

FEMINISM AND TRANSLATION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO TRANSLATIONS OF MARIAMA BÂ: *UNE SI LONGUE LETTRE (SO LONG A LETTER)* AND *UN CHANT ÉCARLATE (SCARLET SONG)*.

Title in French: FÉMINISME ET TRADUCTION: UNE ÉTUDE DE CAS DE DEUX TRADUCTIONS DES ROMANS DE MARIAMA BÂ: *UNE SI LONGUE LETTRE ET UN CHANT ÉCARLATE*

by

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A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree:

MASTERS IN APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES, OPTION TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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MARCH 2015

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this study:

DTS: Descriptive Translation Studies

ST: Source Text

TT: Target Text

SL: Source Language

TL: Target Language

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Naòmi Morgan, whose unwavering support and quest for perfection kept me focused at all times. She displayed a passion for my work and always encouraged me with her beautiful thoughts and words of encouragement. She made sure that each 'golden telephone' conversation left a huge impact and motivated me to forge ahead despite any writers' block I may have had. Most importantly, her incessant questions and constructive criticism made this research a huge success.

Not forgetting my able co-supervisor, Marcelline Massoua, whose words of wisdom and encouragement made me remember the prize ahead. In the most difficult situations, she was always willing to sacrifice a minute or two to listen and share her own experiences with me. Not to mention the countless times she has given me that extra push in the right direction. Special thanks also to Renée Marais for the soothing words of encouragement.

My profound gratitude also goes to my family, especially my mum who is my rock in good and bad times. I say a big thank you for being there for me every step of the way and hearing me talk about my research even when you knew nothing about my topic. Thank you again for the many prayers that kept me strong.

To my fantastic duo Uduak and Pamela, I say thank you for sharing this journey with me. You made this challenging mission worthwhile with the fun, laughter and many tears.

I remain grateful to God Almighty for blessing me with all these wonderful people and many others who made this journey meaningful.

ABSTRACT

This study consists of a comparative analysis of two novels (*Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate*) written by the famous female African writer Mariama Bâ and their English translations (*So long a letter* and *Scarlet song*) by Modupe Bodé-Thomas and Dorothy Blair. Mariama Bâ's texts shed light on the different ways in which African women are oppressed by tradition and religion deeply rooted in a patriarchal and post-colonial society. The story of her own life serves as a basis for an effective analysis of both novels in order to determine the extent of her Feminist orientation in her texts, as well as to evaluate the possibilities of female emancipation based on the choices made by her female characters.

This study further examines the translation strategies present in the English rendition of Bâ's novels. Translation involves conveying a message from a source to a target text in a manner that expresses the same message as the original. It also bridges the language and cultural barrier by facilitating understanding between different worlds. In translating Bâ's novels, the aim is to respect and convey her message of Feminism to an international non-Francophone audience. In order to evaluate whether the translations have achieved the objective of conveying her message, this study will attempt to analyse the translational choices made by each translator as well as to ascertain the success of those choices. This analysis is guided by existing Feminist translation theory. Emphasis is placed on Feminism in general and African Feminism in particular to ascertain Bâ's own Feminist orientation and how this impacted her writing. This is done firstly by giving a brief synopsis of the two novels. Subsequently, traces of Feminism are identified in both novels, followed by an analysis of the source texts. This is done by applying descriptive models outlined within the framework of descriptive translation studies to compare the source and target texts.

This study reveals that despite the many translation strategies that are available, literal/word for word and semantic translations are predominant in the English renditions of Bâ's novels. The use of these strategies differed in the two translations in question. While Bodé-Thomas preferred a more traditional, literal/word for word translation in her rendition of *Une si longue lettre* in order to maintain the simplicity of the text and preserve the African aesthetic¹ which is the essence and distinguishing feature of Bâ's work, Blair opted for a semantic translation which turned out to be an important strategy in her English rendition of *Un chant écarlate*.

Taking the different translational strategies used by Modupe Bodé-Thomas and Dorothy Blair as a case in point, this study proposes that since for the most part, Mariama Bâ's writing in a European language (French) captures the African content and form and portrays her Feminist beliefs in both her novels, the job of both translators is simply to carry over the same African content and form from the source language to the target language in a similar manner that expresses Bâ's Feminist beliefs.

Key words: Mariama Bâ, Feminism, African Feminism, Feminist translation, descriptive translation studies, post-colonialism, translation studies, autobiography, Dorothy Blair, Modupe Bodé-Thomas, source text, target text, *Une si longue lettre*, *Un chant écarlate*, *Scarlet song*, *So long a letter*

¹ A definition of the term African aesthetic requires an illustration of aesthetics. Aesthetics is derived from the Greek word 'aesthetikos' meaning 'sense of perception'. It embodies a set of principles concerned with the perception and appreciation of beauty. African aesthetics therefore represents the standards by which indigenous African societies assign value to their cultural productions, especially their expressive art forms such as music, literature, theatre etc. (Van Damme 1991:168-170).

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude comprend une analyse comparative des deux romans (*Une si longue lettre* et *Un chant écarlate*) écrits par l'écrivaine africaine de grande renommée, Mariama Bâ, ainsi que l'analyse des traductions des mêmes romans en anglais (*So long a letter* and *Scarlet Song*) par deux traductrices différentes, Modupe Bodé-Thomas et Dorothy Blair. Les textes de Mariama Bâ mettent l'accent sur les différentes manières dont les femmes africaines sont opprimées, soit par la tradition, soit par la religion profondément enracinée dans une société patriarcale et post-coloniale. La vie de Mariama Bâ elle-même sert de base pour effectuer une analyse efficace des deux romans afin d'illustrer la mesure de son orientation féministe dans ses textes ainsi que les possibilités d'émancipation féminine qui dépendent largement des choix faits par ses personnages féminines.

En plus, cette étude porte sur les stratégies de traduction dans l'interprétation anglaise des romans de Bâ. La traduction implique la transmission d'un message de la source au texte cible d'une manière qui exprime le même message que l'original. Elle comble l'écart au niveau de la langue et de la culture en créant la compréhension entre deux mondes différents. Alors, en traduisant les romans de Bâ, l'objectif reste de respecter et de transmettre son message de féminisme à un public international et non-francophone. Pour évaluer si les traductions ont réalisé l'objectif de transmettre son message de féminisme, cette étude tentera d'analyser les choix traductionnels de chaque traductrice pour vérifier le succès de ces choix. Cette analyse est guidée par la théorie de traduction féministe. L'accent est mis sur le féminisme en général ainsi que le féminisme africain en particulier pour vérifier la mesure de sa propre orientation féministe et la façon dont ceci influe sur son écriture. Cette tâche s'est accomplie premièrement en faisant un bref résumé des deux romans. Ensuite, les éléments féministes sont identifiés dans les deux textes, suivis d'une analyse des textes sources. Nous appliquons aussi les

modèles descriptifs soulignés dans le contexte de la théorie descriptive de la traduction, pour comparer les textes sources et cibles.

