UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU

Unveiling *The Odyssey*

A Feminist Comparative Study of Three English Translations Concentrating on the Maids

Marika Masalin

BA Thesis

Department of English

School of Languages and Translation Studies

Faculty of Humanities

University of Turku

May 2024

This bachelor's thesis examines three English translations of *The Odyssey*, focusing on the portrayal of the maids that appear in the poem. Specifically, the translations by Fitzgerald (1961), Fagles (1996), and Wilson (2017) are analysed to compare their treatment of female characters and assess whether Wilson's translation can be considered feminist.
The study adopts a comparative approach, drawing examples from Books 16, 18, 19, 20, and 22 of the poem. These examples are analysed using a framework informed by Mills' (2008) categorisation of overtly sexist language and feminist translation theory proposed by von Flotow (1991).
The analysis reveals differences between Wilson's translation and the earlier two. Unlike Fitzgerald and Fagles, Wilson's translation avoids the use of sexist insult terms such as *slut*. It also uses a different approach when it comes to translating words associated with domestic servants, especially the maids. While Wilson's translation does not explicitly incorporate feminist translation strategies, its avoidance of overtly sexist language suggests a non-sexist approach to translation.
In conclusion, this thesis highlights the ways in which translations of classical texts can reflect and perpetuate gender biases. By examining specific examples and applying theoretical frameworks, it contributes to discussions about the role of translation in shaping interpretations of literary works.

Table of contents

1   Introduction

The classic epic, Homer's *Odyssey,* has been translated into English around sixty times the earliest translation dating back to the 17th century. After all this time, Emily Wilson is the first woman to translate this epic into English in 2017 (Hughes Gibson 2019, 36). Wilson's translation raised a question about feminism and feminist translation, likely influenced by her gender, and this was also a reoccurring question in interviews with Wilson.

In this thesis, the focus is on two aspects. Firstly, I will compare Wilson's translation to two earlier translations, Robert Fitzgerald's translation (1961) and Robert Fagles' translation (1996) in order to explore differences among the translations focusing on the maids that appear in the latter part of *The Odyssey.* Secondly*,* I seek to assess whether Wilson's translation can be constructed as a feminist translation, despite Wilson's indications that feminist translation was not her primary focus in the translation process.

To base my analysis, I will employ feminist translation theory attributed to the Canadian feminist translators and feminist linguistics, particularly Mills (2008). These frameworks can provide tools for studying the translations of *The Odyssey* critically, especially when, according to my knowledge, no feminist study has ever been made on these translations.

The Odyssey is a classic and while classics always discuss universal themes that stay relevant throughout time, *The Odyssey*'s world may at times appear obsolete or even strange to modern readers. However, I will consciously ignore this aspect as this paper's primary focus is on the translations. It is worth noting that I have not read the original Greek version as I lack proficiency in Greek.

2   Background

The background theories will be discussed here. Firstly, I introduce the feminist translation theory and after that, a categorisation for sexist language proposed by Mills (2008).

2.1   Feminist translation theory

Feminist translation theory usually refers to the feminist translation that started in Canada between the 1970s and 1980s (Castro and Ergun 2018, 126). According to von Flotow (1991, 72), feminist translation started as experimental writing that was aimed to "attack, deconstruct, or simply bypass" language that was perceived misogynist. In other words, it was a form of activism.

However, it is sometimes difficult or even impossible to pinpoint a place where a specific theory first emerges. Castro and Ergun (2018, 126) challenge Canada as the birthplace of feminist translation in their article but they also observe that the Canadian school of feminist translation were the first to self-proclaim the term *feminist translation*. They further note that the three influential books were published by Canadian scholars, Lotbinière-Harwood, Simon and von Flotow in the 1990s. Therefore, it is assumed that the Canadian school was also the first to describe and provide terminology for feminist translation theory.

In this thesis, when discussing feminist translation theory, the focus is primarily on the Canadian school, acknowledging the broader existence of feminist translation beyond Canada, as Castro and Ergun (2018, 129) note.

2.2   Feminist translation strategies

Canadian feminist translators, particularly von Flotow (1991) devised strategies for translation. Von Flotow lists the main strategies as *supplementing*, *footnotes and prefaces,* and *hijacking* (von Flotow 1991, 74−80).

