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# Ursula Le Guin as a Feminist Self-Translator

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## Abstract

The concept of gender has been mostly discussed within the framework of interlingual literary translation. In this study, we turn our focus to intralingual self-translation and examine the revised works of Ursula K. Le Guin. Guin revised and rewrote her own works of fiction and non-fiction not for linguistic reasons or publisher requests but for feminist concerns. Thus, in this study, we tend to refer to the revisions made by Ursula K. Le Guin as intralingual feminist self-translations. To this end, the alternative feminist worlds she has created in her works are examined as examples of feminist self-translation performances in the figurative sense. Then, Le Guin's fiction and non-fiction works, which have been intralingually revised by Le Guin herself, are studied. Some of her revisions are a direct result of the criticisms posed against the author, whereas some others originate from the rising feminist consciousness of the author. The novels and short stories examined from this perspective include *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) as the novel, which triggers most of the revision process, "Winter's King" (1969/2004), "Nine Lives" (1969/2004) and *The Earthsea Cycle* (*A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1970), *The Farthest Shore* (1972), *Tehanu* (1990), *Tales from Earthsea* (2001) and *The Other Wind* (2001)). The articles examined include the ones in different collections, namely *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (1989) and *The Language of the Night* (1989). Thus, it is believed that this study presents different perspectives for feminist translation studies and contributes to the controversial concept of intralingual self-translation.

**Keywords:** Intralingual translation, feminist translation, self-translation, feminist self-translauthor, Ursula Le Guin

## 1. Introduction

Feminist literary practices have been a fruitful field of study for translation studies particularly after the close interplay between gender studies and translation studies. The concept of gender in this context has been mostly discussed within the framework of interlingual translation, both from the perspective of theory and of practice. In this study, we turn our focus to revisions and editions performed for feminist purposes, which we label as intralingual feminist translation and examine the revised works of Ursula K. Le Guin, who is a well-known science-fiction author. The fact that Ursula K. Le Guin revised and rewrote her own works of fiction and non-fiction not for linguistic reasons or publisher requests but for feminist concerns made us think that her act is an intralingual feminist self-translation.

In order to clarify the concept of intralingual self-translation, it would be useful to focus on some of the studies within the field. For example, in her article entitled "Relocating Self-Translation from the Interlingual to Intralingual: Faulkner as a Self-Translauthor", Gülsüm Canlı[1] (2018) proves that the act of rewriting within the same language by the author herself/himself is an intralingual self-translation within the framework of Gideon Toury's (1995) descriptive translation studies. In her article, Canlı (2018) refers to the concept of "translauthor" used by Çulhaoğlu (2017) and defines the concept as "the person who authors and translates the same text" (p. 60). According to Çulhaoğlu (2017), Cervantes, the author of *Don Quixote*, is a "translauthor", since he is both the author and the translator. By taking this concept, Canlı (2018) coins a new neologism and introduces the American author Faulkner, she has studied as part of her corpus, as an "intr-auto-translauthor". Furthermore, as Canlı (2018) underlines when bilingualism is not put as a prerequisite in the act of self-translation, the interventions of the authors in their own works can also be considered within the context of translation studies. Thus, in reference to the terminology coined by Canlı (2018), this study aims to examine the rewriting practice by Le Guin as a feminist self-translation at the intralingual level through representative examples. Ursula K. Le Guin is considered as an intralingual feminist self-translauthor based on two facts. First, the figurative meaning of translation put forward by feminist translators and translation scholars needs mentioning. Within the context of feminist translation studies, the proposition that women constantly translate figuratively in order to exist in the patriarchal system offers us new perspectives. Feminist translators mostly explain the inferiority of women through this figurative meaning as the dominant discourse and/or language use is patriarchal in the existing world of literature. Based on this proposition, it can be claimed that Le Guin, as a woman author of science fiction, always translates from the patriarchal world. Secondly, referring to different

[1] It is also worth mentioning that Canlı's doctoral dissertation is particularly on this topic, too (see Canlı, 2019).

studies about intralingual translation and self-translation (e.g. Canlı, 2018; Baydere & Karadağ, 2019), her fiction and non-fiction works, which were intralingually revised by Le Guin herself, are examined. Some of these revisions were a direct result of the criticisms posed against the author, whereas some others originated from the rising feminist consciousness of the author.