Nous avons découvert que malgré les nombreuses stratégies de traduction qui existent, les traductions littérales/mot à mot et sémantiques sont prédominantes dans les versions anglaises. L'utilisation de ces stratégies est différente dans les deux traductions en question. Alors que Modupe Bodé-Thomas préfère la traduction littérale/mot à mot dans le but de maintenir la simplicité du texte et de préserver l'esthétique africaine² qui forme la base et l'élément distinctif du travail de Bâ, Dorothy Blair de sa part a choisi la traduction sémantique qui est devenue une stratégie importante dans son interprétation d'*Un chant écarlate*.

Prenant les différentes stratégies de traduction employées par Modupe Bodé-Thomas et Dorothy Blair comme exemple typique, cette étude propose qu'étant donné que Mariama Bâ écrive dans une langue européenne (le français) qui capte le contenu et la forme africains et également représente ses croyances féministes dans les deux romans, la tâche des deux traductrices est tout simplement de transmettre le même contenu et la même forme africains de la langue source vers la langue cible conformément aux croyances féministes de Mariama Bâ.

Mots clés: Mariama Bâ, féminisme, féminisme africain, traduction féministe, théorie descriptive de la traduction, post-colonialisme, études de traduction, autobiographie, Dorothy Blair, Modupe Bodé-Thomas, texte source, texte cible, *Une si longue lettre*, *Un chant écarlate*, *Scarlet song*, *So long a letter*

² La définition du terme esthétique africaine nécessite une description du mot esthétiques. Le mot esthétiques se dérive du mot grec «aesthetikos » qui signifie « la perception ». Il comprend d'un ensemble des principes qui s'intéressent à la perception et l'appréciation de la beauté. L'esthétique africaine donc représente les normes dont laquelle les sociétés africaines autochtones attribuent la valeur à leurs productions culturelles surtout leur art expressif comme; la musique, la littérature, le theatre, etc (English translation by Itang Amissine).

INTRODUCTION

1. Background to research problem and choice of texts

Mariama Bâ is an iconic African woman writer who defied tradition by writing about social injustices and gender inequalities that plagued her society. Her two novels, *Une si longue lettre* (1980) and *Un chant écarlate* (1981), published before her premature death in 1981, symbolise Bâ's quest for a liberated society, one that sees all human beings as equals, as well as her desire to break the holds of patriarchy, with particular reference to female subjugation and racial inequality. My choice of Mariama Bâ is based on her reputation as an acclaimed writer and a female activist who defied a tradition that relegated women to the background. She is without a doubt one of the most read and respected African authors. Her unique writing style enabled her to produce two beautifully written and inspired novels. Bâ's novels are easily comprehensible as understanding the themes highlighted in the novels means situating oneself within the context, thereby leading to a better appreciation of the female conditions highlighted in both novels. The present study and analysis of her two novels will attempt to highlight aspects of Bâ's Feminism advocated by her novels without dismissing the specificity of the uniquely African experience and the different aspects that constitute culture in her writing (Ajayi 1997:48). Given the message contained in the French version of both novels, the translators are responsible for ensuring that Bâ's Feminist message in the two source texts is transferred to the target texts in order to create a similar effect on the target audience. The translators of Bâ's novels should aspire to reproduce in the target language the linguistic, cultural and Feminist elements which appeal to the readership of Bâ's novels. In other words, is it possible to convey the message from the STs to the TTs in a manner that truly represents Bâ's Feminism? Do the translators have to share her Feminist beliefs to produce an equivalent text? This research will attempt to provide insight into these questions.

1. Statement of research problem

Mariama Bâ wrote *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate* to convey the message of female liberation in a patriarchal African society. As an African Feminist, Bâ believed in the importance of the family for the well-being of society. Like other African Feminists, she did not condone male dominance and abuse in family relationships. As such, she expressed herself in a manner that highlighted the plight of subjugated women in Africa.

Given the acclaimed status of her novels, there was a need for a translation that would not only adequately portray the strength of expression of her ideas in the source language but also emphasize the accessibility of her novels to an international, non-francophone readership. The novels to be analysed during the course of this research are: *Une si longue lettre* (1980), translated as *So long a letter* by Modupe Bodé-Thomas in 1981, and *Un chant écarlate* (1981), translated as *Scarlet song* by Dorothy S. Blair in 1986. It would have been enlightening to communicate with the two translators to ascertain certain translational choices; unfortunately, despite various attempts to contact the publishing houses, it has proved impossible to access information about the background of the two translators. The commissioning editor, Lynette Lisk, responded by saying “there appears to be no record of an agreement with Modupe Bodé-Thomas given that she translated *Une si longue lettre* a very long time ago, while Dorothy Blair may have passed away in 1998” (An extract from my correspondence with the commissioning editor Lynette Lisk on 4th March 2013). Numerous researchers have conducted studies on Mariama Bâ’s novels but there is yet to be a conclusive study on aspects of Bâ’s Feminism and the rendition thereof in the translated text. As a result, a way forward could be to study both

translations to ascertain if the Feminist approach³ influenced their translation of Bâ's novels into English.

In order to accomplish the above, this study will investigate specific aspects of translation such as fidelity and equivalence from a Feminist perspective. The Feminist approach to translation has raised many concerns in the field of translation with regard to fidelity and equivalence. Feminist translators are of the opinion that translators play a far more active role in the creation of meaning, and as such the Feminist approach to translation tends to look at translation more from a cultural perspective than a linguistic point of view (Snell-Hornby 1990: 82). As a mediator between the source and target texts, the question is whether the Feminist translator should adhere to the conventional style of translating where the translator remains 'invisible', or should be 'seen' in the translated text? Being a passionate African Feminist, Mariama Bâ's focus was to highlight the idea of female solidarity as a means of realizing common goals.

On this note, this research will investigate the following questions:

1. Given the Feminist nature of Mariama Bâ's novels, were the translators able to produce equivalent English translations of the source texts, based on existing theories of translation?
2. Does the difference between African and Western Feminism have an impact on the translations of the source texts?
3. Are Feminist translators bound by a different code of ethics from non-Feminist translators?

³ According to Von Flotow, "this is an approach by which Feminist translators assert their identity and justify the subjective aspects of their work as a means of renouncing the subjugation of Feminist translators" (Von Flotow 1997b:2-3).

The intended research will respond to these questions by focusing on existing theories on translation studies.

2. Aim of study

The translations of Mariama Bâ's Feminist novels will be examined from the angle of Feminist translation studies. With reference to the history of translation, it is important to bear in mind that translation has been in existence since the birth of language, thus making their existence intertwined. Lynne Long (in Kuhiwczak and Littau 2007: 63-64) maintains that the evolution of language has seen both language and translation influenced by a number of external factors – socio-cultural and linguistic factors - thereby displaying a level of flexibility in both language and translation. This flexibility serves as a 'point of departure' for the development of various strategies such as Feminist translation theory. The 1980's marked a cultural turn with regard to translation, signifying a development of translation theory from equivalence-based theory to other theories such as gender studies and post colonialism, amongst others. This cultural turn also signified interaction between the language-related aspect of translation and the socio-cultural aspect of translation, such as Feminist translation theory, amongst others. Feminist translation theory not only put the issue of gender in the spotlight by subverting cultures of patriarchal hegemony of translation, but attempted to redefine the role of the translator. Feminist translation added singularity to translation studies especially with the introduction of a new approach that did not focus solely on translation, but also on the process of translation. This approach implied establishing new ways of expression that would recognise feminine gender in any given translation.

