confusing their language so that they cannot understand each other. As such, the story is "the translation of a system in deconstruction" (ibid: 166). In other words, YHWH deconstructs their tower (i.e., their language) which is still in the process of construction and is incomplete. As Derrida comments, "He punishes them for having thus wanted to assure themselves, by themselves, a unique and universal genealogy" (1985: 169).

The Tower of Babel seems to symbolize language because, just like the tower, language is forever incomplete. Neither the tower nor language can claim to have an essential nature. Moreover, to theorize in deconstructive terms, whatever enters language cannot exist as a self-identity in the language. It has to be divided so as to indicate its difference from the other and define itself vis-à-vis the other in a relation of difference. This, of course, always requires translation. Thus when YHWH's name enters language, it is immediately divided and confused and is in need of translation. That is why, we see the proper name "Babel" and its translation "confusion" side by side in the biblical story. YHWH's name, after it enters language, both deconstructs language and is deconstructed.

To rephrase the matter in different words, in order to make himself comprehensible, YHWH also needs translation, which requires him to put his name in language both as a proper noun and a common noun. As Derrida professes, "At the moment when he imposes and opposes his law to that of the tribe, he is also a petitioner for translation. He is also indebted" (1985: 184). The proper name points to untranslatability and the common noun, which functions as its semantic equivalent, signifies translatability. This means that YHWH "at the same time imposes and forbids translation" (Derrida 1985: 170). In other words, translation is both possible and impossible, both impossible and necessary.

In his reading of Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator," Derrida states that the source text is always in need of translation "even if no translator is there" (1985: 182). This requirement for translation is something inherent in the very structure of the text to be translated. In line with my argument on YHWH's need for being translated when he enters language with his name, Derrida propounds that "The original is the first debtor, the petitioner; it begins by lacking and by pleading translation" (1985: 184). Thus one can infer that a text's desire to survive eternally is inherent in its genes; therefore, it always begs for translation. According to Derrida's interpretation of Benjamin's essay, translation is something that complements the original. The original and translation complete and influence each other and grow together (Derrida 1985: 191). If the original pleads for a complement, this means that the so-called original "was not there without fault" (Derrida 1985: 188). In other words, the original was something already incomplete and it was itself a translation of another translation.

A prominent translation scholar whose work heavily draws on deconstruction and other poststructuralist approaches is Rosemary Arrojo. Inspired by the non-essentialist concepts of language and culture conceived by poststructuralism, Arrojo deconstructs approaches, views, and theories that pretend to be universal. What seems to underlie her ideas and occupy her agenda is, just like Venuti and many other translation theorists, her desire to empower translation. That is why, most of her work is not about translated texts but about translation

studies and the role of the translator. She criticizes descriptivist or empiricist translation scholars – whom she labels “modern translation scholars” – because she thinks they:

disregard not only the political implications of their argumentative moves but, first and foremost, the often asymmetrical relations of power that constitute translation and the transmission of culture and knowledge between different languages and people. (Arrojo 1997b: 12)

Hers is a self-conscious and self-critical perspective on behalf of translation which, to her view, still suffers from marginality and invisibility despite some considerable improvement. The cause of this marginality is related to the way translation and translators have been represented in language and literature. Thus what she deconstructs in the texts she examines is the discourse that revolves around translation. Considering the ideological nature of language, it is obvious that the notion of discourse is significant “because it joins power and knowledge together. Those who have power have control of what is known and the *way* it is known, and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998: 72).

Arrojo is aware that the essentialist discourse that is still powerful in many domains of life including translation imposes an unethical and violent relationship on the Other. It is evident that whoever defines or represents is more powerful than the defined or represented. Only when one defines oneself and gets others to accept this self-definition, one may get into a mutually disinterested relationship. Of course, such a thing is almost impossible because of the non-essential, contextual, and ideological nature of language. Maybe, that is why, Arrojo’s work is not innovative only because of her deconstructive practice, but also because she “disregards translated texts or extratextual evidence and bases her work directly upon the system of representations that informs T[ranslation] S[tudies]” (Calzada-Pérez 2003: 19-20).