Through representative examples extracted from Le Guin's fiction and non-fiction works, this study attempts to present different perspectives for feminist translation studies and contribute to the concept of intralingual self-translation.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Intralingual Translation

The concept of intralingual translation, which was first discussed by Roman Jakobson (1959) as one of the three categories of translation in his influential work, can be defined as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language" (1959/2000, p. 114). Jakobson's categorization is useful for framing the translation in a broader sense. However, he is also claimed to limit the concept of translation (see Berk Albachten, 2014; Korning Zethsen & Hill-Madsen, 2016 among others), since he only refers to interlingual translation as "translation proper".

Thus, researchers focusing on intralingual translation tend to come up with different definitions of the term. Some of them also suggest new categorizations for this type of translation (see Gottlieb, 2005). Building on Toury's (1995) approach to translation, Korning Zethsen & Hill-Madsen (2016) also put forward a new definition that can be more inclusive. According to them, since translation can be defined through three conditions, it is possible to discuss intralingual translation practices in the framework of "translation proper". These conditions can be summarized as follows:

> - A source text (verbal or non-verbal) exists or has existed at some point in time.
>
> - The target text has been derived from the source text (resulting in a new product in another language, genre, medium or semiotic system).
>
> - The resulting relationship is one of relevant similarity, which may take many forms depending on the skopos. (Korning Zethsen & Hill-Madsen, 2016, p. 705).

Considering the above-mentioned definition of translation, intralingual translation takes place each time a work is translated from a vernacular into a language, or within the same language. There are some well-known examples in this respect, such as the translation of Harry Potter books between British English and American English (Hatim & Munday, 2004, pp. 4-5). Other practices may include the attempts for using an updated language or modernizing an existing work (such as the efforts of Turkish authors with the Language

Reform in Turkey, for further research see Berk Albachten, 2014). It is also used for rewriting the text in the postcolonial context for ideological or political reasons as given both by Toury's (1995) definition and Berk Albachten's (2014) explanations.

Within the Turkish context, there are studies examining the intralingual translation practices mainly as an attempt to modernize the language and its relationship with the Turkish language reform (e.g. Berk Albachten, 2013, 2015) and the intralingual translation as, among others, a rewriting and editing practice (e.g. Birkan Baydan, 2011). According to these studies, the changes at both linguistic and stylistic levels in the new products can be considered as intralingual translation, which is useful in understanding the history and discourse of their time. So, the practice of intralingual translation is actually a translational activity that can be explained within the cultural, historical and political backgrounds. Considering the discussion above, it can be claimed that it is possible to label the revisions, editions, additions and omissions as intralingual translation practices, especially when the strategies applied in new edited versions are much more radical.

### 2.2. Self-Translation

Anton Popovic defines self-translation as "the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself [sic]" (1976, p. 19). In that sense, there are two works but only one author. Since author is the translator, and translator is the author, self-translations are said to be different from "standard" translations. Although Popovic (1976) has claimed that self-translation cannot be regarded as a variant of the original text but a true translation, some translation studies researchers make a distinction between self-translation and translation proper. First of all, faithfulness and alterations are the characteristics, which may distinguish a self-translation from a translation proper. These characteristics are closely related with the notion of authority, since an author of a text is assumed to have much more authority over the text when compared to translators. Thus, it is possible to detect the critical changes in the different versions of translations performed by self-translators. As Fitch (1988) has underlined, "readers tend to consider a translation done by the writer himself [sic] as closer to the original, more authorial and, consequently, more authorized" (p. 19).

Moreover, in self-translation, there is a blurred distinction between the original and the translation. In other words, two texts are "intrinsically connected" (Souza, 2006, p. 50). Thus, the author and the translator cannot be differentiated. Grutman and van Bolderen (2014) explain this act with the creation of different persona by the author/translators. According to them, "the self-translating persona often appears later on in a writer's career" and their persona in each language can also vary as in the case of "Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen

in Denmark, Jean Ray/John Flanders in Belgium, or Julien/Julian Green in France" (Grutman & van Bolderen, 2014, p. 324).