2.2.1   Supplementing

Texts rich in wordplay often require translators to be creative and go beyond literal translation to bridge differences between languages. This process is termed supplementing, and it employs wordplay, grammatical dislocations, and syntactic subversion (von Flotow 1997, 24).

In essence, supplementing entails compensating for techniques used in the source text in order to convey the original feminist meaning in the target text.

2.2.2 Prefaces and footnotes

In the feminist context, prefaces and footnotes serve as the translator's tools to comment on the feminism incorporated into the target text. Within the feminist translation theory, the translator is allowed an active, more present, and visible role within text enabling them to explain their choices and inform readers about elements in the original text that have been lost in translation (von Flotow 1991, 76). This practice stems from the understanding that the work of the feminist translator is part of feminist activism and is aimed at challenging patriarchy (Bozkurt 2014, 110).

2.2.3 Hijacking

Hijacking as a term might be misleading. Von Flotow (1991, 78) clarifies that she adopted the term from critique towards feminist translation. Hijacking entails the translator appropriating the text and adding "corrective measures" or "womanising" the text to render the feminine visible (Castro and Ergun, 128; von Flotow 1991, 79). For instance, if the source text employs generic masculine when referring to people, the translator may render this as *women and men* or use a gender-neutral pronoun (von Flotow 1991, 79).

2.3 **Sexism and sexist language**

To identify *sexist language*, it first has to be defined. According to *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories,* sexism encompasses social arrangements, policies, language, and practices that perpetuates the, often-institutionalised, belief that that men are superior and women inferior (Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories, s.v. "sexism"). For a more detailed understanding, Mills' (2008, 42 and 124) classification of sexist language is employed. This classification is divided into two categories: *overt sexism* and *indirect sexism.*

While overtly sexist language is often easily identified, typically using stigmatised words, indirectly sexist language presents a more difficult problem. This is because indirectly sexist language operates on the discourse level, making it less traceable to specific words. Speakers also may justify it as humour (Mills, 11−12). In this thesis, the focus will primarily be on overtly sexist language since it allows the comparison of word usage.

Mills provides the following categorisation for overtly sexist language. The first category is *naming* which involves using different words for women and men to describe the same sort of behaviour or the same qualities with the female version often carrying a negative connotation. For example, women can be described as feisty and men independent for acting the same (Mills, 43).

The second category is *dictionaries* as examples of "codification of language" that can institutionalise sexist terms. This implies that dictionaries may include words with sexist meanings without explicitly labelling them as such (Mills, 45).

The third category is termed *generic pronouns* or *nouns*, which simply relates to the use of masculine pronouns (such as *he*) or nouns (such as *man*) referring to both women and men. Despite the common use of generic pronoun in English when referring to groups of people, it still carries associations with men exclusively, which consequently renders women invisible (Mills, 47).

The fourth category is labelled *insult terms for women* encompassing insult terms that are directed at women such as bitch. While being similar with the concept of naming, the difference is that naming describes the process of calling men and women with different words and insult terms for women are always pejoratives that can only refer to women (Mills, 52).

The fifth category relates to names and titles although it can refer to other nouns as well. Over time, some words have undergone a process of semantic derogation, as seen in the definition of *mistress* that originally had the same neutral meaning as *master*, its male counterpart. The sixth and final category addresses name and title customs especially in the Anglophone world (although prevalent in other cultures too), where titles and surnames pass from the father and not from the mother (Mills, 61−62).

3 Material and Methods

In this section, the material and methods used will be discussed.

3.1 Material

The translations selected for this study are Emily Wilson's (2017), Robert Fagles' (1996), and Robert Fitzgerald's (1961) translations. While it would be intriguing to include more translations in this thesis, the word limit restricts it. The analysis will focus on the excerpts featuring the maids found in Books 16, 18, 19, 20 and 22. However, it is important to note that when studying *The Odyssey* for this thesis, I read the whole poem.