To illustrate, examining Arrojo’s article entitled “Writing, Interpreting, and the Power Struggle for the Control of Meaning: Scenes from Kafka, Borges, and Kosztolányi” would suffice I guess. This essay is an innovative and creative reading of three stories by three different authors, i.e., Kafka, Borges, and Kosztolányi. In her reading, she mostly draws on Nietzsche’s deconstructive and non-essentialist views on language with the agenda of empowering translation as a creative activity that does not deserve to be what it is in the traditional sense. One of the Nietzschean concepts she mentions is “the will to power,” which signifies “the creative and procreative impulse of life” (Arrojo 2002: 63). She argues that this “will to power, masked as the will to truth, is also a will to construct” (Arrojo 2002: 64).

This immediately brings to mind the construction of the Tower of Babel (or language) which is eternally far from completion. Just as the Semites tried to make a name for themselves, to have a universal language whose words would have fixed meanings, and to own a property that would stamp their name on it as its sole proprietors, every writer and reader/interpreter wants to possess and control the meanings in a text. However, just as the Semites could not succeed in constructing and becoming the sole owners of the Tower of Babel, no writer or reader/interpreter can achieve being the sole possessor of the meanings in a text because language cannot reveal essences or intrinsic meanings. In other words, since all truths and meanings are constructed, anyone’s claim to proprietorship and originality is just an illusion.

On the other hand, according to Nietzsche, this illusion of possessing is what allows one to achieve a “sense of security” which “is only at the expense of denying one’s creative power of inventing and building concepts” (Arrojo 2002: 64). Thus, this complacency makes text producers believe that they are the only possessors of the “stable” meanings in their texts and that readers/interpreters can only reach these “stable” meanings without exerting any change on them. However, such complacency brings about the death of the creative faculties of these text producers. That is why, although authors have a perpetual desire to be the sole owner of their constructed meanings and try hard to protect them from intruders, they never stop producing new meanings and are ambivalently aware that they can never fulfill that desire.

After all, any text is written to be read by others, and any reading of a text, whether by the author or the reader, always inherently requires a new interpretation. As Arrojo maintains, "there is no text in itself apart from the activity of interpretation" (2002: 65). Moreover, since language does not contain essences, any reading or "all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated" (Nietzsche qtd. in Arrojo 2002: 65).

In the final analysis, what I infer from my reading of Arrojo's essay is that both writing and reading/interpretation/translation are in an incessant struggle and competition to have control over the meanings in a text. In such a context, Arrojo's below question makes sense: "is it ever possible for interpreters to be faithful to the authors or to the texts they visit?" (2002: 73). To express in deconstructive terms, if no origins or essences exist in language, the hierarchical distinction between original and copy/translation is not relevant any more. Moreover, interpretation/translation can no longer be seen as "an incurable disease" or "an unforgivable crime" (Arrojo 2002: 78).

Evidently, the main aim of Arrojo's work is to empower translation. For her a translation is meaning production (Arrojo 1997b: 19, 1997a: 31) and the translator has an "inescapably authorial task" (Arrojo 1997a: 28). The translator is the author of the target text and has an "authorial responsibility [...] in the production of culture" (Arrojo 1998: 25). In this sense, Octavio Paz's argument that we may make sense of the world only through translation is compatible with Arrojo's emphasis upon the translator's authorial role. Paz asserts that we are perpetually exposed to a proliferating pile of texts:

each slightly different from the one that came before it: translations of translations of translations. Each text is unique, yet at the same time it is the translation of another text. No text can be completely original because language itself, in its very essence, is already a translation—first from the nonverbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign, another phrase. (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 3)

Therefore, Arrojo argues that just like the author, the translator also has a function in repressing the perpetual "meaning proliferation that takes place in any act of interpretation" (1997a: 31). In line with her agenda of giving an authorial voice to the translator, she states that "the consciously visible translator should start to build a name, a "proper" name for him or herself" (1997a: 31). Such a translator will naturally "take responsibility for the texts he or she produces, as it is impossible to hide behind the anonymity of the ideal "invisibility" which has allegedly been given up" (Arrojo 1997b: 18).