Self-translations are performed for different reasons such as "reaching readers in another language, improving one's language skills or refashioning one's identity" and maybe most strikingly to "avoid problems" (Grutman & van Bolderen, 2014, p. 326). Dissatisfaction by authors can be another reason for self-translating since they may not like the translation of their work or they may want to adapt their text based on their targeted readers. The power relations especially within the context of migration and post-colonial translation can also trigger the act of self-translating.

Although the concept of self-translation can be seen as a rather neglected field within translation studies, there are theses and articles focusing on different self-translating activities in Turkey. For example, there is research on the "interventionist" self-translation practice performed by Elif Şafak (e.g., Akbatur, 2017; Erkazancı Durmuş, 2014; Küçük, 2016); Halide Edip Adıvar's self-translation practices (e.g., Kürük, 2017, Yalçındağ, 2021); and power dynamics in self-translation exemplifying Erendiz Atasü's self-translation practices (Taşkın Geçmen, 2019). In addition to self-translating authors in Turkey, Turkish translations of self-translating foreign authors have also been the subject of different studies (e.g., Candan, 2019; Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt, 2013; Türkmen, 2021).

While all of the above-mentioned studies focus on the bidirectionality of self-translation, there are also several studies at the intersection between intralingual translation and self-translation (e.g., Baydere & Karadağ, 2019; Berk Albachten, 2014; Canlı, 2018, 2019).

In her work in which she introduces new concepts to translation studies, Canlı (2018) reconsiders the insistence on bilingualism in studies in the field of self-translation and examines whether it is a necessity or not. She analyses William Faulkner's work *Sanctuary* and its rewritten versions with Lefevere's rewriting concept (1992); and she discusses self-translation at the intralingual level and concludes that there is a need for new concepts and definitions in translation studies. By the same token, Baydere and Karadağ (2019) examine Reşat Nuri Güntekin's novel *Çalıkuşu* within the context of self-translation at the intralingual level and propose new terms. The terms of "intergenre self-translation", "intergenre-auto-translauthor", "direct self-translation" and "indirect self-translation" are proposed as a result of their analysis (Baydere & Karadağ, 2019; Baydere, 2021).

Considering that the intralingual translation and self-translation may be performed for ideological reasons, figurative treatment of feminist translation (that women are constantly

translating from the patriarchal language to the feminine language in order to express themselves) and intralingual translation performed for feminist concerns are worth studying.

### 3. Case Study: Ursula K. Le Guin as An Intralingual Feminist Self-Translauthor

In this part of the study, the identity of Le Guin as an intralingual feminist 'self-translauthor' and her revisions as intralingual feminist self-translation practices are examined. The revision practices mentioned can be observed both figuratively and intralingually. It is claimed that Le Guin figuratively translated her works from a patriarchal world into a feminist culture and she also performed intralingual self-translation when she revised her fiction and non-fiction works for feminist purposes.

To this end, the alternative feminist worlds she has created in her works, as examples of feminist self-translation performances in the figurative sense are briefly examined. Then, her fiction works, namely her novels and short stories, which have been intralingually revised by Le Guin herself are examined. The works examined from this perspective include *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) as the novel, which has triggered most of the process; "Winter's King" (1969/2004), "Nine Lives" (1969/2004) and *The Earthsea Cycle* (*A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1970), *The Farthest Shore* (1972), *Tehanu* (1990), *Tales from Earthsea* (2001) and *The Other Wind* (2001)). Last but not least, her non-fiction works such as her articles published in different collections, namely *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (1989) and *The Language of the Night* (1989), which Le Guin has also revised for feminist purposes, are analysed.

Ursula Kroeber Le Guin is a well-known American writer. She was born on October 21, 1929, in Berkeley, California (Bernardo & Murphy, 2006, p. 2). Her death in 2018 at the age of 88 caused great sadness among her readers as her works of science fiction and fantasy were highly admired. Le Guin won many awards with her works in the genre of science fiction, which is known as a male-dominated genre, and became a living proof that this male-dominated field can be used for feminist purposes.

