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Translation as Crossing Borders

A Case Study of the Translations of the Word ‘Feminism’ into Chinese by the CSWS

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Setting the scenes

I have been translating feminist theories and Women’s Studies from English into Chinese since the late 1980s. Although I am aware of the difficulties posed by translating academic work from one language into another, such translation posed few problems for me until 1997, when two events happened that compelled me to rethink these issues. One was my involvement in discussions that centred on the translation of an article ‘Feminist Philosophy in China’ from Chinese to English, and then back again into Chinese. [1] The other was my participation in the debates about translating the term ‘feminism’ into Chinese in 1994 and in 1997, led by the overseas Chinese Society for Women’s Studies (the CSWS).[2] Both these events made me realise that in contemporary time of globalization, if we engage in a meaningful dialogue across the borders of languages and cultures, translation issues are crucial.

However, what puzzled me was what is it that we should be anxious about when doing translations. Is translation just a matter of 'looking for the right words' or is there something beyond words themselves? And if so, what, precisely is this?

In posing these questions as my entry into discussing the problem of translation, I found that there has been the remarkable development for the concept of translation which not only refers to discussions about the matter for semiotic processes in the area of translation studies, but also refers to debates on cultural translation in the field of Anthropology. Especially in the view of cultural translation, which helped me point a way out of my puzzlement, that is, any process of description, interpretation, and dissemination of ideas is always already caught up in relations of power and asymmetries between all kinds of borders of languages, regions and people (Asad, 1986; Niranjana, 1992; Costa, 2006).

In this paper, I will use the debates on translating the term 'feminism' into Chinese in the CSWS in 1994 and 1997, to examine the processes of translation. However, my focus is not on translation in the ordinary sense of the word, much less on its technical aspects. I regard translation as a process of negotiation entered into by 'translators', located in between different languages and cultures. Here, "in between" refers to that "space of translation where the self or one culture encounters, and, more importantly, *interacts* with an 'other' or another culture" (Dingwaney, 1995: 8). In this space, the dominant language and culture is interpreted, rewritten, inflected, subverted by the "natives" in their own accents.

The debates on translation of 'feminism' into Chinese at the CSWS

The Chinese Society for Women's Studies (CSWS) is the US-based feminist organization and a 'travelers' group. The CSWS was formed in 1989, when seven Chinese women students in various disciplines (history, sociology, comparative literature and American Studies) gathered to share their experiences of Women's Studies at the annual conference of Chinese historians in the United States.

From its outset, the goals of the society were clear: to promote the study of Chinese women in the international scholarly community; to promote scholarly exchange between women in China and their counterparts in other parts of the world, and to collaborate with feminist scholars and activists in China in order to promote Women's Studies in China.

Noting that some Chinese scholars did not call themselves feminist because they weren't familiar with the term, members of CSWS suggested that: "We find there is ambivalence and a lack of clarity about feminism and Women's Studies in Western countries on the part of Chinese scholars. Thus, more studies about Western feminism need to be conducted, and more exchanges between scholars inside and outside China should be initiated." (Zhang with Xu, 1995: 37)

Following this mission, the CSWS organised several projects introducing Chinese scholars to feminism and Women's Studies in the West during the 1990s. In 1994 and 1997, the CSWS also organised a group to write and translate into Chinese two books about Western feminism and Women's Studies. As a member of the CSWS, I was directly involved in these projects. There was much discussion and debating among CSWS members through letters and emails on how to translate the term 'feminism', the definition of its meaning, and the clarification of members' understanding of the contextual differences between doing

Women's Studies in China and the West. Let me refer to the discussion in 1994 and especially the online debate in 1997 as an example of how the CSWS saw the translation issues involved.[3]

(a) The 1994 Case

Perhaps the most important political metaphor in China during the 1990s was *Jie Gui* (connecting with the international track) which is based on the view that China had been an outsider of the international community for a long time; and when China returned to the international community, it had to change its gauge to fit the 'international track.' One of the major events in this process of '*Jie Gui*' was China's hosting the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW).