The translations examined in this thesis have been chosen based on two factors. Firstly, I aimed to select translations that have the status of being well-liked. This assessment is based on discussions on online platforms on Quora and Reddit where translations by Fitzgerald (1961), Lattimore (1965) and Fagles (1996) emerge prominently. Additionally, other translations such as Lombardo (2000) and Pope (1725) are mentioned on these platforms (Quora n.d; Reddit n.d.).

Translations like Fitzgerald and Lattimore have the advantage of time compared to newer translations. allowing them to gain more prestige over time. Additionally, being contemporary works, they can also be accessed digitally unlike Pope's, which may be more challenging to find as a physical copy or in a digital form. For example, I was able to find both Fitzgerald and Lattimore's translations on Google Books but not Pope's. Similarly, Fagles and Lombardo's translations are available on Google Books.

The second criterion guiding my selection of translation to study in this thesis was to ensure they spanned different decades, allowing each of them to stand independently. I also aimed to choose translations published moderately close to each other to ensure that they represented similar translation tradition and language style, facilitating comparison to the 2010s translation by Wilson. As a consequence, Pope's translation was excluded due to its age, while Lombardo's and Lattimore's translations were excluded since they were published too close to Fitzgerald's and Fagles' translations.

3.1.1 About the translators

While the primary focus in this thesis is on the language use in the translations, it is important to introduce the translators. Fitzgerald, a translator and a poet, was honoured with the Bollingen Award for his translation of *The Odyssey*. His other translations include *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles and *Alcestis* by Euripides (Poetry Foundation n.d.). Fitzgerald also translated *The Iliad* by Homer. He passed away in 1985.

Fagles, known for his translations of both *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer, also translated other ancient texts such as *Three Theban Plays* by Sophocles and *Oresteia* by Aeschylus. He passed away in 2008 (Penguin Random House n.d.).

Wilson, currently a professor at the Department of Classical Studies and Chair of the Program in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Pennsylvania has translated not only *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer, but also Seneca's *Six Tragedies*. She has also authored books on classics (The Department of Classical Studies University of Pennsylvania n.d.).

3.1.2 A brief introduction to *The Odyssey*

Given the focus on the maids, it is unnecessary to revise the complete plot of *The Odyssey*. However, for clarity and to facilitate understanding of the examples presented later in this thesis, a summary of the major events will be provided.

The Odyssey, often interpreted as a sequel to *The Iliad,* attributed to Homer tells the story of Odysseus as he returns home from the Trojan War. While Odysseus is still away, his wife Penelope faces the challenge of being courted by the suitors who wish to marry her and become the new king of Ithaca. To delay any marriage, Penelope promises to marry once she has completed weaving a shroud that she unravels each night. Meanwhile, Odysseus and Penelope's son Telemachus comes of age in his father's absence and waits for him to return.

The poem also features several domestic workers, known as maids, who live and work at the house. Some of the maids become involved with the suitors and once Odysseus returns, he and Telemachus hang these maids along with killing the suitors themselves.

3.2   Methods

In this thesis, the findings are presented through cataloguing and comparing differences found in the three English translations of *The Odyssey*. After reading all three translations, I collected examples involving female characters where the translations differed from each other on a lexical level. These examples were then reviewed, and those that included characters other than the maids, such as Penelope, were excluded. This was done to maintain a focus specifically on the maids throughout the analysis.

When all the examples had been collected, I organised them into tables categorised under the name of each translator. These examples were analysed according to Mills' categorisation of sexist language, as introduced in the Background section. The analysis of these examples serves as the foundation for examining Wilson's translation and its feminist implications, utilising feminist translation theory, also introduced in the Background section.

In the tables located in the Findings section, I follow the citation style outlined in the Style Guide provided by the Department of English at the University of Turku, which is based on *The Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition). However, on tables that can be found in the Findings I only provide the Book number and line(s) since the name of the translator is already provided in the header of each column. Each example is attributed to the translator under whose name it appears. In the text, when referring to the examples, I include the translator's name as well as the reference to the Book and line(s). Additionally, when providing context to the examples, I use square brackets ([…]).

4 Findings

Examples drawn from the translations will be presented here. I will discuss them under the categories introduced by Mills. Out of six categories, I will only utilise two as there were no examples available for the remaining four categories.