According to Melzer (2006), science fiction has "always included women writers, and as a narrative style it is open to feminist appropriation" (p. 7). Creating different or alternative universes makes it possible for feminists to explore different scenarios and forms of gender together with "alternative sexual identities" (Bernardo & Murphy, 2006, p. 31). It is true for Le Guin that she has perfectly appropriated the science fiction for feminist purposes. Her feminist appropriation can be interpreted as an intralingual feminist self-translation in its figurative sense.

In the context of feminist translation studies, the proposition that women constantly translate linguistically in order to exist in the patriarchal system offers us new perspectives.

The figurative meaning of translation is seen as "[…] a topos in feminist discourse used by women writers to evoke the difficulty of breaking out of silence in order to communicate new insights into women's experiences and their relation to language" (Godard, 1989, p. 45). With reference to the idea that dominant discourse and language use is patriarchal in the existing world of literature, feminist translators figuratively employ the practice of translating in order to make the (sometimes implicit) literary oppression of women explicit.

Another analogy can be constructed between immigrant authors and feminist and/or female ones. Referring to Thiong'o's (2009) views about migrant writers, it can be said that some migrant writers who write in a foreign language are also self-translators, even though they are not performing interlingual translation as suggested by Jakobson (1959/2000) (for a case study see Erkazancı-Durmuş, 2022). Thus, feminist and/or female authors are also constantly translating from the patriarchal world into the feminist world in their works. This practice is very much like the practice of postcolonial and/or migrant authors.

Based on the ideas mentioned above, Le Guin can be considered as a translator who is always translating into patriarchal world because of being a woman. In her own words, Le Guin actually sees all kinds of writing as a form of translation. In January 2006 Susan Bernardo sent Le Guin a series of questions, which she generously replied (Bernardo & Murphy, 2006, p. 7). In her answer to one of the questions about the process of translation, she states:

> Sometimes I think all writing—poetry and narrative prose— is translation. As I said in the first note to *Always Coming Home*, "The difficulty of translation from a language that doesn't exist yet is considerable, but there's no need to exaggerate it." The 'language that doesn't exist yet' may be the language, the words, of your poem or story; you are translating them (bringing them across, literally) from nonexistence into existence. The difference between understanding another culture and understanding another person may be a difference of size, not kind. We all speak different languages and have to learn those of other people(s). To learn the art of translation. (Bernardo & Murphy, 2006, p. 7).

From a feminist point of view, it can be stated that women are always appropriating the language, which is mostly patriarchal, in order to express themselves. Le Guin also explains this issue in her speech at the Mills College as follows:

> I want to thank the Mills College Class of '83 for offering me a rare chance: to speak aloud in public in the language of women […] intellectual tradition is male. Public speaking is done in the public tone, the national or tribal language; and the language of our tribe is the men's language. Of course women learn it. […] we're already foreigners. Women as women are largely excluded from, alien to, the self-declared male norms of this society,

> where human beings are called Man, the only respectable god is male, and the only direction is up. (1989a, p. 115-116).

Moreover, she creates the alternative feminist worlds in her works, which can also be interpreted as an intralingual feminist self-translation practice. For example in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin, translating from the patriarchal culture, presents her readers with an alien planet, which is very different from the patriarchal world they live in. Le Guin created a genderless society in the novel. She wanted to see what was left when gender was eliminated. In Le Guin's words "whatever was left would be, presumably, simply human. It would define the area that is shared by men and women alike" (1989a, p. 10) (for further analysis of the novel from feminist translation studies perspective see Sancaktaroğlu-Bozkurt, 2018).

Susan Wood, the editor of *The Language of the Night*, also writes in her introduction to the collection: "The essays reprinted here are also translations, explanations of dreams" (1989, p. 6). Wood, echoing Le Guin's ideas, states that the fantasy and science fiction are actually translations of "an intuitive process, of an interior journey, into words" (1989, p. 10). Thus, it won't be wrong to claim that Le Guin has translated from the patriarchal world in her essays, articles, interviews, novels and short stories throughout her whole life.