The Fourth World Conference on Women was an important event for Women's Studies in China during the 1990s, not just because many Women's Studies groups in china, and also the CSWS, used this opportunity as a way of making a contribution for Chinese women. The members agreed to work on a project which would result in publication of a book on Western feminist thoughts and the emergent discipline of Women's Studies, and chose one of the members, Dr. Bao, a historian at the California State University, as the editor.

When starting the project, we soon discovered that the problem we faced was the translation of Western feminist terminology. Dr. Bao suggested we try our best to translate as many word as possible on our own, leaving difficult words to be discussed when all the essays we had agreed to write had been submitted. In order to do our best, Dr. Bao looked at different strategies. She visited China to

consult on the problems of the translation with professors of English and also Chinese Women's Studies scholars.

A year later, as the project was approaching its completion, Dr. Bao accepted a suggestion from one of the CSWS members to compose a list of suggested terminological translations. This would be aimed at helping to gain uniformity in translation and so avoid unnecessary confusion by the readers of our book. She proposed that if a contributor's translation was different from the one suggested in the list, then both Chinese and English versions should appear alongside one another with a brief explanatory note.

With an encouraging number of responses, discussion on translations was started in connection with the Index of Terminological Translation (a list of suggested translations). In the memo, Bao set out the aim of the discussion:

> The discussion will not only help us to improve the quality of our work, but also help us to clarify our understanding of the contextual differences of doing Women's Studies in China and the West. (Bao, memo, 3/Oct/1994)

During the ensuing discussion, the most crucial translation was the term "feminism". The term feminism has a century long history in China. It was translated into Chinese at the turn of the twentieth century when it entered the country along with the suffragette movement. The original translation was '*nuquan zhuyi*' (women's power or rights + ism), denoting a militant demand for women's political rights reminiscent of the earlier women's suffrage movements in the West and in China. After the decline of the feminist movement in China, the women's movement took another and very different direction, one of advancing the

development of women's liberation through the political struggle of socialism. The identity of Chinese women thus came to be defined by the ACWF (All China Women's Federation) and other state organisations exclusively in terms of an official discourse on gender. Use of the term 'feminism' was rejected, 'forbidden' within this discourse from 1949, the birth of the People's Republic of China.

When feminist 'knowledges' travelled to China during the 1980s, the term 'feminism' re-emerged in Chinese Women's Studies discourses. The new translation proposed in the 1990s was *'nuxing zhuyi'* (femininity + ism), emphasising gender differences rather than women's rights, seen in China to have a richer set of cultural and political meanings than the earlier term. In circulation for a longer period in Hong Kong and Taiwan, it has been widely adopted in mainland China since the 1990s.

Even though the suggestion made was to use the translation *'nuxing zhuyi'* for the term 'feminism' in the Index, some contributors preferred the translation '*nuquan zhuyi'* instead. They emphasised that feminism in the Western context had been highly political and in a sense is grounded in the concept of 'power', and that *'nuxing zhuyi'* does not contain the whole meaning 'feminism' has in Western terms (Liu, Index, 1994). However, an opposite opinion was articulated, which emphasised that '*nuquan zhuyi'* is a branch of *'nuxing zhuyi'* , and that while the former way contain the political sense, the later conveyed the idea that women have created a ideological system, and included women's political struggles for their rights. One of the contributors thought that neither '*nuquan zhuyi'* nor *'nuxing zhuyi'* could explain the very rich meaning of feminism in the Western terms, and she suggested that one way to deal with this was that we should make our individual

choices, and specify these in writing to demonstrate the differences among us (Wang, letter, 9/Oct/1994).