#### **From an Ethics of Sameness to an Ethics of Difference**

Obviously, non-essentialist and nonhierarchical thinking has led to a consciousness about the violent and ethnocentric character of any kind of language production, including translation. The commonspread translational practice that favors the assimilation and domestication of difference with the pretext of fluency and transparency has served hegemonic cultures that propagated their own worldviews as universal. Therefore, with the advent of the non-essentialist notions of language and culture, translation scholars and theorists began to advocate and foreground an ethics of difference, which is based on the notion of respect and responsibility for the other. One of the pioneers of this development in translation studies is Lawrence Venuti who professes: "The ethical stance I advocate urges that translations be written, read, and evaluated with greater respect for linguistic and cultural differences" (1998: 6). His books *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995) and *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998) emphasize the necessity of establishing an ethical relationship with the foreign text which would not eradicate its difference and foreignness. As he points out:



Translation is a process that involves looking for similarities between languages and cultures – particularly similar messages and formal techniques – but it does this only because it is constantly confronting dissimilarities. It can never and should never aim to remove these dissimilarities entirely. A translated text should be the site where a different culture emerges, where a reader gets a glimpse of a cultural other, and resistancy, a translation strategy based on an aesthetic of discontinuity, can best preserve that difference, that otherness, by reminding the reader of the gains and losses in the translation process and the unbridgeable gaps between cultures. (Venuti 1995: 306)

Venuti also argues that a translation strategy he calls “resistancy” is necessary for “preserving” the difference of the foreign text. Two other terms he uses for his translation strategies are “foreignizing” and “minoritizing.” His stance, like that of all the other poststructuralist thinkers, is counter-hegemonic; therefore, he does not favor resistancy to only the dominant discourses and practices in the target language, but also to those in the source language. To elucidate his translation strategies, he utilizes Philip Lewis’s concept of “abusive fidelity,” which:

acknowledges the abusive, equivocal relationship between the translation and the foreign text and eschews a fluent strategy in order to reproduce in the translation whatever features of the foreign text abuse or resist dominant cultural values in the source language. (Venuti 1995: 23-24)

A significant notion directly connected with the ethics of difference and empowerment of the translator’s role is Venuti’s concept of “visibility.” After the publication of Venuti’s book *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* in 1995, this term became a key word of translation studies and translation theory. As Venuti points out, “under the regime of fluent translating, the translator works to make his or her work “invisible,” producing the illusory effect of transparency that simultaneously masks its status as an illusion: the translated text seems “natural,” i.e., not translated” (1995: 5). This is, of course, something that marginalizes the translator as someone who has no creative role in the production of translations. This concept of Venuti has had an extraordinary impact on the empowerment of translation, which was the main aim of his book: “The motive of this book is to make the translator more visible so as to resist and change the conditions under which translation is theorized and practiced today, especially in English-speaking countries” (1995: 17). Inspired by poststructuralist thinking, Venuti argues that the cure to the current invisibility of the translator is to recognize him or her “as an author” (1995: 311).

### **Post-colonial Translation Theory**

Venuti observes that “The 1990s witness a series of historical studies that explore the identity-forming power of translation, the ways in which it creates representations of foreign texts that answer to the intelligibilities and interests of the translating culture” (2000: 337). These historical studies have mostly come from the circles of postcolonial translation theory. Two of these that are widely referred to are Eric Cheyfitz’s *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonisation from The Tempest to Tarzan* published in 1991 and Tejaswini Niranjana’s *Siting Translation. History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* published in 1992. It is not surprising that postcolonial translation scholars problematize the identity-forming power of translation because it is the colonized and their descendants who have suffered most intensely from identity crises. Perhaps that is why Niranjana argues that “post-colonials already exist ‘in translation’” (1992: 186).