In addition to the figurative meaning, intralingual self-translation practice can be discussed in Le Guin's works. The criticisms against *The Left Hand of Darkness*, one of the most prominent novels of the period, have actually triggered most of the process.

The novel was first published by Ace Books in 1969 and received the James Tiptree Jr., Hugo and Nebula Awards. It is known as a building block among feminist science fiction works with its experimental fiction and innovative style. Le Guin, who defined her novel as literary "thought experiment" (1989a, p. 9), has actually created "a social world based on alternative sexual physiologies" (Higgins, 2009, p. 77). She, thus, questions the traditional gender roles and used science fiction to interpret androgyny. The novel takes place on a planet called Winter and everyone living here is androgynous. The Gethenians can become male or female during each mating cycle, and this is something that humans find incomprehensible.

After writing the novel, Le Guin, who created a genderless society, was criticized for the masculine language she used and in particular for having used the so-called generic pronoun "he" in English, especially when talking about the androgynous Gethenians. While many critics regard the novel as an important feminist text, many have criticized Le Guin's use of this masculine language, and claimed that when trying to create a genderless society she

actually "eliminated the female altogether and presented nothing but a male society" (Bernardo & Murphy, 2006, p. 33).

After the criticisms against *The Left Hand of Darkness* mentioned above, Le Guin revised her short story, "Winter's King", which she wrote and published a year before she started writing the novel, and rewrites it, so to speak, by performing a self-translation. The story was originally appeared in a fiction anthology, namely *Orbit 5: An Anthology of Brand New SF Stories*, in 1969. Later, the story was published in Le Guin's short story collection, *The Wind's Twelve Quarters* in 1975 following the revisions. Le Guin changed all the so-called generic pronouns into "she" and only kept the male titles of "king" and "lord" the same. This change adds a new perspective to the existing patriarchal language in the story and makes it possible for us to refer Le Guin as an "intralingual feminist self-translauthor". In her "Foreword" to her short story collection in which she discusses the order of the stories in the collection, she states that "it is impossible; stories may be written in one year, not published until two or three years later, and then possibly revised, and which date do you use?" (1975/2004, p. ix). Thus, for Le Guin revising one's own works is not uncommon. She further explains her revisions in the "Foreword" and states that "the only stories that have been revised, beyond an occasional one word or one-sentence change and restitution of cuts and errors in the published versions, are: 'Winter's King' [...]; 'Vaster than Empires and More Slow' [...]; 'Nine Lives' [...]" (1975/2004, p. x).

In the note to the story of "Winter's King" (1975/2004), Le Guin explains the content of the revisions and her motivations. She explains the criticisms against her using the so-called generic pronoun "he" in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and explains how she hates made-up pronouns, "te" and "heshe" and so on (1975/2004, p. 93). She justifies her revisions through the following lines:

> In revising the story for this edition, I saw a chance to redress that injustice slightly. In this version, I use the feminine pronoun for all Gethenians –while preserving certain masculine titles such as King and Lord, just to remind one of the ambiguity. This may drive some nonfeminists mad, but that's only fair. (1975/2004, p. 93).

Some of the revisions can be seen in the following passage extracted from 1975 revised version of "Winter's King":

> Look first at the young king, a nation's pride, as bright and fortunate a soul as ever lived to the age of twenty-two; but when this picture was taken the young **king** had **her** back against a wall. **She** was filthy, **she** was trembling, and **her** face was blank and mad, for **she** had lost that minimal confidence in the world which is called sanity. (1975/2004, p. 94).

Thus, Le Guin prefers to use the pronoun "she" for "king" in this example, and she perfectly reminds the readers that the members of the society in the story are androgens.