What can be seen from the correspondence on the Index of Terminological Translation about the meaning of 'feminism' in a Western context is that the term 'Western feminism' somehow exists out there, and should be sought and grasped in its essence. It was surprising how anxious some of the contributors were during these discussions. I have known and used both of the proposed translations for the term "feminism' when involved in Women's Studies in China but I was never particularly concerned which one I used when translating into Chinese. In some context I chose to use '*nuquan zhuyi'* because of its original and established usage over many years, and its convenience for Chinese readers, sometime the use *'nuxing zhuyi'* was a requirement of editors. However, I thought that, whatever translation I used, the readers would understand more of what was meant in the context of the particular article. Furthermore, I thought that the problem that we faced in China in 1980s over the term 'feminism' was not *how do we translate it*, but rather *should we use it or not*? Perhaps, as Dr. Bao noted, there are fundamental differences between researching Women's Studies in China and in the West. In other words, there are the borders we need to cross, which are politics as well as cultures.

Now, we had to consolidate the group's differing opinions. Dr. Bao sent us a memo on 3 Oct. 1994, in which she suggested that, since the book, using the term *'nuxing zhuyi'* , was dependent on the preferences of the majority of the contributors, at this point we needed a democratic decision. She asked us to mail our lists to her, together with our opinions. With only three votes against, we decided to choose *'nuxing zhuyi'* intead of *'nuquan zhuyi'* for our book. The academic, intellectual and political problem was simply

decided by vote and the book was published by the Sanlian Publishing House in 1995.

(b) The 1997 Case

In 1997, with funding from the Ford Foundation, the CSWS organised another project on translation of feminist theory. More than twenty members of the CSWS got involved. The difference between this project and the 1994 one was that now most contributors could access and use email, so members could communicate directly with each other, rather than sending information only through the editor. As a result there were very heated arguments which involved us exploring important aspects of feminism in general.

As Dr. Wang, one of the translation project editors, mentioned in a letter, some contributors emphasised that the English term 'feminism' has very rich connotations and no one single translation or explanation in Chinese could do justice to such a complex phenomenon. Both *nuquan zhuyi* and *nuxing zhuyi* have limitations in being translated as 'feminism', and therefore the historical background should be acknowledged when the term is translated (Wang, email, 1997). In short, translation was being seen as the process by which the correct words are found to match the original meaning. The discussion began with two themes:

1. *Nuquan zhuyi* - a political enterprise and *nuxing zhuyi* - an academic term or an essentialism

Quite different from the new trend of translating the term of feminism into *nuxing zhuyi* in China, some contributors preferred

translating feminism as '*nuquan zhuyi*, understanding feminism as an engaged, political enterprise. While considering that this should be emphasised in the translation, they thought that *'nuxing zhuyi'* might be too weak for this (see Wei, email, 30 Apr. 1997). Other contributors, however, thought that *nuxing zhuyi* sounded more academic, and this might be why it is used in Taiwan, because the feminist movement in Taiwan started in academia on the basis of imported feminist ideas (Chau, email, 30/4/1997).

A member of the group, Chau, reviewed a number of articles on feminist history and also feminist dictionaries. From this, Chau commented that the problem is not defining feminism, but rather (literally) translating the word:

> Feminism is strange and unique to begin with in the West - I suggest someone look up the history of the word in a feminist thought dictionary. I suspect that like many 'isms' the word was first coined by someone who was against feminism and wanted to laugh at it by giving it a (at that time) ludicrous name: feminine and femininity are the very opposite ideas of feminism. So unless we want to assert a cultural feminist standpoint - arguing that because women are so different from men by nature we should have complementary social tasks though enjoying equal power/rights - we should avoid any term that suggests sex/gender essentialism. (Chau, email, 30/4/1997)

In the meantime, Wang discussed the origin of the term feminism with Karen Offen, a historian of European feminism. Offen's response to Wang was that "translating 'feminism' is always a concern - the best definition is something like 'a theory and practice aimed at ending the subjection of women to men'" (Offen,

email, 2/5/1997). It was helpful to understand more of the history of feminism in the West by looking at dictionaries and consulting experts, but this couldn't sort out the problem of translation. Thus the dialogue shifted to the context of China.