4.1 Insult terms for women

At this point of the poem, Odysseus has returned home but he is still disguised as a beggar, so the maids or Penelope do not recognise him. Before being scolded by Penelope, Melantho talks rudely to Odysseus who then threatens to let Telemachus know about Melantho's behaviour. In each translation, Odysseus insults Melantho but with different words. In Wilson's translation, he calls her a dog, in Fitzgerald's translation a slut and in Fagles' translation a bitch (see Table 1).

Table 1 Odysseus insults Melantho

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	You little dog! I will go soon and tell Telemachus what you have said so he can slice you limb from limb! (18.337−39)	You wait, you bitch − the hardened veteran flashed a killing look. "I'll go straight to the prince with your foul talk. The prince will chop you to pieces here and now! (18.380−83)	One minute: let me tell Telémakhos how you talk in hall, you slut; he'll cut your arms and legs off! (18.418−20)

Earlier in Book 18 before being threatened by Odysseus, Melantho is introduced. It is also revealed that she has been raised by Penelope and now sleeps with the suitor Eurymachus. Melantho is also the only maid who speaks in the poem and faces scolding from Penelope.

Table 2 Melantho sleeps with Eurymachus

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	But Melantho, unconcerned about	But despite that, her heart felt nothing for	Yet the girl [Melantho] felt

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	Penelope, was sleeping with Eurymachus (18.323−25)	all her mistress' anguish now. She [Melantho] was Eurymachus' lover, always slept with him. (18.366−68)	nothing for her mistress [Penelope], no compunction, but slept and made love with Eurýmakhos. (18.401−3)

Despite being threatened and insulted by Odysseus, Melantho continues to mock him. After this Penelope scolds her. In Wilson's translation, Penelope calls Melantho a "brazen, shameless dog" and in Fagles' translation she calls her a "brazen, shameless bitch". Fitzgerald does not use a word that refers to dogs and Penelope calls Melantho "shameless through and through" (see Table 3).

Table 3 Penelope scolds Melantho

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	You brazen, shameless dog! I see you! You will wipe away your nerve, Your grand audacity, with your own life. (19.91−93)	Make no mistake, you brazen, shameless bitch, none of your ugly work escapes me either — you will pay for it with your life, you will! (19.99−101)	Oh, shameless, through and through! And do you think me blind, blind to your conquest? It will cost your life. (19.110−12)

The word bitch appears also when Eurycleia, the nurse, washes Odysseus, still in disguise, in Book 19 of Fagles' translation. Wilson and Fitzgerald do not use this word.

Table 4 Eurycleia talks to Odysseus who is in disguise

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	I think the women slaves are mocking him as these bad girls	Just so, the women must have mocked my king, far away,	Stranger, some women in some far off place perhaps

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
	are hounding you. (19.372−73)	when he'd stopped at some fine house — just as all these bitches, stranger, mock you here. (19.420−23)	have mocked my lord when he'd be home as now these strumpets mock you here. (19.433−36)

In Book 22, Telemachus finds out that the maids have slept with the suitors and thinks they should be killed like the suitors have already been killed. In Fitzgerald's and Fagles's translations, Telemachus calls the maids sluts. In Wilson's translation, this word has not been used and Telemachus refers to the maids as girls (see Table 4). It is unclear where this word comes to the English translation, but Wilson (2017, n.p.) explains that the original Greek word that Telemachus uses when he hangs the maids translates into *those female people* not *sluts*.

Table 5 Telemachus speaks about hanging the maids

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	I refuse to grant these girls a clean death, since they poured down shame on me and Mother, when they lay beside the suitors. (22.463−65)	No clean death for the likes of them, by god! Not from me —they showered abuse on my head, my mother's too! You sluts —the suitors' whores! (22.488−90)	I would not give the clean death of a beast to trulls who made a mockery of my mother and of me too—you sluts, who lay with suitors. (22.514−16)

4.2 Naming

The Odyssey includes many unnamed female characters who work at Odysseus' house. They are primarily referred to as slaves or maids depending on the translator (and maids in this thesis as well). Wilson uses words like *slave girl, house girl*, simply *slave* or *girl* and *nurse* while Fitzgerald uses *maid, maidservant,* and *nurse* and Fagles uses a more diverse repertoire of *woman, maid, serving-woman, handmaid, waiting-woman, chambermaid* and *nurse*. Some

of these characters such as Eurycleia and Eurymedusa are named unlike maids apart from Melantho which suggests that they might be higher in hierarchy.