In accordance with my interest in Feminist translation studies, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine Mariama Bâ's novels and their English translations in relation to the cultural turn in

Translation Studies. Another purpose of this study is to examine the discourse on translation from a Feminist perspective and to determine the extent to which this approach has contributed to the nature of the translations of Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate*. Although both Modupe Bodé-Thomas and Dorothy Blair – translators of Mariama Bâ's novels – are contemporaries of the period when Feminist theory was introduced, they were not necessarily researchers or theorists and may not have applied Feminist theory to their translations of the novels. This hypothesis will be examined during the course of this study. Therefore, taking into consideration the quality and nature of Bâ's novels as well as their translations by female translators, this dissertation will attempt to understand if the translations are in accordance with Bâ's Feminist beliefs and how these beliefs are conveyed in the English translations of the two novels. This attempt will be executed by examining the traces of Feminism in Bâ's novels, and analysing the translations using Gideon Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) to ascertain if the translators were able to portray Bâ's Feminist ideas in their translated versions. With regard to the descriptive aspect of our research, the present study draws on the area of descriptive translation studies (DTS) in particular concerning a framework for the comparison of Mariama Bâ's source and target texts and the description of translation strategies used by the translators.

3. Delimitation of study

A complete analysis of every aspect of both novels will exceed the parameters of the research problem. Thus, the focal point will be to analyse aspects of Bâ's Feminism in the source texts so as to ascertain how these aspects are represented in the two English translations.

4. Structure of study

Following the above introduction to the study, the remainder of this study is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 is composed of an overview on the author and the novels to be used in this study. This chapter will also review the literary genres used by Mariama Bâ as a detailed discussion is required to understand her style of writing.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the existing literature on Feminism and Feminist translation theory. This review is necessary, considering that the study centres on Feminism and translation. This chapter will also provide an overview on the post-colonial era which serves as the socio-political context in which these novels were written. This overview will ensure a better understanding and more effective interpretation and analysis of the novels that constitute the foundation of this study.

Chapter 3 centres specifically on the method used in conducting this research as a means of underpinning the analysis of the literary and stylistic devices used in the texts.

Chapter 4 describes in detail the analytical framework and translation strategies adopted in this study. This is done by providing a synopsis of both novels as well as a detailed comparison of Mariama Bâ's source texts and their English translations. This analysis is done both at the micro and macro textual levels with appropriate examples from both texts to highlight and describe the strategies used in the transfer of Bâ's Feminist beliefs from the source to the target texts.

Chapter 5 presents and summarises the research findings contained in this study.

CHAPTER 1

1.1. BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

According to Siga Jagne (2004: [sp]), Bâ's life-story⁴ is a very important aspect in the study of her texts' as the latter is a mirror of her life, which greatly influenced her writing. Therefore, to gain meaningful insight into Mariama Bâ's Feminist orientation, it is important to reflect on her background. Born in 1929 into a Muslim family in Dakar, Senegal, Bâ was raised by her maternal grandparents after the death of her mother. Given her father's prominent status in society as a Minister of State, she started her education in a French school at a particularly young age while also attending a Koranic school. Due to the dominant nature of patriarchy in that society, few girls received formal education in comparison to boys. Society had little tolerance for women's opinions and their freedom of expression and association was controlled. Bâ was born in an era when female children faced numerous obstacles with regard to education; her maternal grandparents did not see the need to educate her beyond primary school. However, Bâ owes her education to her father, who insisted on giving her an opportunity to study. Bâ states as much in an interview with Alioune Touré Dia (1979): « Grâce à mon père et à la vision juste qu'il avait eu de l'avenir, j'ai été à l'école, malgré mes grands-parents qui étaient des traditionalistes »⁵ (Dia 1979: [sp]).

At an early age, Bâ's sensitivity resulted in awareness and sharp criticism of the inequality that existed between male and female sexes resulting from African traditions. This was essentially based on the unequal power relations that existed in male and female relationships and for her, this fact could help one become aware of Africa's needs for societal change (Dia 1979:12-14). In some parts of the world, particularly the Maghreb and in Sub-Saharan Africa, female children

⁴Mariama Bâ's daughter, Mame Coumba Ndiaye, wrote a memoir entitled *Mariama Bâ ou les allées d'un destin* (2007), published in honour of her mother by Les nouvelles éditions africaines du Sénégal. This memoir contains a detailed account of Bâ's life.

⁵Thanks to my father and the clear vision he had of the future, I went to school, despite my grand-parents who were traditionalists (English translation by Itang Amissine).

are prohibited from receiving formal education as it is believed that their place is in their husband's home. Examples can be drawn from the kidnapping of 274 school girls in the north-eastern part of Nigeria on 14th April 2014 by members of the Islamist militant group Boko Haram. These girls were taken from their dormitories in a bid by extremists to prevent the girls from receiving Western education. Another example is the near death experience of Malala Yousafzai⁶ who was left for dead by the Taliban as a means of illustrating the consequences of promoting female education. Although these are recent examples, female subjugation and patriarchy remain dominant in both past and present day society. In criticizing this gender inequality, Mariama Bâ used her pen as a means of expression to reclaim the lost voices of African women. This resulted in the writing of her first book, *Une si longue lettre* (1980) in which Bâ highlighted several Feminist problems⁷ that plague women in that society.

Although writers like Flora Nwapa⁸ and Aminata Sow Fall⁹ were published earlier than Bâ, she is still considered as the champion of the Feminist cause in Africa. While these earlier female African writers were known as the forerunners of a future generation of female African writers, they focused their attention mainly on national liberation struggles against colonialism and their writing did not centre only on female subjugation. Bâ on the other hand devoted her writing to exposing the hidden truth on issues such as female submission, gender relations, power inequality, as well as the ways in which these were framed by African and Islamic cultural beliefs. Although a Muslim, Bâ did not allow herself to be hampered by religion as she openly

⁶Malala is an activist for the promotion of female education. On 15 January 2009, private schools for girls in Pakistan's Swat district were ordered to close following an edict banning female education. Malala, then a 7th grade student proposed blogging for the BBC, giving an insight on the effects of this edict by the Taliban. Concerned for her safety due to reprisals from the Taliban, Malala blogged using the pseudonym 'GulMakai'. However, she was later discovered to be the anonymous blogger and was shot in the head by the Taliban. She is currently the 2014 Nobel peace prize winner for her "struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education" <http://www.biography.com/people/malala-yousafzai-21362253>

⁷These Feminist problems include: social inequality, polygamy, patriarchy and discrimination amongst others.

⁸Renowned Nigerian author, famous for her novel *Efuru* (1966).

⁹Aminata Sow Fall is the Senegalese born author of *La grève des battus* (1979).

expressed her disdain for polygamy, which at the time was a taboo subject for women and still an acknowledged practice amongst Muslims. Shortly after the publication of *Une si longue lettre*, Mariama Bâ wrote *Un chant écarlate*, which was published posthumously in 1981. Like her first novel, *Un chant écarlate* also depicts the fate of women in a post-colonial and patriarchal Senegalese society¹⁰. Bâ's skilful writing of *Une si longue lettre* saw the novel being recognised as a classic of modern African literature, thereby earning it first prestigious Noma Award in 1979. The novel was "acclaimed by the judges for its significant testimony and true imaginative depth" (Zell 1980:199). Furthermore, Appiah and Gates (1999:451-452) maintain that:

The award did not bring the novel into the world, but drew attention to its merits, thereby giving it immediate international exposure as well as a solid place amongst the top African literary works of the twentieth century. It is considered as a novel that gave the African continent a voice from within.