In order to show that *nuquan zhuyi* is also a political enterprise, Wang traced the history of feminism in China. She pointed out that at the beginning of the twentieth century feminist thought was being introduced into China. With knowledge of the suffragette movement in Europe and America, *nuquan zhuyi* became the prevailing term when referring to feminism, with men and women who claimed to be progressive and modern all eager to identify with *nuquan zhuyi*. But the question then arises as to why this term later became a label with negative connotations. According to Wang,

> The denigration and exclusion of *nuquan zhuyi* was an inseparable part in the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) construction of the myth that CCP was the only saviour to Chinese women. In this very sense, an insistence on the usage of *nuquan zhuyi* would constitute a political gesture that aims at deconstructing the CCP's hegemony of the discourse of women's liberation. (Wang, email, 30/4/1997)

But precisely why did *nuxing zhuyi* gain currency in the mid-1980s? Wang proposed that

> the discourse of femininity emerged in this period with complicated causes. One of them is that women scholars adopted an essentialised notion of women to challenge the dominant category of class. The term *nuxing zhuyi*, [...] coming from Taiwan, fitted well with their need at

> that time to emphasise women's essentialised characteristics and needs, [...]. (Wang, email, 30/4/1997)

Bao, the editor of the 1995 publication, disagreed with Wang on several points, asserting that the 'political gesture' in translating the term is actually problematic and will cause problems for Women's Studies in China.

> I agree that we need to emphasise the political edge of feminism in the contemporary context of China [...] which I believe is extremely important -- as we have already stated in our 1995 book. But this is, what is the cause of this loss of women's rights in China? [...]rather than simply focus on the loss of rights, which even in China today, not all women would define in exactly the same way, or agree to the reality that 'women are losing rights in today's China.' (Bao, email, 30/4/ 1997)

Another contributor, Xu, argued with Wang about the issue of essentialism in Women's Studies in China:

> Wang made excellent arguments to link *'nuxing zhuyi'* with the essentialist notion of women. However, I feel your labelling may be partially correct and may not properly analyse the diverse connotations of *'nuxing zhuyi'* in 1990s China. (Xu, 30/4/1997)

Important questions were addressed in this debate, including how do we understand the history of Chinese women this century? Can we use Western feminist ideas, such as those about 'essentialism', to label *nuxing zhuyi* in Chinese Women's Studies? How should we understand the fact that both Women's Studies scholars and activists prefer this translation?[4] Arguably, what is of most

consequence here is that the focus of the debate had shifted from the Western to the Chinese context.

2. *Nuquan zhuyi* - in the Western context? / *nuxing zhuyi* - in the Chinese context?

Su first raised this issue in a 1997 email:

> Personally I prefer the latter way, that is to use *nuquan zhuyi* throughout the book because this is what I understand what feminism is in the Western context and what the term now is generally understood in China, from what I know about the Chinese community in Women's Studies. My impression may be limited, though I have the impression that *nuxing zhuyi* has, as an underpinning, what some Chinese scholars want to define their 'feminism' as in response to Western 'feminism'. (Su, email, 28/4/1997)

What draws my attention here is that Su proposes that some Chinese scholars in China are defining 'feminism' as *nuxing zhuyi,* in response to Western feminism (*nuquan zhuyi*). That is, for her *nuquan zhuyi* and *nuxing zhuyi* are being used as dichotomies. Some contributors were worried that the use of *nuquan zhuyi* to denote Western feminism and *nuxing zhuyi* to denote Chinese feminism would emphasise a division between women and feminists created by the government authorities and some Women's Studies scholars, and also hinder Chinese women's dialogues with their counterparts in other parts of the world and so undermine the growth of feminism in China (Wang, email, 30/4/1997). In response to these points, for instance, Wang suggested that:

> [...] valorising *nuquan zhuyi* does not necessarily support the dichotomies between China and West (especially if WE do not use two terms to denote the two phenomena), but could be constructed as a challenge to the dominant discourse as well. (Wang, email, 30/4/1997)

Words produce *effects* rather than having intrinsic *meaning* (Rorty, 1989). Wang's statement perhaps implies that the translation used should be directed to producing particular effects in Women's Studies in China. Moreover, Wang's use of the capitalised 'WE', to emphasis that the CSWS occupies a decisive position in such cross-cultural exchanges, so constituting this 'WE' within a power relationship, a point I will discuss later.