Wilson seems to consistently use only a few words that apart from *girl* and *nurse* refer to slavery (OED, s.v. "house girl", n.d.). Fitzgerald and Fagles circulate between words that according to OED refer to female servants that are employed to do their tasks, for example, clean the bedrooms in case of *chambermaids* (OED, s.v. "chambermaid" n.d.; OED, s.v. "maidservant", n.d.; OED, s.v. "waiting-woman", n.d.).

Table 6 References to female servants

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	the slave girls [washed them] (4.48)	women (4.56)	maidservants (4.53)
	a house girl (4.51)	a maid (4.59)	a maid (4.56)
	godlike Odysseus' girls (4.682)	King Odysseus' serving-women (4.768)	maids of King Odysseus (4.731)
	the loyal Eurycleia (4.741)	Eurycleia the fond old nurse (4.836)	the dear old nurse [Eurycleia] (4.793)
	[Princess Nausicaa's] slaves were sleeping (6.17)	two handmaids (6.21)	her maids (6.24)
	[Nausicaa's mother's] her house girls all around her (6.52)	several waiting-women (6.57)	her maids (6.58)
	her old slave [Eurymedusa] [lit the fire] (7.7)	her chambermaid (7.8)	her old nurse, Eurymedousa (7.9)
	Eurycleia, the nurse (17.30)	his old nurse (17.31)	old Eurýkleia (17.37)

To compare, some domestic workers are men. Some of them are named, for example, the shepherds Eumaeus and Melanthius and the gardener Dolius. Wilson also refers to Dolius

with the word *slave* in her translation and so does Fitzgerald. Fagles use the word *servant*. There is also a reference to a boy slave who is a *house boy* in Wilson's, a *squire* in Fitzgerald's and a *herald* in Fagles' translation.

Table 7 References to male servants

Translator	Wilson	Fagles	Fitzgerald
Example	old Dolius, my gardener, the slave that cares for all my trees (4.734−5)	Call old Dolius now, the servant my father gave me when I came, the man who tends my orchard green with trees (4.828−30)	old Dólios, the slave my father gave me (4.787)
	house boy [fetched the lyre] (8.256)	the herald (8.290)	a squire (8.270)

5 Discussion

I will elaborate my analysis on the examples that were introduced in the Findings section. This will be done in the same order as in Findings section and Mills' categories introduced under Background will be utilised.

5.1 Insult terms for women

In the examples, two insult terms appear: bitch and slut. These will be discussed in separate sections.

5.1.1 Bitch

Some insults are sexualised such as *bitch* (Mills, 52). According to Ashwell (2016, 235), *bitch* refers to a woman who is more boisterous, assertive, and self-concerned which is seemed inappropriate for women. This insult term is therefore considered misogynist because it is applied to women labelled as difficult.

Bitch, however, has another meaning. Although nowadays it is usually used as an insult, it also refers to a female dog (OED, s.v. "bitch" n.d.). Fagles may have used it in this latter sense, given that Wilson uses the word *dog* in her translation. According to Wilson, (2020, xxxvii), there was a Greek word that referred to dogs and was used as an insult. For instance, Odysseus also uses this word when he insults the suitors in Book 22 (Wilson, 22.37−38; Fagles, 22.38; Fitzgerald, 22.39). However, despite its association with female dogs, *bitch* remains a sexist insult and its usage perpetuates misogyny.

5.1.2 Slut

Slut appears less frequently in the examples compared to *bitch*. It is used by Fitzgerald and Fagles when Telemachus oversees the hanging of the maids, who are killed for having slept with the suitors. Describing the maids as sluts during their hanging constitutes sexist language since *slut* specifically refers to women (OED, s.v. "slut", n.d.).

