

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: DOING FEMINIST TRANSLATION AS
LOCAL AND TRANSNATIONAL
ACTIVISM: THE TURKISH TRANSLATION
OF *VIRGIN: THE UNTOUCHED HISTORY*
AND ITS RECEPTION.

Emek Ergun PhD 2015

Directed By: Dr. Carole McCann, Chair and Professor of
Gender and Women's Studies

Feminist theories travel across the globe, activating political trans/formations on their multidirectional routes across geopolitical and historical borders. Yet, the geohistorical and textual specificities of such global mobilities have not received much scholarly attention. By offering a renovated form of Edward Said's traveling theory, so that it attends to the feminist translation and reception factors, this dissertation offers a theoretical and analytical model on global translational flows of feminist discourses in the hope of reducing the gap in the literature and encouraging more research on the subject.

The dissertation investigates the praxis of "feminist translation" conceived as a form of local and transnational activism drawing its ethical stance particularly from the feminist notions of self-reflexivity and interconnectedness. Built on an analysis of my Turkish translation of Hanne Blank's *Virgin: The Untouched History*, a popular feminist historical account of western virginites, the dissertation examines two key

aspects of cross-border traveling of feminist discourses: 1) the interpretive processes of feminist translation and the role of the translator's agency in these processes (as well as other major agents involved in the production of the Turkish book), 2) the receptions of the translated text in Turkey by feminist readers, studied both through a media discourse analysis and a complex reception study composed of reading diaries, focus groups, and in-depth interviews.

Comparing the U.S. and Turkey, two unevenly positioned cultures with different configurations of virginity, the dissertation discusses how a western book on women's sexuality was crossculturally mobilized to unsettle Turkey's virginity codes and what kinds of effects it generated within the country's feminist community. In doing so, the study illustrates that feminist translation has trans/formative power to intervene into the gender/sexuality (in this case, particularly virginity) discourses of the reception culture and reinforce the existing feminist endeavors against gender oppression. It also reveals that feminist translation facilitates the production and dissemination of feminist knowledges across borders and the creation of imagined transnational feminist communities by connecting writers, translators, and readers through such translational/transnational epistemological projects.