According to Florence Stratton (1994:133-135), "this broad impact of Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre*, has seen its inclusion on the reading list for many High School, Masters and Doctoral qualifying examinations in the United States and Europe". Also, in a 2011 radio interview with Yvan Amar on Radio France Internationale (RFI), Pascale Bathélémy¹¹ states that Mariama Bâ's novels are widely read and well received in Africa and especially in Senegal where she is considered a national icon. As proof of her hard work and commitment, the first democratically elected president of Senegal, Leopold Senghor, established a school for girls called "Maison d'éducation de Mariama Bâ", in her honour. Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* has since been translated into over seventeen different languages and adapted into stage plays and television films in Wolof, Senegal's most widely spoken language (Ndiaye 2007:178-180).

Translations of *Une si longue lettre* exist in the following languages:

- Swedish (1980)

¹⁰This society is composed of families who exert pressure on young women thereby influencing their lives as a means of upholding tradition.

¹¹Author and lecturer of Modern History at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon.

- English (1981)
- German (1981)
- Finnish (1981)
- Norwegian (1981)
- Swahili (1994)
- Serbo Croatian (2004)
- Wolof (2007)
- Spanish (2008)
- Bulgarian
- Japanese – (the Noma award prize is funded by a Japanese publisher)
- Russian
- Arabic
- Italian
- Dutch
- Czech
- Romanian
- Danish

As proof of the wide reception of *Une si longue lettre*, translations exist in two African languages – Swahili and Wolof – and in Turkish, which can be considered interesting languages in the translational chain considering the regions where these languages are spoken. The translation in Swahili is considered interesting as this is the only Bantu language into which Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* has been translated. Of course, Wolof is also acknowledged in the list of translations as it is of utmost importance that Bâ's message of Feminism is preached beyond the elite group of French speakers in the Senegambia region, to the rural areas of the region

where French is not widely spoken. Turkish as a language is equally symbolic, given the need to make her novel accessible to a region which is as conservative as Bâ's Senegal.

Un chant écarlate has also been translated into seven languages, namely;

- English
- German
- Dutch
- Swedish
- Danish
- Bulgarian
- Italian

It is widely acknowledged that literary translation is a daunting task, taking into consideration the cultural differences between the source text and target text audiences. Moreover, translating a gendered language can be difficult, especially when the source text depicts an extensive use of gender related expressions as in the case of the French language. Language is generally accepted as a medium of communication and as such, the translator should be in a position to adapt the language to the needs of the intended users. According to Marion Graf (1998), « On ne traduit pas seulement dans une autre langue, mais aussi pour un autre univers culturel »¹² (Graf 1998:18). Although English and French are considered 'cognate languages – that is, derived from the same source, called -'Indo-European languages', - and show a considerable level of similarity, English is a language that is devoid of excessive use of gender, thereby making it more inclined to being a 'neutral' language. Therefore, it is the duty of the translator to convey the same message - from a language that displays an excessive use of gender, into a more 'neutral language' - in a manner that reflects the choice of words as contained in the

¹² Translation is not only done into another language but also for another cultural environment (English translation by Itang Amissine).

source language, thereby producing the same reaction as the original text (Stockwell et al 1965:41- 45).

Mariama Bâ died in 1981 after being diagnosed with lung cancer, but her writing did not go unrewarded, as other talented young female writers from across Africa, began expressing themselves through literature:

Bâ's intellectual project leaves the baton to the young women to change the status quo. Her hopes are that through the younger generation, the archaic and negative attachment to tradition will make way for a different way of constructing knowledge within tradition, but in a positive manner (Parekh and Jagne 1998:71).

Nigerian born author Chimamanda Adichie¹³ is an example of a modern-day female writer whose books have also focused on the condition of women in society. As proof of the literary merit of her work, her *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a yellow sun* have since been translated into more than thirty languages.

1.2. LITERARY GENRE IN MARIAMA BÂ'S NOVELS

Mariama Bâ's novels explore the recurring and controversial place of tradition and religion in society while appealing for personal transformation and empowerment. Her chosen style of writing reflects the level of creativity used in touching the emotions of the reader. Bâ's creative use of the epistolary genre is immediately apparent in the title of the novel, *Une si longue lettre*. Her premise is that of a fictional letter from Ramatoulaye the protagonist/narrator to her best friend/kindred spirit Aissatou, who is in America after having divorced her husband. Ramatoulaye, a recent widow, is sequestered in mourning for a four-month period as is the custom. During this time, she recounts past and present events in her life and uses this medium

¹³ *Half of a yellow sun* (2006) and *Purple hibiscus* (2003). She is an acclaimed African writer of fiction representing a younger generation. Through her writing, she has inspired her younger contemporaries to read more African literature, and is also a recipient of numerous awards, including the Commonwealth writers' prize, amongst others. <http://www.awdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Inspiring-African-Feminists2.pdf>

to survive the long period of seclusion. This is obvious in the opening sentence: « Aissatou, j'ai reçu ton mot. En guise de réponse, j'ouvre ce cahier, point d'appui, dans mon désarroi: notre longue pratique m'a enseigné que la confiance noie la douleur »¹⁴ (Bâ 1980:7). As Ann McElaney-Johnson (1999:111) states, "Bâ distinguishes herself from her contemporaries in her choice of the epistolary genre". Her use of the epistolary genre can be likened to Alice Walker's *The colour purple* (1982) which is written in the same genre. Like Mariama Bâ, Alice Walker addresses the numerous issues of racism, sexism and patriarchy, amongst others, faced by women of colour. In addressing these issues, Walker also creates a fictional character, 'Celie', who, like Ramatoulaye, is the protagonist/narrator who writes letters to God as a means of coping with the daily abuse and subjugation she is faced with. African women's desire to write stemmed from the need to rise above subjugation and marginalisation in a society that does not allow them to be seen or heard. For such women, writing is an opportunity to give a first-hand narration of their personal experiences as a means of confronting the lingering Feminist issues. According to Tanja Nel (2009:37),

Une des plus grandes particularités de *l'écriture femme* est donc ce glissement vers l'intérieur de l'être, au cœur des sensations les plus intimes. En s'écrivant, les femmes d'Afrique donnent une voix à chaque femme qui a connu les mêmes difficultés¹⁵...

Mariama Bâ is no exception, as her skilful writing shows the desire to address practices such as patriarchy and subjugation that denied women personal power and liberation. Her reliance upon her own experiences forms the crux of her work. Her use of the epistolary genre in *Une si longue lettre* showcases the use of the first person narrative in which Ramatoulaye expresses herself to her friend Aissatou:

¹⁴Dear Aissatou, I have received your letter. By way of reply, I am beginning this diary, my prop in my distress. Our long association has taught me that confiding in others allays pain (Bâ 1981a:1 -all references to Bâ 1981a refer to the translation by Modupe Bodé-Thomas).

¹⁵ One of the greatest features of feminine writing is the shift toward self, with personal experiences as a focal point. In writing about one self, African women give voice to every woman who has experienced the same difficulty (English translation by Itang Amissine).