The maids do betray their masters, Odysseus and Penelope, by engaging in relations with the suitors, who are their masters' enemies. Olson (1992, pp. 219-220) observes that workers in The Odyssey are expected to maintain loyalty to their masters or mistresses at all times, and

when they do so, they attain a status almost equivalent to their masters. Thus, in the context of the Homeric world, the hanging of the maids is comprehensible.

To underscore this point, Fitzgerald and Fagles may have opted to use *slut* to further emphasise the maids' betrayal. Additionally, since it is uncertain which source language Fitzgerald and Fagles have translated, it is possible they derived the word from their source texts.

However, *slut* does not appear in the original Greek version. In an article for the New Yorker, Wilson (2017) elaborates that in the Greek original the word Telemachus uses in this context translates to "those female people". Therefore, I argue that employing (and possibly importing) *slut* constitutes sexist language use in this context as it portrays the maids as if they had deserved their punishment due to their sexual behaviour.

5.2 Naming

Language is a carrier of ideas and assumptions (Cameron in Mills, 44). Consequently, reality is constructed, at least in part, by language use. Naming works as an important part of this process, as noted by Mills (44−45) and may subtly carry sexist undertones. For instance, when men and women are labelled differently although exhibiting similar behaviour. The sexism arises from the fact that the name (or word) for a woman is often negative while the name for a man is neutral or even positive.

In *The Odyssey* both female and male domestic servants are found, yet their naming varies slightly among the translators. As mentioned above, Wilson uses words such as *slave girl, house girl*, simply *slave* or *girl* and *nurse* while Fitzgerald uses *maid, maidservant,* and *nurse* and Fagles uses *woman, maid, serving-woman, handmaid, waiting-woman, chambermaid* and *nurse* for female domestic servants. For male servants, Wilson uses for example *house boy* whereas Fitzgerald uses *squire* and Fagles uses *herald*.

These words reflect a different social hierarchy. A *slave* denotes to someone who is property and performs unpaid labour unlike a *maid* who is a female servant (OED, s.v. "slave" n.d.; OED, s.v. "maid" n.d.). A *squire* serves as a personal attendant or servant (OED, s.v. "squire" n.d.). A *herald* holds the responsibility of making royal or state proclamations, and of bearing ceremonial messages between princes or sovereign powers" (OED, s.v. "herald" n.d.).

Interestingly, a *house boy* is also a servant or employee, not a slave in contrast to its female version a *house girl* who is a slave (OED, s.v. "house boy" n.d.; OED, s.v. "house girl" n.d.).

Wilson has explained her approach to translating titles in an interview where she discusses her decision to translate the original Greek word as *slave* (or a synonym such as *house* girl) instead of a *maid* to emphasise the presence of slavery in the Homeric world (Wilson in North 2017). However, this approach attracted critique. Whittaker (2020, 6–7) argues that Wilson misinterpreted the original Greek words and translated them as *slaves* despite their original, more versatile definitions such as such as *maid* and *herald*.

Wilson may have intentionally aimed to create a non-sexist translation by relegating all domestic servants to the same hierarchy as slaves regardless of their sexes. In contrast, Fitzgerald and Fagles have adhered to the source text, assuming Whittaker's critique is valid. Consequently, analysing the hierarchy among the domestic servants becomes impossible without reading the original. Additionally, it remains uncertain whether Fitzgerald's and Fagles' approach constitutes "naming," as the different job titles assigned to servants could reflect variations in their duties rather than hierarchical distinctions.

5.3   Feminist translation strategies in Wilson's translation

In this thesis, I aim to answer the research questions presented in the Introduction. Firstly, I aim to examine the differences between Wilson's translation and those of Fitzgerald's and Fagles' translations regarding the use of sexist language. Secondly, I intend to study whether Wilson's translation can be classified as a feminist translation. While I have analysed the differences in the translations, I am yet to explore whether Wilson's translation incorporates feminist translation strategies introduced earlier.