In addition, after the criticisms about the so-called generic pronoun "he" used for the Gethenians in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Le Guin also invented pronouns in a screenplay of the novel written in 1985, even though she generally emphasizes her dislike against the invented pronouns. She explains the underlying reason as follows:

> I referred to Gethenians not pregnant or in kemmer by the invented pronouns a/un/a's, modelled on a British dialect. These would drive the reader mad in print, I suppose; but I have read parts of the book aloud using them, and the audience was perfectly happy, except that they pointed out that the subject pronoun, 'a' pronounced 'uh' [Ə], sounds too much like 'I' said with a Southern accent. (Le Guin, 1989a, p. 15)

Other short stories she revised include "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow" and "Nine Lives". She explains that in "Vaster Than Empires and More Slow", there appears "a cut in the first pages" (1975/2004, p. x), while in "Nine Lives" she fixed the minor changes made by the first publisher, *Playboy* magazine. "Nine Lives" was actually first appeared in *Playboy* in 1968, under the only pen name Le Guin has ever used: U. K. Le Guin (1975/2004). The editors politely asked her if they could use the first initial only and Le Guin agreed. Le Guin claims that "it was the first (and is the only) time I met with anything I understood as sexual prejudice against me as a woman writer, from any editor or publisher; and it seemed so silly, so grotesque, that I failed to see that it was also important" (1975/2004). Thus the revisions she made originate from this prejudice. Le Guin fixes the good many minor changes *Playboy* had made and prefers her version of the story and publishes the story under her unabridged name in the collection entitled *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*.

In addition to the changes on the pronouns and her (abridged) name, *The Earthsea Cycle* is another revised work for the feminist cause. These works may not be considered as direct intralingual self-translation practices. However, as the feminist concerns made Le Guin to take action, it is also worth mentioning here. *The Earthsea Cycle* (1968-1972) was intended to be a trilogy at first, which includes *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1970), and *The Farthest Shore* (1972). Yet, Le Guin continued publishing other novels as part of this cycle. *Tehanu* (1990) was actually released with the subtitle of "The Last Book of the Earthsea". However, *Tales from Earthsea* (2001) and *The Other Wind* (2001) followed the publication of *Tehanu*. She justifies herself about adding new books to the series as follows:

> When Tehanu was published I put a subtitle on it — "The Last Book of Earthsea." I was wrong! I was wrong!
>
> I really thought the story was done; Tenar had finally got her second inning, and Ged and Tenar were obviously happy-ever-after, and if I didn't know exactly who or what Tehanu was, it didn't bother me.
>
> But then it began to bother me.
>
> And a lot of things about Earthsea were bothering me, like do wizards really have to be celibate, if witches don't? and how come no women at Roke? and who are the dragons? and where do Kargish people go when they die?
>
> I found the answers to a lot of those questions in the stories that make the Tales from Earthsea.
>
> So then I was able to find out who Tehanu is -- and who the dragons are -- in The Other Wind, 2001. (*Ursula Le Guin Archive*, 2019).

Now the books of the *Earthsea* series include 7 works with the addition of the short story "The Daughter of Odren" in e-book format in 2014. As seen with the abovementioned examples, Le Guin rewrote her works or added new works into the series in order to express her ideas about feminism. Even though she was always translating from the patriarchal world, it is also true that she could not escape the patriarchy even when creating new worlds. Even though she tried to challenge the patriarchal norms by creating androgynous or matriarchal worlds, she realized that she was also under the hegemonic pressure of the patriarchy. However, she preferred making feminist appropriations later on.

As for her non-fiction writing, it seems that Le Guin felt the need to answer the criticisms against her using so-called generic pronoun "he" in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and seven years after writing the novel, in her article entitled "Is Gender Necessary?" she explained her ideas on gender. The article was first published in Aurora in 1976, which is the first science fiction anthology written by women, edited by Susan Anderson and Vonda N. McIntyre. In this edition, Le Guin attempts to explain why she has used the so-called generic pronoun "he" when talking about Gethenians. It was later published (in the United States) in 1979 as one of the articles in *The Language of the Night*. In those years, Le Guin was getting uncomfortable with some of the statements she made in it, and the discomfort soon became plain disagreement (Le Guin, 1989a, p. 7). Thus, Le Guin did "rewrite" her article in 1987, but she requested that the revised edition be published together with the first edition, keeping the old edition unchanged, highlighting appropriations she made in square brackets, and

commenting on the article[2]. The new version, entitled "Is Gender Necessary?/Redux" was published in the reprints of *The Language of the Night Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* and in the compilation of *Dancing at the Edge of the World Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*. Our discussion in the context of intralingual feminist self-translation will be drawn upon the background of the points above.