Je souffle. J'ai raconté d'un trait ton histoire et la mienne. J'ai dit l'essentiel, car la douleur, même ancienne, fait les mêmes lacérations dans l'individu, quand on l'évoque. Ta déception fut la mienne comme mon reniement fut le tien. Pardonne-moi encore si j'ai remué ta plaie. La mienne saigne toujours¹⁶ (Bâ 1980:81).

Although first-person narrative does not necessarily coincide with autobiographical forms of expression, it is viewed by some scholars as a true representation of an author's personal story. As Stringer (in Latha 2002:183) states, "because of the first person narrative and its confidential tone, *So long a letter* is often referred to as an autobiographical work". Philippe Lejeune's extensive publications on the autobiographical genre provide useful terms such as the *pacte autobiographique* (autobiographical pact) which he defines as follows:

[...] le récit rétrospectif en prose qu'une personne réelle fait de sa propre existence, lorsqu'elle met l'accent sur sa vie individuelle, en particulier sur l'histoire de sa personnalité¹⁷ (Lejeune 1975:14).

Lejeune's definition above comprises of four main elements that constitute an autobiography:

1. The form of the language, either a narrative or prose;
2. The chosen subject, which represents the story of a person;
3. The situation of the author, showing that both the author and narrator are identical in the sense that the identity of the author and narrator refers to a real person;
4. The position of the narrator showing the following:
 - a) The identity of the narrator and the main character;
 - b) The story being told retrospectively.

Therefore, in order to have an autobiographical pact, the reader must be convinced that both the author and the narrator are one and the same person, and the story is retrospectively told in a spirit of truth. Using Philippe Lejeune's definition of autobiography as a starting point, Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* does not meet the set criteria to qualify as an autobiographical novel, as

¹⁶ I take a deep breath. I've related at one go your story as well as mine. I've said the essential, for pain, even when it's past, leaves the same marks on the individual when recalled. Your disappointment was mine, as my rejection was yours. Forgive me once again if I have re-opened your wound. Mine continues to bleed (Bâ 1981a:55).

¹⁷ "A retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (Lejeune 1975:4).

she masks her true identity by creating fictional characters in the novel, despite the striking similarity in the story. Furthermore, Bâ distances herself from her protagonist as she explains in an interview published in the journal *Amina*. She clearly explains the motif behind her use of the first person singular which in essence justifies the non-classification of *Une si longue lettre* as an autobiographical novel.

J'ai voulu donner au roman une forme originale. En général, l'auteur se met en dehors des personnages et raconte. J'ai choisi la forme d'une lettre pour donner à l'œuvre le visage humain. Quand on écrit, une lettre, on dit je. Ce « je » s'identifie à Ramatoulaye et non à l'auteur¹⁸ (Dia 1979 : [sp]).

According to Kjellman-Chapin (2009:148), Serge Doubrovsky, a critical theorist coined the term autofiction. He defines autofiction as an art of combining real content and fictional form, thus allowing the authors to insert themselves into their own fiction in a search for self. Following Serge Doubrovsky's concept of autofiction, Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* can be termed an 'autofictional novel' written in epistolary form, whereby fiction is used as a means of masking certain events through the use of fictional characters while telling her own story. This use of autofiction is clearly in contrast to Phillippe Lejeune's *pacte autobiographique*. As Kayembe (2014:1) states:

[...] Mariama Bâ achève de rejeter le contrat autobiographique d'*Une si longue lettre* pour en assumer clairement le caractère avant tout imaginaire, qui implique la recherche de la forme et du style narratif¹⁹.

In *Un chant écarlate*, Mariama Bâ's style of writing once again shows how poignant and skilful she is by creating believable characters who can be loved and hated. This second novel, unlike the first, centres on interracial marriages, especially in a society where patriarchy is deeply rooted. Through her fiction, Bâ creates yet another story that is compelling and rich with emotion

¹⁸ I wanted to give an original form to the novel. Typically, the author distances himself/herself from the characters in the story. I chose the form of a letter in order to give life to my work. When one writes a letter, the word 'I' is used. This "I" refers to Ramatoulaye and not to the author (English translation by Itang Amissine).

¹⁹ Mariama Bâ completely rejects the autobiographical pact in *Une si longue lettre* in order to clearly portray the character above all imagination, which involves finding the form and narrative style of the novel (English translation by Itang Amissine).

as she highlights pertinent issues such as love, friendship, betrayal, tradition and even negritude²⁰. Bâ's novels are saturated with folklore and evoke oral storytelling given that she is deeply concerned with the customs and traditions of her society. In her works, she establishes the fact that orality is deeply connected with the narrative structure of her novels hence the introduction of Griots²¹ as a means of giving a voice to her texts, revealing the poetic aspect of her writing and staying true to the Senegalese context in which her novels are firmly rooted. Bâ's style of writing makes her novels very touching as it places emphasis on the tone, delivery, purpose, ethos, and the pattern of the discourse. Such writing style becomes a determining factor that influences reception of the texts by their readers. As Ade Ojo (1986) states, the personal style of the author such as the author's choice of words must be thoroughly understood in order to fully appreciate the strategies and techniques used in writing. Once these have been fully understood and mastered, a successful translation of the text can be done. This is an indispensable action as every author has a motive for writing which is reflected in his/her style. Therefore, the translator should understand this motive prior to commencing a translation of any given work. Mariama Bâ's novels, although classified as short novels, are easily comprehensible and are rich in ideas that compel the reader's imagination and emotions therefore making them necessary reading for all women of the world, as well as the men who hope to love them and seek an equal society for both genders.

²⁰ Negritude is a conscious preoccupation to combat the stereotyping of Africa perpetuated by the West, by elevating the status of Africans at home and in the Diaspora. Simply put, it is a philosophical movement to revive 'Black pride'. This term was coined by three founding fathers and black Francophone intellectuals: Aimé Césaire from Martinique, Léopold Senghor from Senegal and Léon Damas from French Guiana (Campbell 2006:33).

²¹Griots are living repositories of West Africa's oral epics and also histories that are crucial for the preservation of West African social structures. They are often described as 'praise singers' (Hale 1997:250-251).

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview on Feminism and literary translation. Such a review is necessary, given that this study is centred on Feminism and literary translation with reference to the novels of Mariama Bâ. Some of the areas to be reviewed include Feminism, African Feminism and, the socio-political context of Mariama Bâ's novels.

2.1. FEMINISM AND AFRICAN FEMINISM

“When men are oppressed, it’s a tragedy. When women are oppressed, it’s tradition”.
Letty Cottin Pogrebin²²

Feminism is not a new concept, as its existence dates back to the 17th century when the American women’s movement began to demand improved rights and equal opportunities (Offen 1988:123). Women fought for recognition in society to avoid marginalisation and gender inequality. It is widely acknowledged by scholars that Feminism is a theory that is used to define women’s ideologies²³. The Feminist movement has been based mainly on the history of white women’s experience, exposing the existing gender inequalities. The black woman especially has been reluctant to participate fully in the Feminist movement because in America and Europe, she was already involved in the struggle to end racism and because on the African continent, “memories of western[sic] colonial imperialism are still too fresh to make any alliance with European women unproblematic” (Ajayi-Soyinka 1993:164). However, by the mid-1980s, women became increasingly informed on gender inequalities and subjugation, thus drawing strength from shared experiences which would enable them to tackle the oppression they were constantly faced with. Women of colour began to question the basis of mainstream Feminist theory, the domination of the Feminist movement by white women, the omission of the

²² Letty Cottin Pogrebin is the American author of *Deborah, Golda and me: Being female and Jewish in America* (1992). She is also an activist and a founding editor of *Ms. Magazine*.