Wilson's translation notably abstains from using insult terms unlike the other two translations. In addition, her approach to naming the characters diverges from that of Fitzgerald and Fagles. However, these differences do not align with the concept of supplementing, which entails compensating for the feminist wordplay lost in translation (von Flotow 1997, 24 and von Flotow 1991, 75). Given that *The Odyssey* is not a feminist text, a translation cannot supplement the feminism in the original text

Castro and Ergun (2018, 128) and von Flotow (1991, 79) define hijacking as "womanising" the text or, in other words, making the female visible. While Wilson refrains from using the

word *maid*, she consistently maintains the feminine in the text by keeping the sex of the slaves visible in the text. However, the sex of the servants is not invisible in the other translations too. Therefore, Wilson's approach cannot qualify as hijacking in the sense of bringing the feminine into the text.

Wilson uses prefaces. In the copy I use for this thesis, an introduction and a translator's note are included where Wilson elucidates her translation process when translating *The Odyssey*. Her deliberate omission of *bitch* and *slut* and reasoning for doing so may be considered a feminist act since she explains that she aimed to avoid importing modern sexism into the poem (Wilson, xxxvii and lxx). Wilson also employs footnotes throughout the translation to provide additional context for the reader. These footnotes do not specifically address her translation choices from a feminist perspective. Rather they clarify in-text references to *The Iliad* or other Greek mythology.

A feminist translator is permitted a more active role within the text (von Flotow 1991, 76) raising the question whether the translator consciously adopts a feminist approach in their work. Von Flotow (1997, 34) describes translation in the "era of feminism" as a process of rewriting gendered qualities and attitudes ascribed to women. This "era of feminism", as von Flotow (1997, 14) defines it, refers to "an era powerfully influenced by feminist thought". In this context, a feminist translation can be seen as a rewritten text in which what von Flotow calls "corrective measures" have been applied (von Flotow 1997, 34). Presumably, these "corrective measures" refer to feminist translation strategies. Thus, I argue that a feminist translation is inherently the product of a consciously feminist translator. Furthermore, it is more likely that a translator familiar with feminist thought would produce a feminist translation incorporating feminist translation strategies.

Wilson does not explicitly state that producing a feminist translation was her motive for translating *The Odyssey*. Instead, she aimed to produce a contemporary translation that follows the same metre as the original Greek poem while avoiding language that is overly foreign or pompous in style and stands as a modern translation with modern language (Wilson in Brady 2018). Given these factors, it appears that Wilson's translation lacks a feminist motive and does not employ feminist translation strategies, suggesting that it may not be possible to classify it as a feminist translation.

However, feminists have not only developed feminist translation theory but also studied and analysed language and linguistics through a feminist perspective. Mills and Mullany (2011, 156) note that feminists have argued against the use of sexist language and advocated for more positive and inclusive language such as replacing sexist terms with neutral ones. Sexist, gendered, insults such as *slut* are used to control women (Lees in Cameron; Cameron [1982] 1996, 136). Consequently, the perpetuation of such language sustains sexism. Wilson explains that she did not "import misogynistic language where the original does not have it" (Wilson in Brady 2018). Therefore, it can be argued that Wilson may have produced a non-sexist translation rather than a feminist one.

6   Conclusion

In this thesis, I have demonstrated how Wilson's translation differs from Fitzgerald's and Fagles' translations. Two key distinctions emerged. Firstly, Wilson's translation omits words such as *bitch* and *slut* unlike Fitzgerald's and Fagles' translations. Secondly, Wilson employs different words when referring to the maids compared to Fitzgerald and Fagles. While all three translators use varied wording, Wilson consistently labels the maids as slaves while Fitzgerald and Fagles label them as maids or a synonym of this word. This, however, has elicited critique towards Wilson.

To address whether Wilson's translation qualifies as feminist, I applied feminist translation theory, focusing on strategies such as supplementing, use of prefaces and footnotes, and hijacking. Although Wilson does not explicitly employ these strategies, her translation exhibits changes advocated by feminist linguists, such as the avoidance of sexist insults, rendering it non-sexist.

As a bachelor's thesis, this study is constrained by its length, limiting the inclusion of additional translations of The Odyssey. Future research could explore this topic further, potentially enriching the study. Additionally, I have not analysed the original Greek version of The Odyssey due to personal language limitations, but such analysis could offer a broader foundation for future research.

References

Ashwell, Lauren. 2016. "Gendered Slurs." *Social Theory & Practice* 42, no. 2: 228–39. Accessed 8 February 2024. EBSCO.