Although some contributors to the book were concerned about this issue, they compromised, because it was important not only to see the differences but also the common ground shared with other women throughout the world:

> I would try to put the two together. This concern of mine is stronger than a couple of years ago because it seems this practice has been expanding in China. Although I am concerned about the essentialist connotation within the translation of *nuxing zhuyi,* I do realise the fluidity and complexity of feminism and plus the fact that Taiwan scholars and many Chinese scholars are using *nuxing zhuyi* to refer to their ideas. So in my translation, I used *nuquan/nuxing zhuyi*, as a compromise. (Zhang, email, 1/5/1997)

Zhang mentions here that Taiwanese and Chinese scholars are using *nuxing zhuyi* to 'refer to their ideas', and not just to

'dichotomise between China and the West'. Could her compromise between *nuquan zhuyi* and *nuxing zhuyi* leapfrog over the problem of 'dichotomies'? Due to limited time and knowledge at the time, we could not discuss this issue thoroughly by email, but we did agree that "It is extremely important to study the connotations of feminism in the different contexts of China and Taiwan, and also in Hong Kong before and after 1997." (Bao, email, 30/4/1997)

One contributor, Xu, explained her views about 'our' (the CSWS) position in this translation event:

> Feminism itself has diverse connotations in the West, historically and contemporary. Why should we standardise it in Chinese and in this book? If we intend to set up a standard in the theoretical development of feminism in China, I think that we are making a big mistake. Personally, I don't want to be part of it. [...] Wang mentioned that there have been different translations of the term 'feminism' in China but there is no one book containing different translations. Why cannot our book be the first one? (Xu, email, 30/4/1997)

Zhang responded here on a 'technical' note, justifying that contributors should reach an agreement to use only one translation for the reader's convenience, since it referred to the same term (Zhang, email, 1/5/1997). However, after such a heated debate, most contributors felt that keeping or rejecting the different translations in the book was no longer a technical issue, but rather involved choosing a metaphor which would emphasise the differences between feminism in the West and in China, and also the different understandings and diverse opinions of feminism in the CSWS. In fact, we finally reached an agreement, by majority

choice, to keep the different translations, and the resultant book was published by the Sanlian Publishing House in 1999.

From this experience, we can see that the CSWS was doing translation in the mode of 'crossing borders'. The discussion concentrated on the definition of the Western context, then moved to the Chinese context, and, in addition, emphasised the differences and diversity of feminism. This change, it seems to me, is due to the increasing contact between members of the CSWS and other women in China.

Rethinking the issue of translation

A year later, when I was going through these emails and letters again, one sentence caught my eye "[...] our discussion on how to translate the term 'feminism' is not a translation issue. It is a theoretical debate" (Xu, email, 30/Apr/ 1997). Why did Xu think our debate was not about an issue of translation? Perhaps she meant that our discussion about translation of the term 'feminism' into Chinese went beyond the old assumptions about what translation consists of, that was, a model of "language meets language". Indeed, debates within Translation Studies have shifted the key issue of translation away from 'what is a correct translation' to 'what do translations do, how do they circulate in the world and elicit response?" (Simon, 1996: 7). In this view, the translation has been understood as the issue of "philosophical, but also political, engaged in questions of language, discourse, ideological contradiction, and social conflict" (Venuti, 1992: 6). In this sense, the debate within the CSWS certainly was an issue of translation, in which the contributors were engaged in a difficult process of negotiation around the term 'feminism'. They employed all kinds of strategies, historical comparisons, theoretical interpretations,

linguistic examinations, to negotiate the meaning and function of the term.