²³ Conscious ideas proposed by women, with a common goal of revalidating the undervalued female attributes and exposing the sexual disparities that exist in society.

experience and works of women of colour in Feminist theories and critical analysis, and the inadequacy of the single focused Feminist critical theories to the multiplicity of factors that constitute their black experiences and inform their writing. Black women in particular, consistently drew their inspiration to campaign against gender inequality from personal experiences, cultural practices and history. This gradually became the basis of their fight. As Omofolabo Ajayi-Soyinka (1993:161) puts it, "Feminism is an acknowledgement of the cultural and racial differences among women, including many other factors that constitute their experience and affect their conditions besides patriarchy". The introduction of race in the Feminist movement makes Feminism a difficult concept to define in a manner that caters for the need of all women. Its significance is totally dependent on individual experiences as well as the time and place of occurrence. Often, people create their own definition of Feminism to best suit their personal experiences, thus showing diversity amongst Feminists. This reflects the changing and varied nature of women's experience, therefore making it difficult to provide a single acceptable definition of this term.

Adding to the complexity of defining the term, Mitchel and Oakley (1986:9) do not offer a precise definition of Feminism. Rather, they state that attempting to define Feminism paves the way for individual bias thus understating Feminism in its diversity and its differences. However, they suggest what can be termed a simple definition which they believe can be shared by all Feminists:

Many would agree that at the very least a Feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change in the social, economic and political order.

Jaggar (1994:2), on the other hand, equates Feminism with the different social movements dedicated to ending the subordination of women. hooks [sic] (2000:1) defines Feminism as "a

movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression". Drawing from hooks' definition, Feminism is not about being anti-men, but the equal acknowledgement of male and female gender, irrespective of race; hence the call for a change in mentality. Over the years, women have fought relentlessly against patriarchal domination and subjugation and this fight is yet to see its end. In their struggle, they have managed to draw attention to themselves and set up women's movements in various countries as a source of unity and solidarity in their campaign against inequality. Despite the inability to provide a standard definition of the term Feminism, it is worth noting that there are similar characteristics such as gender equality, rejection of a patriarchal society, female emancipation amongst others, that make up this term. As Sapiro (1986:441) posits:

Feminism is a perspective that views gender as one of the most important bases of the structure and organization of the social world. Feminists argue that in most known societies, this structure has granted women lower status and value, more limited access to valuable resources, and less autonomy and opportunity to make choices over their lives than it has granted men...

Although Feminism began in Europe, it has since spread across the world and has taken root in Africa, where women have not only their male counterparts to contend with, but also archaic cultures and traditions. From an African perspective, Feminism stems from the need for the liberation of African women from society in which patriarchy is deeply rooted. According to Uzoamaka Azodo (1997:201):

A look at the situation in Africa, in the past and in the present, shows that a univocal theory of global feminism does not address the special conditions in which African women find themselves. Rigid traditions discriminate against African women, who are seen as perpetual children and second-class citizens.

The distinction between African Feminism and Western Feminism by some scholars is the fact that African Feminism underlines the notion of motherhood and is not 'anti-men', as opposed to Western Feminism, which rebels against any form of gender inequality, irrespective of cultures

and traditions. In traditional Africa, women were considered to be docile and existed as mere exotic accessories to men. The incompatibility between African and Western Feminism has been underscored by Filomena Steady (1981), who defines African Feminism as “humanistic feminism”. In the same light, many female African scholars have expressed similar thoughts on the notion of African Feminism. For instance, Deirdre Bádéjò (1998:94) asserts that:

African Feminism embraces beauty, power, serenity, inner harmony, and a complex matrix of power. It is always poised and centered [sic] in womanness. It demonstrates that power and femininity are intertwined rather than antithetical.

This serenity of African Feminism can to some extent be likened a certain level of docility imposed by culture and religion which results in women lacking the voice with which to express their dilemma and point of view. This passive stance after years of intimidation and subjugation misled most women into underestimating their capabilities. However, over the years, African women began protesting against gender hierarchy and the patriarchal structures that subjugate them. African women are born to cater not only for the needs of the entire family, but those of society as well. When African women are born, they are taught that their place resides within the family and the society they find themselves in. Their duty is to raise children and cater for their husband’s needs. They toil from childhood to woman and motherhood and remain exploited until they are no longer useful and are discarded, then replaced by younger women who go through the same vicious cycle of exploitation, especially in a polygamous society. Such is the fate of women in a deeply rooted patriarchal African society.

African women feel aggrieved under these circumstances and seek ways of breaking free from the bondage of subjugation. As Megkwe (2008:17) explains, African Feminists seek equality amongst sexes as well as an end to any form of dehumanization. It is important to note that African Feminism is not antagonistic to men but challenges them to be aware of those aspects of women’s subjugation which differ from the generalised oppression of the African people.

According to Azodo (1997:202), the African Feminist struggle for the eradication of a patriarchal society is also based on personal experiences, contrary to Western Feminism which seeks a more radical approach that portrays an extreme rejection of any form of sexist behaviour. Radical Feminists strive for women's autonomy in the areas of sexuality and procreation, particularly in what they call 'forced motherhood'²⁴ and 'sexual slavery'²⁵ (Ashton and Whitting 1987:13). As Simon and Obeten (2013) posit, the women's movement in Africa arose out of different historical perspectives. African Feminists are more concerned with pressing issues such as "polygamy, poverty, obnoxious widowhood rites, and social taboos like the caste system amongst others" (Simon and Obeten 2013:204). As depicted by Mariama Bâ in both her novels, women are viewed as investments. When women get married, they become assets to their husbands and their families due to the emphasis placed on material considerations which are also dependent on a particular tribe/caste system.

Senegalese society is greatly influenced by the caste system which limits the choices that women are able to make, as a woman of a lower class finds it difficult to integrate with the upper class. In her writing, Bâ portrays this difficulty as the caste system remains a dominant aspect of Senegalese culture. As Jagne (2004: 10-11) states, "the caste system in the S n gambia [sic] area is as old as the histories of the people who inhabit the area". Jagne (2004) further explains the different caste systems in Senegal such as:

1. The Guers: This is the highest caste in the caste system and is comprised mainly of the descendants of nobles and farmers;
2. The Guewals: This is the second highest caste and is comprised mainly of griots;

²⁴ According to Marci Littlefield (2007:54), motherhood centres on procreation and suggests a unique relationship between mother and child. Once this act of motherhood becomes imposed by society and no longer voluntary, it becomes forced motherhood.

²⁵ According to Article 4 of the Human rights review (2012), "Sexual slavery is the condition of a person over whom all of the powers attaching to ownership are exercised, thereby resulting in sexual exploitation" (Equity and Human Rights Commission 2012:140).