As the role of translation in the colonial experience and in the still continuing decolonization process was more widely recognized in the 1990s, it began to be studied and theorized more extensively by postcolonial thinkers and scholars. Postcolonial translation theory emerged as a result of this recognition. As Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi point out in *Postcolonial Translation: Theory and Practice*:

At this point in time, post-colonial theorists are increasingly turning to translation and both reappropriating and reassessing the term itself. The close relationship between colonization and translation has come under scrutiny; we can now perceive the extent to which translation was for centuries a one-way process, with texts being translated *into* European languages for European consumption, rather than as part of a reciprocal process of exchange. (1999: 5)

The first question that postcolonial translation theorists have tried to answer is how translation has constructed the identities of the colonizer and the colonized. Their common answer is that through translation colonizers have imposed their own forms of representation and discourses as universal truths. According to this system of representation and discourse, only colonizers were original, real, and civilized, and colonized peoples were the opposite. Therefore, colonizers had the right to define, translate, appropriate, colonize, and “civilize savages.” In such a context, “Translation [...] shapes, and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power” (Niranjana 1992: 2).

According to Eric Cheyfitz, colonialism began “in a central or primal scene from classical rhetoric: the scene in which an orator through the power of eloquence “civilizes” “savage” humanity” (1991: xx). This scene has been taken from Cicero’s *De Inventione* and is part of the cultural heritage of Western metaphysics which is based on hierarchical binaries and which has shaped the way colonizers thought and acted. Of course, this points to the ideological and contextual nature of language. Since the colonized were never given the right to represent themselves, but were always constructed and represented by colonizers, the subjectification and interpellation<sup>1</sup> of the colonized led them to accept the representation of themselves imposed by colonizers. The role of translation in the interpellation of the colonized has been illustrated by Niranjana with her description of the colonial situation in India (Niranjana 1992).

Within the framework of this system of representation, the notions of original and copy (translation) in the context of colonialism have an interesting history. Naturally, like some other binaries, these notions have been deconstructed by postcolonial translation scholars. As Bassnett and Trivedi state:

Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or ‘translations’ of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate. Moreover, being copies, translations were evaluated as less than originals, and the myth of the translation as something that diminished the greater original established itself. (1999: 4)

The emergence of the notion of original dates back to the early days of “colonial expansion,” which means it is “a relatively recent phenomenon” because in the Middle Ages “writers and / or translators were not troubled by this phantasm” (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 2). It appeared “as a result of the invention of printing and the spread of literacy, linked to the emergence of the idea of an author as ‘owner’ of his or her text” (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 2).

The second question that has occupied postcolonial translation theory is how to deal with the phenomenon of translation as it has operated as a discursive practice in the service of colonialism and imperialism. The widely shared approach is that translation must contribute to the current decolonization process in the face of the globally spreading neocolonialism. To do this, many postcolonial translation scholars argue that translation must be rethought and

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<sup>1</sup> Interpellation is a term coined by the French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser to denote the process by which the ‘ideological state apparatuses’ or hegemonic institutions of a society shape the subjectivity of its members ideologically or discursively. (Robinson 1997: 119)

reconceptualized. For instance, Bassnett and Trivedi propound that since "Translation has been at the heart of the colonial encounter, and has been used in all kinds of ways to establish and perpetuate the superiority of some cultures over others," we must "rethink both the history of translation and its contemporary practice" (1999: 16). Similarly, Niranjana believes that "the rethinking of translation" is "an important task" which "seeks to reclaim the notion of translation by deconstructing it and reinscribing its potential as a strategy of resistance" (1992: 6).