There are seventeen revisions in the article "Is Gender Necessary", ten of which are mentioned in this study. They are mostly related to Le Guin's changing ideas about feminism. Some of the revisions are briefly mentioned in the following table:

**Table 1**

*Revisions in the Article "Is Gender Necessary/Redux"*

| | **Is Gender Necessary?**<br>**1976 Edition** | **Redux**<br>**1987 Edition**[3] |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | [...] I didn't see how you could be thinking woman and not be a feminist; [...] (1989c, p. 135) | Feminism has enlarged its ground and strengthened its theory and practice immensely, [...] (1989c, p. 135) |
| 2 | [...] what as it is a "feminist" book [...] (1989c, p. 136) | Strike the quotation marks from the word "feminist" please. (1989c, p. 136) |
| 3 | [...] The fact that the real subject of the book is not feminism or sex or gender or anything of the sort; [...] (1989c, p. 136) | [...] "The fact is", however, that there are other aspects to the book, which are involved with its sex/gender aspects quite inextricably. (1989c, p. 136) |
| 4 | [...] So, the basic arrangement, I found, in every Gethenian community, is that of the kemmerhouse, which is open to everyone, in kemmer, native or stranger, so that he can find a partner. [...] (1989c, p. 143) | Read: .... So that they can find sexual partners. (1989c, p. 143) |
| 5 | [...] Just for example, I wish I had known Jung's work when I wrote the book: so that I could have decided whether a Gethenian had no animus or anima, or both, or an animum. [...] (1989c, p. 144). | [...] I quite unnecessarily locked the Gethenians into heterosexuality. It is a naively pragmatic view of sex that insists that sexual partners must be of opposite sex! [...] I regret this very much. (1989c, p. 144) |
| 6 | This rises in part from the choice of pronoun. I call Gethenians "he" because I utterly refuse to mangle English by inventing a pronoun for "he/she." (1989c, p. 145). | This "utter refusal" of 1968 restated in 1976 collapsed, utterly, within a couple of years more. I still dislike invented pronouns, but now dislike them less than the so-called generic pronoun he/him/his, which does in fact exclude women from discourse; and which was an invention of male grammarians, for until the sixteenth century the English generic singular pronoun was they/them/their, as it still is in English and American colloquial speech. It should be restored to the written |

[2] It is noteworthy that her revisions inspired and motivated an author to reconsider her work for changing the representation of the lesbian characters in her story, and she also kept the old version of her story and bracketed with an explanation of where she thought she had gone wrong (see Mohanraj, 2018).

[3] A revised version of the article was published in 1987. It should be noted that it was included in two different collections and one of these collections had both American and British versions. The pages we used when quoting here are the pages in the 1989 edition of *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* edited by Sarah Wood.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | language [...] (1989c, p. 145). |
| 7 | "He" is the generic pronoun, damn it, in English. (I envy the Japanese, who, I am told, do have a he/she pronoun.) But I do not consider this really important. (1989c, p. 145) | I now consider it very important (1989c, p. 145). |
| 8 | The pronouns wouldn't matter at all if I had been cleverer at showing the "female" component of the Gethenian characters in action. (1989c, p. 145). | If I had realized how the pronouns I used shaped, directed, controlled my own thinking, I might have been "cleverer". (1989c, p. 145). |
| 9 | [...] One does not see Estraven as a mother, with his children, [...] (1989c, p. 145) | Strike "his" (1989c, p. 145) |
| 10 | [...] in any role that we automatically perceive as "female": and therefore, we tend to see him as a man. (1989c, p. 146). | Place "him" in quotation marks, please. (1989c, p. 146). |

In the examples above, one can understand how Le Guin's ideas have evolved over time. Her definition of feminism has changed, thus she wanted to rewrite her own ideas. If her additions are regarded as a practice of self-translation, it can be thought that the most important reason for this is the sensitivity that Le Guin has developed over the years, as she herself stated. Le Guin, herself, explains her motivations for the revisions in her Preface to the revised edition of *The Language of the Night* (1989b) and states that "the changes I wanted to make were no aesthetic improvements, but had a moral and intellectual urgency to me" (p. 1). This quotation itself actually shows that her additions are more than basic adjustments, and they are performed out of feminist concerns.