Perhaps what we should learn from the debate concerns how we understand what is meant by translation. We used to think that translation was the processes by which we find the correct words to match the original words, so the original meaning can spread unchanged with the translation. However, in order to find the right term, we have to try to understand the culture of the original term, as its meaning is culturally based.

But we might get 'lost' in this exploration, because the more extensive this 'embedding' is, the more difficult it will be to find equivalents for terms and ideas from the 'other' culture. For instance, one of the CSWS contributors had looked at Karen Offen's work on feminism, and some dictionaries of feminist thought, and then proposed a new translation, *fujie sixiang* (liberate women+thoughts) as an alternative to the term feminism, however, even though she gave reasonable justifications for the new translation, no one took up her point, and I think one of the reasons for this was that the term *fujie sixiang* has been used by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for years, and it will have very particular connotations in China if we apply it to feminism.

It is clear that the translation of the term 'feminism' needs to involve a *continuous process of negotiation*. Meanings are not to be discovered simply by focusing on the linguistic statement against its contextual and conceptual backdrop. The question is not 'what does the concept mean within a culture alien to us?' but to what *extent* can we consider this concept equivalent or analogous to one which we can frame in our own terms? (Simon, 1996). Translators have to negotiate the meaning of the word within their accounts made and fashioned according to their value judgements.

And if we think seriously about such difficulties in the process of negotiation, the possibility of the cultural untranslatable of a term needs to be considered. With the translation of 'feminism', the two terms *nuquan zhuyi* and *nuxing zhuyi* are already in use in Chinese, and the context will guide the reader to choose the appropriate situational features. As Bassnett pointed out "The problem here is that the reader will have a concept of the term based on his or her own cultural context, and will apply that particularised view accordingly" (Bassnett, 1991: 33). Although some CSWS members argued that the translation *nuquan zhuyi* has a common ground, and should be used for Western feminism as well as Chinese feminism (cultural translatable), readers in China are still selecting *nuxing zhuyi* based on their cultural context. As ethnographies have shown that because feminism derives its theory from a practice grounded in the materiality of women's oppression, the political dimensions of the ethnographic text always already articulated to its employment in contingent, conjunctural translations of the other (Costa, 2006). Therefore, we have to recognise that feminist ideas, and even the word *feminism,* have always been different or controversial. In this case, the question whether those processes of translation tend simply towards assimilation and *reduction* to the identical or, on the contrary, are able to put forward the non-identical, which can only be done by keeping alive a relation of mutual tension and mutual strangeness (Ribeiro, 2004).

The idea of 'loss and gain' in Translation Studies could perhaps be useful here for rethinking the translation of the term feminism: "Once the principle is accepted that sameness cannot exist between two languages, it becomes possible to approach the question of *loss and gain* in the translation process." (Bassnett, 1991: 30) Concerns about 'finding the right word' are perhaps an indication that overseas Chinese scholars have spent so much time discussing what

is *lost* in translating the term 'feminism' from English into Chinese that what can be *gained* from this maybe should concern us more.

Translation is not a neutral activity but is culturally and historically embodied, marked by the translator's lexicon and values. Is it from their perspectives that the translators of the CSWS read and translated into Chinese? The translator is my next issue of concern.

Who are the translators?

If we stop treating translation as an invisible practice, the figure of the translator needs to come out from behind the shadows. Thus, one area in Translation Studies that has become very important is the study of statements about translation made by the translators, "By studying translator's prefaces we can learn a great deal not only about the criteria selected by an individual translator, but about the ways in which those criteria reflect views on the community at large" (Bassnett, 1991: xiii). We might like to know more about who is doing the translation, within what networks, and with what social effects.