Thus what the postcolonial translator must do is to "*re-translate*," which is a "radical" form of "*re-writ[ing] history*" (Niranjana 1992: 172). This act of re-writing is grounded on "an act of reading" which may be linked with "what Benjamin would call "citation" and not an "absolute forgetting"" (Niranjana 1992: 172). This act of re-writing the colonial history necessarily involves subversion of essentialist thinking, and therefore, the re-written history will be "the history of resistance" (Niranjana 1992: 172). At the heart of this postcolonial practice of translation lies acceptance of "hybridity" (Niranjana 1992: 46), which involves not a seeking

for origins or essences but for a richer complexity, a complication of our notions of the "self," a more densely textured understanding of who "we" are. It is here that translators can intervene to inscribe heterogeneity, to warn against myths of purity, to show origins as always already fissured. Translation, from being a "containing" force, is transformed into a disruptive, disseminating one. (Niranjana 1992: 172: 186)

Thus, post-colonial translation theory and practice calls for translators' intervention and urges them to preserve and foreground heterogeneity in their translations. One of the strategies that captures attention here is defamiliarization of language. According to Bassnett and Trivedi, "By defamiliarizing the language, post-colonial writers [and translators] can bring readers face to face with the reality of difference, and call into question the supremacy of the standard language" (1999: 13). In this respect, Niranjana also proposes the strategy of not translating proper names because "colonialism's violence erases or distorts beyond recognition (as witnessed in innumerable colonial texts) the *names* of the colonized" (1992: 183).

An interesting postcolonial translation practice has come from the famous Brazilian translation movement called "Cannibalism". The pioneers of this movement are Augusto and Haroldo de Campos brothers who have advocated an extremely interventionist practice of translation believing that "Only by devouring Europe could the colonized break away from what was imposed upon them" (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 4-5). According to Haroldo de Campos, translation is like blood transfusion serving "the health and nourishment of the translator," who "is an all-powerful reader and a free agent as a writer" (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 5).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has also contributed to the postcolonial translation theory by both theorizing on translation and practicing it. In her essay "The Politics of Translation," she discusses the nature of the relationship between the translator and the text to be translated. Accordingly, when she propounds that "Translation is the most intimate act of reading" (Venuti 2000: 398), she asserts that there must be an utmost intimacy between the translator as reader and the source text. Only a translator who has managed to set up such a close friendship with the text will be able to "surrender to the text" (Venuti 2000: 398). She even implies that the translator as a reader should be like a lover of the text: "To surrender in translation is more erotic than ethical" (Venuti 2000: 400). However, this does not mean that she emphasizes the devotion of the translator to the source text. What she seems to be pointing out here is "the responsibility to the trace of the other in the self" (Venuti 2000: 397). In other words, in her view, "The task of the translator is to surrender herself to the linguistic rhetoricity of the original text" (Venuti 2000: 405). By "rhetoricity," she seems to mean whatever has been excluded from the text by the author. Otherwise, as she argues, "Without a sense of the rhetoricity of language, a species of neo-colonialist construction of the non-western scene is

afoot" (Venuti 2000: 399). Evidently, Spivak has a political stance toward translation, and this political perspective is prevalent throughout her essay.

Another well-known translation scholar and practicing translator who has brought innovative ideas to the postcolonial translation theory and Translation Studies in general is Maria Tymoczko. In her essay "Ideology and the Position of the Translator: In What Sense is a Translator 'In Between'?" (2003), she argues that translation, like any other text, is bound to have an ideology of its own. Moreover, since translation is a metatext, i.e., "a form of metastatement," it may have a doubly sophisticated ideology because it has to situate itself in response to the respective ideologies of the source text, the translator, and the target audience (Tymoczko 2003: 181-3). Does that mean that the translator occupies a position in between? Is such a thing ever possible? These are some of the questions she deals with in her paper. Apart from these, she asks why the image of the translator as someone in between is so popular and almost unquestionable in translation studies. She argues that this may have stemmed from the etymology of the word "translation," which has derived from the Latin term *translatio*, meaning "to carry across, transfer." The implication here is that meaning is something that can be transferred intact in a container or vessel called language by means of the translator functioning as the transporter between two cultures. Two other reasons that she puts forth are "the importance of the concept of *between* per se in poststructuralist thought" and "the physical dimension of interpretation" (Tymoczko 2003: 192, 195). It is interesting that as a postcolonial and poststructuralist thinker Tymoczko puts a critique to this poststructuralist notion of in-betweenness. Hers is a critical perspective that, according to Calzada- Pérez, attempts to deconstruct "all ideological messages" and supports the view that "TS would benefit from a constantly skeptical attitude towards (its own) pre-established ideologies" (Calzada- Pérez 2003: 20).