Although Le Guin's major intervention in the 1989 reprints of *The Language of the Night Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* was to the article "Is Gender Necessary", as Le Guin states in her preface, she has changed the masculine pronoun "he" to plural "they", feminine "she", "one", "I" or "we" in every article in this collection. Thus, in addition to corrections and omissions, the principal revision involves the so-called 'generic pronoun' he. The point to which Le Guin draws our attention is valuable:

> The principal revision involves the so-called 'generic pronoun' he. It has been changed, following context, euphony or whim, to they, she, one, I, you or we. This is, of course, a political change (just as the substitution of he for they as the 'correct' written form of the singular generic pronoun –see the OED- was a political act). Having resistingly, reluctantly, but finally admitted that he means he, no more, no less, I can't let it stand in these essays, because it misleads. When I wrote in the early seventies about 'the artist who works from the center of his own being', I did not intend to refer to male artists only, still less to imply that artists are, or should be, male; but that is what the words say and imply. The existence of women artists is not (in the grammarians' cute phrase) 'embraced' by the male pronoun; it is (in the non-cute Argentinean usage) 'disappeared' by it. I was in fact disappearing myself in my own writing – just like a woman. Well, no more of that. (1989b, p. 2).

It is clear that she wanted to make these changes in order not to leave the world she created and to reflect how her ideas have changed over time. Le Guin's last words about her changing ideas in her preface to the revised version of "Is Gender Necessary" is meaningful: "I do very much hope that I don't have to print re-reconsiderations in 1997, since I'm a bit tired of chastising myself" (1989a, p. 7). This quotation explains her lifelong journey, which is not only personal but also cultural, political and ideological.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The revision practices mentioned above can be observed both figuratively and intralingually. It is claimed that Le Guin figuratively translated her works from a patriarchal world into a feminist culture and performed intralingual self-translation when she revised her fiction and non-fiction works for feminist purposes.

One of the main reasons for Ursula Le Guin's self-translation practice is the reaction she received after writing the novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Le Guin overhauled her work and put it in a new context in a way that would be better accepted by feminist critics. At the time when Le Guin actually wrote the short story, "Winter's King" and the novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and compiled her articles for the first time, second-wave feminism was just beginning to sprout. During this period, the relationship between gender and language was being discussed; so, there were justifiable reasons for her transformation.

We can also say that the changes were born out of personal motivations. Thus, Le Guin's decision was not only based on the criticism levelled against *The Left Hand of Darkness*, but also the higher gender awareness she has gained. Thus, when it comes to her works of fiction, she appropriated her own texts as in the cases of "Winter's King" and "Nine Lives" as a result of the rising feminist consciousness. As for why she rewrote her non-fiction pieces, the surprise and discomfort Le Guin felt when she realized that the use of "he" as a generic expression was a way of annihilating the presence of women altogether was a motivating force.

Le Guin feels the need to explain herself, and as time passes by and a higher level of feminist consciousness emerges, she begins to question the concept of feminism and its relation to language. The reasons that backup the need for the translation of the patriarchal style of language to a feminist style draw our attention in her interviews and speeches. This process also becomes explicit in the prefaces and footnotes penned by Ursula Le Guin in her works. For some scholars, Le Guin's attempt can be seen as an editorial practice. However, whether you label the practice as editing or intralingual feminist self-translation (which we prefer to use), the changes were more than just minor corrections for a new edition. The changes made by Le Guin were made for ideological reasons. In case at hand, the rewriting

process can be seen as rewriting of the self, and Le Guin can be defined as a feminist 'self-translauthor', while her revisions can be labelled as intralingual feminist self-translation practices. In conclusion, Le Guin's prefaces, footnotes, and interviews, all mentioned above, actually remind us that intralingual feminist self-translation can be seen as a lifelong journey for authors and most people.

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