In this case, who were the translators in the CSWS?

Most members of the CSWS were Chinese scholars or students living in America with a small number living in other Western countries. When the subject of 'Women's Studies' was opening up in China, during the mid 1980s, many members of the CSWS went to America and much of their knowledge of feminism and Women's Studies was gained there. In this sense, the CSWS members are located at the borders between cultures, politics and languages, thus their acts of translation have to cross these borders. This involves a new speaking position, in which the CSWS has carried out projects such as publishing translated feminist books,

organising workshops and conferences on Women's Studies and women and development. However - and here I would like to return to my earlier point about the 'power relations' which inform contemporary cultural exchanges - a different perspective on this would be that members of the CSWS are living in a first world country (US) and not a third world country, in consequence a notion of politics of location should be developed.

Some members of the CSWS argued that their diasporic position has marginalised them, but at the same time it has strengthened their potential to be a source of counter-discourses in China (Wang, Z., 1997). But there is also a more 'structural' way of thinking about the relationship between the diasporic and the indigenous or 'native' Women's Studies scholars. Here other members point out that:

> The 'native' may uphold the universality of Western experience with all sincerity, and the 'foreign/diasporic', saturated with the fear of the potentially unequal relationship proffered by their discursively defined location of power, may also zealously endorse nativism. Further complicating the situation is that in this era of 'globalising feminism', language and discourses developed at one location could be employed to an entirely different effect at another location. It should, therefore, come as no surprise if the already privileged claims to have been 'muted', and the muted continues to be muted in the discourse of 'speaking for the silenced' (Bao with Xu, 2001: 91-92).

As a US based feminist organisation involving in projects of 'travelling theory', the CSWS should be more critical of the power relationship of the knowledge production. As Mignolo points out,

"knowledge production is not detached from the sensibilities of geohistorical location and that historical locations, in the modern/colonial world, have been shaped by the coloniality of power. Scholarship, travelling theories, wandering and sedentary scholars, in the First or the Third World, cannot avoid the marks in their bodies imprinted by the coloniality of power, which, in the last analysis, orient their thinking" (Mignolo, 2000: 185-186). Indeed, most research projects since the early 1990s have been done through the collaboration of teams from the CSWS and the Women's Studies scholars in China, but the power relationship in the process of knowledge production has not been revealed until recently (Min, 1999; Bao with Xu, 2001). Most of these projects were credited to the financial, intellectual, and political support of the Ford Foundation, but it should be noted that Ford has its own agenda in promoting 'global feminism' and 'gender and development', and much more serious concern should be given to this issue. The dominance of America as a world power as well as the English language allows them easy access to resources as well as determining what should be translated. For instance, the CSWS was a very important element in the process of translating key works of gender theory into Chinese.

Not surprisingly, such outside influences have been overwhelmingly American in the case of feminist theory in English. Who can imagine contemporary Women/Gender Studies without the influence of that? By trafficking those US feminist theories and blocking the distribution of others, the asymmetrical distribution of knowledge has became wider. If debates about postmodernism and post-colonialism in Women's Studies in China are belated, then which other important feminist ideas have not yet travelled to China? Work by women of colour (even Americans such as Gloria Anzaldua, Angela Davis) have not yet been heard.

Women's Studies and feminist thoughts in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, India and Africa (not to mention Australian, Latin American feminism) go almost unheard in China. The power relationship behind this global flow of feminist ideas, publications and activism should be revealed and this is clearly one of the new areas of work that needs to be encouraged by the Women/Gender Studies in China.

Afterthoughts

By comparing the discussions in 1994 and in 1997 in the CSWS, we can see as a 'translating being', doing translation as crossing these borders. In 1994, the discussion concentrated on the definition in a Western context, but in 1997 a distinct change was apparent, in that most contributors understood feminism, not only as a Western movement but also in a Chinese context, and in addition the differences and diversity of feminism was being emphasised. This change, it seems to me, is due to the increasing contact between members of the CSWS and other women in China.