Bozkurt, Sinem. 2014. "Touched Translations in Turkey: A Feminist Translation Approach." *Momentum Journal* 1, no. 1: 104−124. Accessed 6 February 2024. https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/moment/issue/35620/396579.

Brady, Amy. 2018. "How Emily Wilson translated The Odyssey." *Chicago Review of Books.* Accessed 18 January 2024. https://chireviewofbooks.com/2018/01/16/how−emily−wilson−translated−the−odyssey/.

Cameron, Deborah. [1982] 1996. *Sukupuoli ja kieli.* [Language and gender] Translated by Riitta Oittinen et al. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Castro, Olga and Emek Ergun. 2018. "Translation and Feminism". *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics,* edited by Jon Evans and Fruela Fernandez, 125−143. London: Routledge. Accessed 23 January 2024. EBSCOhost.

Code, Lorraine. 2000. *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories,* 441. London: Routledge. Accessed 22 January 2024. ProQuest Ebook Central.

von Flotow, Luise. 1991. "Feminist Translation: Contexts, Practices and Theories." *TTR* 4, no. 2: 69−84. Accessed 23 January 2024. Érudit.

von Flotow, Luise. 1997. *Translation and Gender: Translating in the "Era of Feminism." Translation and Gender.* 1st ed. Vol. 2. Ottawa: St. Jerome Pub. Google Books.

Homer. [1996] 2006. *The Odyssey.* Translated by Robert Fagles. London: Penguin Books. Google Books.

Homer. [1961] 2007. *The Odyssey.* Translated by Robert Fitzgerald. London: Vintage. Google Books.

Homer. 2020. *The Odyssey: a new translation, contexts, criticism.* Translated and edited by Emily Wilson. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Hughes Gibson, Richard. 2019. "On Women Englishing Homer." *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 26, no. 3: 35−68. Accessed 25 January 2024. JSTOR.

Mills, Sara. 2008. *Language and Sexism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mills, Sara, and Louise Mullany. 2011. *Language, Gender and Feminism: Theory, Methodology and Practice*. London: Routledge. Volter Database.

North, Anna. 2017. "Historically, men translated the Odyssey. Here's what happened when a woman took the job." *Vox*. Accessed 23 January 2024. https://www.vox.com/identities/2017/11/20/16651634/odyssey-emily-wilson-translation-first-woman-english

Olson, S. Douglas. 1992. "Servants' Suggestions in Homer's Odyssey." *The Classical Journal* 87, no. 3: 219−227. Accessed 5 February. JSTOR.

Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford University Press. n.d. Accessed 18 January 2024. https://www.oed.com/?tl=true.

Penguin Random House. n.d. "Robert Fagles." *Penguin Random House.* Accessed 12 February 2024. https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/243445/robert-fagles/.

Penn Arts and Sciences. n.d. "Emily Wilson." *The Department of Classical Studies.* Accessed 12 February 2024. https://www.classics.upenn.edu/people/emily-wilson.

Poetry Foundation. n.d. "Robert Fitzgerald." *Poetry Foundation.* Accessed 12 February 2024. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-fitzgerald.

Quora. n.d. "What is the best English translation of Homer's Odyssey?" *Quora.* Accessed 11 January 2024. https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-best-English-translation-of-Homers-Odyssey.

Radsken, Jill. 2018. "New chapter for "The Odyssey" *The Harvard Gazette.* Accessed 23 January 2024. https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/02/woman−scholars−take−on−the−odyssey/.

Reddit. n.d. "Best translation of the Iliad/Odysseus." *Reddit*. Accessed 11 January 2024. https://www.reddit.com/r/classics/comments/vbhtln/best_translation_of_the_iliadodysseus/

Wilson, Emily. 2017." A Translator's Reckoning with the Women of The Odyssey." *The New Yorker.* Accessed 6 February 2024. https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-translators-reckoning-with-the-women-of-the-odyssey

Whittaker, Richard. 2020. "Homer's *Odyssey* Three Ways: Recent Translations by Verity, Wilson, and Green." *Acta Classica* 63, no. 1: 241−254. Project Muse. Accessed 12 February 2024.