3. The Tegg: This group is made of highly skilled members who work with metals (e.g. goldsmiths);
4. The Woodeh: This group of highly skilled workers specialise in leather and wood.

The important aspect of the Senegalese caste system is that it is determined by the trade of each group. Bâ portrays the difficulty of caste integration through Aissatou's marriage to Mawdo and his mother's disapproval as she believes that a goldsmith's daughter does not qualify as a suitable daughter-in-law due to the class difference. Therefore, she resolves to find a second wife of noble birth for her son: « Mawdo te hissa à sa hauteur, lui, fils de princesse, toi, enfant des forges...ton existence, Aissatou, ne ternira jamais sa noble descendance, jura-t-elle²⁶» (Bâ 1980 :33-45).

In an attempt to define African Feminism, Filomena Chioma Steady (1981:28) explains African Feminism as “emphasizing female autonomy and co-operation; nature over culture; the centrality of children, multiple mothering and kinship”. This signifies that African Feminists still take pride in marriage and motherhood. This definition also illustrates the fact that “many African women writers and critics do not advocate a complete eradication of culture but a modification of it, as well as an adaptation to international human rights standards which would liberate and empower all women” (Nkealah 2006:139). Although African women are concerned about changing the status of women in society, their approach also differs based on personal experiences. These differences have led to the classification of African Feminism into reformist, transformative and radical African Feminist literature (Arndt 2002:33-35).

- **Reformist African Feminists** offer a partial criticism of patriarchal norms and conventions which discriminate against women. They also present a liberal treatment of men in a manner that shows them being criticised on an individual basis for the wrong committed and

²⁶Mawdo raised you up to his own level, he the son of a princess and you a child from the forge...she swore that your existence, Aissatou, would never tarnish her noble descent (Bâ 1981a:19-28).

not as stereotypical of their gender. These Feminists are of the opinion that such circumstances can be reformed.

- To the **transformative African Feminists**, although the discriminatory behaviour by men may be described as typical, it is sharply criticised. This group of Feminists vividly represent women as accomplices in female subjugation, while men are simply products of 'patriarchal patterns of thought' (Arndt 2002:34). Men are seen as immoral and are considered as pawns used by women in their oppression of fellow women. Men are viewed as weak-willed and unlike the reformists, they believe in a general criticism of men. As the name implies, this kind of Feminism thrives on the hope for a transformation of African society into one which sees women being accorded the same level of respect as men, women who are free-willed and who would break free from the clutches of all forms of patriarchal subjugation. A typical example of this Feminist writing is illustrated in Bâ's novels. Examples from both novels will be used to illustrate this type of African Feminist literature during the course of this study.

- **Radical African Feminists** are of the opinion that men as a group mistreat and discriminate against women. Another predominant characteristic is their use of excessive pain and violence, where women are made to suffer physical and psychological violence at the hands of men. There is also a notion of pessimism and such Feminists deny any form of transformation. For this category of Feminists, there is a total rejection of all forms of subjugation and female discrimination.

The issue of female subjugation and empowerment has been a major theme in African literature and research during the last few decades. There is no doubt that the Feminist response has been rather necessary following the consciousness that African women have been continually exploited, ignored and considered irrelevant. This is evident not only in African societies, but also in African literature which reflects these difficulties faced by women. Writers such as Bâ depict the position of women in Africa as they battle with or succumb to the various forms of

traditional oppression that hinder them from attaining personal empowerment. However, with the dawn of independence in different African countries as well as the changes that ensued, new directions and frameworks for women's empowerment were formulated. Therefore, the exclusion of women from society became increasingly challenged and this has seen women's inclusion in strategic official positions. For example, South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation is currently under the supervision of a woman, while Liberia's Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is the first woman in modern Africa to be elected a head of state.

2.1.1. MARIAMA BÂ AS A FEMINIST

Considered an icon of African women's literature, Mariama Bâ actively participated in women's organisations during the late 1960s. According to Ndiaye (2007:117-121):

Elle se tourna véritablement vers l'action militante à partir de 1968 bien avant d'asseoir sa réputation de femme écrivain...avec la popularité qui était la sienne et le rôle de premier plan qu'elle occupait au sein des mouvements, membre de la FAFS (Fédération des associations féminines du Sénégal), Présidente du cercle Femina (qu'elle avait elle-même créé)...on songea à elle comme la principale autorité en matière de questions féminines.²⁷

Her involvement in women's organizations stemmed from the desire to put forward women's points of view and their desire for change. She used writing as a medium of expression and this attracted the attention of not only her compatriots, but the Western world at large. This notion of Feminism is represented in Bâ's writing as she highlights the treatment of women in Africa and demonstrates that women can assert their womanhood as an entity that is subordinate to no one (Kamara 2001:214). Furthermore, she makes a plea for a positive change in society so that women are not marginalised, but are considered as individuals with equal rights to their male counterparts.

²⁷ Her involvement in militant activities came in 1968 before earning her a reputation as a female writer... with her growing popularity and the prominent role she played within the movement as a member of FAFS (Federation of Senegalese Women's Associations), president of the Femina group which she herself created...she was often regarded as the main authority on women's issues. (English translation by Itang Amissine)

From a wider perspective, Bâ illustrates the fact that Feminist struggles are not limited to the African context but are relevant to women from all walks of life irrespective of their race, culture, age and class. This she clearly illustrates in *Un chant écarlate*, which points out the difficulties of interracial marriages. Bâ's exceptional quality of writing in *Une si longue lettre* saw the book being catapulted into international recognition and acceptance as a rare piece of writing given the period during which it was written as well as the themes it highlighted. Mariama Bâ became a recognised advocate for the greater understanding of African Feminist issues (Killiam 2004: 55-57). Bâ was also politically active in several Senegalese women's movements and associations. As spokesperson for Feminist movements in Dakar, she delivered a speech at the Senegalese National Assembly where she denounced the poor conditions of mothers and children in Senegal:

En cette journée du 25 Mars [sic] dédiée à la femme sénégalaise, c'est avec émotion que je prête ma voix, à la pensée des sœurs des associations féminines dont la différence de militantisme n'exclut pas le même idéal d'émancipation de la femme...c'est pourquoi je souhaite devant cette assemblée que ma voix, si peu autorisée soit-elle, demeure aussi l'expression des femmes les plus nombreuses, les plus dépouillées, les plus méritantes peut-être reléguées au mutisme malgré elles²⁸ (Ndiaye 2007: 201).

Mariama Bâ became an inspiring figure for African women. She wrote only two novels before her death, but these novels strongly represent the difficult situations faced by women in African societies and remain vital to the literary world. Because of Bâ's Feminism, it is important to note that her writing reveals the diverse cultural and religious peculiarities in which her novels took root. Therefore, as Ade Ojo (1986:293-294) affirms:

²⁸ On this 25th day of March dedicated to the Senegalese women, it is with great emotion that I lend my voice to express the thoughts of the sisters of feminine movements who, despite the difference in activism, share the same ideology of female emancipation...that is why I express the wish before this assembly, that my humble voice will also remain the expression of the many humble and deserving women who are relegated to silence (English translation by Itang Amissine).