### **Feminist Translation Theory**

Non-essentialist notions of language and meaning have influenced feminist translation theory and practice as well. Their consciousness about the contextual and ideological nature of language, translations, and identities is an indication of this. Accordingly, referring to Simone de Beauvoir's famous aphorism "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman," Louise Von Flotow states that "...gender refers to the sociocultural construction of both sexes" (1997: 5). Being aware that patriarchal perspectives have shaped both the identity of men and women in language and in real life and that this has led to the marginalization of women and translations, feminist translation theorists and translators have engaged in deconstructing these perspectives. In this regard:

Radical feminist writing in the late twentieth century has been experimental in that it explores new ground, seeking to develop new ideas and a new language for women. Writers have tried out new words, new spellings, new grammatical constructions, new images and metaphors in an attempt to get beyond the conventions of patriarchal language that, in their view, determine to a large extent what women can think and write. (Von Flotow 1997: 15).

Like their post-colonial colleagues, feminist translators also implement a visibly interventionist practice in their translations. They examine the texts they will translate from a feminist perspective and unhesitatingly "make changes when the texts depart from this perspective" (Von Flotow 1997: 24). Again like postcolonial translators, they adopt a political stance that enables them to claim responsibility for whatever manipulative changes they make in their translations. As De Lotbinière-Harwood asserts, "My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women" (Von Flotow 1997: 29). Feminist translators usually make their political stance and gendered perspective visible in "the metatexts – the statements, theoretical writings, prefaces and footnotes that have been added to work published since the late 1970s" (Von Flotow 1997: 35). They also consider themselves as

(re)writers, and do not heed the hierarchical binary opposition that puts a writer in a superior position to a translator.

One of the projects that has been put into practice by feminist translators is that of "recovering 'lost' women translators" (Von Flotow 1997: 66). In this respect, substantial research has been done on lost women translators, and "since in many historical periods women were restricted to translation, a considerable number of 'lost' women translators have been uncovered" (Von Flotow 1997: 66). Another project is that of rewriting or retranslating existing translations. An example that attracts attention is the rewriting of the Bible. In such projects, the patriarchal language of (canonical) texts is revamped. To illustrate:

Terms such as 'brethren' or 'king' which have exclusively male referents have been replaced with more specific terms such as 'sisters and brothers' or more general terms such as 'monarch' or 'ruler'. The phrases 'women and men' or words such as 'people' or 'person' replace the generic 'man', depending on the context. (Von Flotow 1997: 54)

As it is seen, masculine nouns are replaced with neutral or plural nouns. All in all, feminist consciousness of gender and asymmetrical relations of power in language use have brought some innovative thinking to translation theory and practice in the period of 1990-2010.

### Conclusion

To conclude, this paper has explored how translation has become remarkably visible and powerful during the last decade of the previous millenium and the first decade of the new millenium. During this period, translation has become a worldwide academic field, and translators have emerged as responsible decision makers and (re)writers. Evidently, this has occurred as a result of the ascendancy of non-essentialist notions of language, meaning, and culture. Since such notions have largely come from poststructuralist circles, a significant part of the innovative thinking in translation theory has also come from poststructuralist translation theories.

Such innovative thinking has caused a debate between theorists in the domain of Descriptive Translation Studies and those in the field of Cultural Studies (or poststructuralist), leading to what Venuti (2003) calls "a double marginalization" of translation, but recently hybrid, multidisciplinary, and eclectic approaches have prevailed. Apparently, the increasingly shared view is the indispensability of "multidisciplinarity" which "encourages merging and fusion and abandons fruitless oppositions that impoverish research" (Calzada-Pérez 2003: 20). In addition, a more self-critical, introspective, and constructive understanding has begun to prevail in translation scholars' thinking and work, which points to a more promising future for translation.

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