As Caren Kaplan suggested the "Underlying these compromises and negotiations is the recognition that political necessity, even urgency, requires the theorization of a meaningful tension between universal and particular, similarity and difference, and home and away" (Kaplan, 1996: 169). In order to make the meaningful tension between these 'borders', the next study on translation of the term 'feminism' should cross the 'border' of China.

After the 1997 project of translation, the new collaborative projects with local grassroots Chinese women had been conducted in the CSWS. The CSWS role was changing from introductory training

to participatory empowerment. The work was still a part of 'connecting with the international track', but instead of concentrating on the flow of 'globalising feminism' into China, the focus has now been on connecting with the 'local' track through dialogue between diverse groups of women. The most important factor here was the change to sharing feminist participatory principles with local partners. Based on these principles, the CSWS planning committee fully respected the local host's role in setting up the workshop program and inviting grass-roots women to the workshop. Local women's autonomy and ownership of the workshop evolved as a driving force to assure a successful project.

To understand the changes occurring in the CSWS during the 1990s, it is important to note Bao Xiaolan and Xu Wu's explanation:

"Like most of our cohort who received training in Women's Studies during the late 1980s and early 1990s, we had been influenced by the 'theory of difference', which emphasised the importance of recognising the diverse experiences of women in feminist interaction". (Bao with Xu, 2001: 91).

Experiencing feminist practice in China made some members of CSWS realise the importance of the theory of difference. They claimed that without realising the importance of understanding women's diverse experiences, they could not organise a workshop like that. It was the awareness of the unequal relationship of power in feminist interactions and the political of locations that led them to re-examine the relationship with their partners in China and create an intersubjective 'contact zone' at the workshop for all participants (Bao with Xu, 2001).

With the revolutionary developments in the Internet and communication and the growing body of transnational institutions, the conditions of traveling theory have moved faster and further forward than ever. Simultaneously, this somehow renders the border itself unstable and changing constantly. In this situation, the CSWS has to slow down the speed in crossing the borders and try to cope with this fast changing world.

Therefore, simply doing translation as crossing these borders is not enough for translators. The most important thing is having the ability to situate themselves on the border, In this sense, the function of the translator is not one of a "go-between", but of a "get- between', someone who does not simply bring and take, but who gets in the middle (Ribeiro, 2004) or access to a "middle way" (Iveković, 2005). Recognizing the borders and at the same time crossing the borders, is the ability we are looking for.

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process of translating the term 'feminism' in China". It will be published in the journal Interventions *(forthcoming).*

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[1] The article was written by Lin, Chun; Liu, Bohong and Jin, Yihong (1998) "China" in Alison M. Jaggar and Iris Marion Young (eds.) *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, Blackwell, Oxford. The first version of the article was written in Chinese and included some Chinese feminist viewpoints on Women's Studies in China. The English translation of this article was then changed to a more Western style in concept and writing in consideration of the understanding of Chinese Women by the Western readers. When this English version was translated back into Chinese, many Chinese women felt it no longer even sounded like Chinese. For example, the philosophical terms of "other", "orientalism" had not been used in Women's Studies of China during that time. More details about the repercussions of this article in Chinese Women's Studies circles are provided in Ferguson, 1997.

[2] In 1994, and 1997, the CSWS organised a group of members to write and translate two books about Western feminism and Women's Studies, to be then published in China. There was much discussion and debate between CSWS members through letters and emails on how to translate the term 'feminism' .

[3] Because I was not able to access the Internet at that time, I was unable to become involved in this debate in 1997, although I did receive copies of the email discussions by post.

[4] I do believe that some members in the CSWS did not fully understand the history of Women's Studies in China during the 1980s In that time, instead of learning from Women's Studies scholars and activists in China, they assumed that Chinese Women's Studies had adopted 'essentialism' since the 1980s and did not ask why. I have discussed this issue in my article (Min, 2005).