Every literary object, definitely bound by a distinct geo-political specificity and conditioned by a particular creative ingenuity and affectivity, reflects a peculiar national temperament, a specific cultural tradition, a particular artistic convention and definite historical and economic determinants. It is a product of a culture and therefore of a people's way of life and of the values or norms inherent in the society in which it is rooted.

This shows the need for the translator to adequately recognise and understand the history and context that influences the writer's thinking pattern before producing a translation. Should this not be taken into consideration, the original ideas will not have the same effect on the target audience, as the translator will be unable to situate the text within the established context. In the light of the above, this next section will examine the socio-political context of Bâ's novels.

2.2. SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT OF MARIAMA BÂ'S NOVELS

As Christopher O'reilly (2001) declares, post-colonial literature reflects the effects of colonialism in a great variety of ways. Following the colonial era, post-colonialism sought to explain and respond to the cultural legacies of colonialism as well as its effects. This led to post-colonial writers wanting to identify with the objectives of post-colonial writing. These objectives include:

- The quest for personal and racial/cultural identity;
- The belief that writing is an integral part of self-definition;
- The emphasis on historical reconstruction (O'reilly 2001:6).

Given that Bâ's country of origin deeply impacted her writing, it is important to give a brief historical background on Senegal to facilitate a better understanding of Bâ's works.

Senegal is a country in West Africa that is delimited by the Atlantic Ocean and countries like Guinea, Mali and Gambia which makes it the Senegambia region. Through its coastal regions, trans-Saharan traders comprising mainly of Arabs from the Middle East introduced Islam into Senegal and other parts of West Africa during the trans-Atlantic slave trade era of the 10th

century. This saw interaction between the already existing African tradition and Islam which became the religion at the time. When the French embarked on a colonial conquest in the Senegambia area in the 19th century, Senegal was already religiously rooted in Islam (Clark 1999:156-158). The French practised a system of assimilation which focused on expanding the French culture to their colonies. Therefore, they did not interfere in the traditional and religious practises of the Senegalese people. Rather, they were primarily concerned with maintaining order and supervising the economic activity of the region. Colonisation began from the coastal regions of Senegal, namely the island of Gorée, Saint-Louis and Dakar. It is worthy of note that Mariama Bâ was directly affected by colonialism as she was born in Dakar.

Since obtaining its independence from the French in 1960, Senegal became an overwhelmingly Muslim country with 90% of its population practising Islam. The country also inherited a rich literary heritage and boasts of a rich cultural heritage. Through its founding President Leopold Sedar Senghor and his concept of *negritude*, Senegal encourages African cultures and values as a symbol of the uniqueness of the country and the African continent as a whole (Murphy 2008:56-58). The period between the colonial and post-colonial era witnessed a great number of literary works written in French by both male and female Senegalese writers such as Senghor himself, Sembène Ousmane, Aminata Sow Fall, Nafissatou Diallo and Mariama Bâ amongst others. This increased level of literacy led to the development of African literature as writers began expressing themselves freely. Many writers used their newly acquired language of the colonisers (English/French) to expose the ills of society at the time. However, African literature could never be free from the colonial era as, ironically, the 'coloniser's language' was still used in writing by the post-colonial African writers despite the many indigenous languages available to them. One could argue that this was a strategy by these African writers to promote an international readership of their works and to draw attention to the aftermath of colonialism in their respective countries.

Mariama Bâ is no exception as she wrote in French. Although educated in the French system, Mariama Bâ also spoke one of Senegal's main languages, Wolof, thereby giving her an insight into two worlds (France and Senegal). It is worthy of note that Bâ did not translate her own novels into Wolof at the time. For her, the aim was to make her novels accessible to an international non-francophone readership. Only after her death was her *Une si longue lettre* translated into Wolof. Like many other post-colonial African writers, Bâ resorts to giving her readers an insight into Senegalese culture by promoting the use of a hybrid language. This hybridity aims at conveying the true message without distorting African cultures and also without giving undue privilege to the language of the colonisers (French). For her and many others, language can be seen as the foundation of an identity and the bearer of a particular history and culture. Thus, Bâ does not oppose writing in the coloniser's language, but rather remoulds the colonisers' language to reflect the rhythm and syntax of her indigenous language, Wolof. Like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o who writes in his native 'Gikuyu', and Buchi Emecheta, who writes in 'Ibo', Mariama Bâ shows the inability of European languages to sometimes adequately convey the thoughts and agonies of the African writer. As such, she uses many loan words from her native Wolof language, with a glossary of footnotes in French for clarity to her intended audience. She does not strive to adapt these words, but uses them in their natural state. Therefore, the translators of her novels must be able to adopt this same level of creativity and hybridity in their English translations of her novels in order to create an emotional connection with the intended audience.

Through her writing of the two novels, Mariama Bâ provides a fascinating look at post-colonial life in the former French West Africa from a woman's perspective and also focuses on issues that particularly impact women's lives. In reading Bâ's novels, it is therefore evident that she portrays the interlocking systems of oppression through education, gender discrimination, patriarchy, religion and tradition. These rigid systems show the multiple layers of female

oppression under the guise of tradition. Davies (2007:561) asserts that “the social and historical realities of African women’s lives must be considered in any meaningful examination of women in African literature and of writing by African women writers”. Bearing in mind Davies’ observation, both *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate* deal with women in a specific Senegalese cultural context in which polygamy is sanctioned by both African tradition and the Islamic religion. Despite creating fictional characters that have a certain amount of acculturation to French norms and values, her characters still maintain a strong awareness of their Senegalese identities. As Western education was paramount during the post-colonial era, Bâ shows her characters as receptors of the Western education that shaped their lives. In *Une si longue lettre*, Aissatou and Ramatoulaye received French education in Senegal and as a result, they were exposed to both their traditional cultures and Western ideas through their white school mistress. Furthermore, Aissatou has the courage to embrace modernity by divorcing her husband and starting a new life with her children. As such, Bâ shows the role that education can play in an individual’s development.

In *Un chant écarlate* Bâ also highlights female subjugation although she explores this from the angle of a foreigner. Mireille (a white French woman) is married to Ousmane, an African man set in his patriarchal ways. Like many other women, she desires a blissful marriage and attempts to embrace Ousmane’s ‘Africanness’ by converting to his religion (Islam) and adopting his traditional ways. Despite her effort, she remains faced with the difficulty of integration primarily as a result of her skin colour. This implies that irrespective of race, the same problems apply. The problem of integration faced by Mireille sees Bâ placing emphasis on negritude which can be regarded as a means of restoring ‘African pride’. To an extent, this notion of negritude brings about another level of oppression to women in Africa, especially in Mireille’s situation as a foreign woman in an African society deeply rooted in patriarchy. Ousmane, who is a typical African man deeply rooted in his traditions and religion, receives Western education. In

spite of his education and marriage to Mireille, his 'Africanness' prevails. He rejects Mireille's civilised ways by maintaining his childhood habit of eating with his hands as opposed to using a cutlery as demanded by her. He also enjoys a sense of community whereby his entire family pays unannounced visits to the disdain of his wife and also, he maintains a deep regard for his religion and African heritage. For Ousmane, marriage to Mireille becomes burdensome as he is gradually irritated by her meticulousness and rebels by seeking solace with his black mistress who eventually becomes his second wife. For him, this 'newly found' polygamous nature is likened to self-liberation from the shackles of his first marriage to Mireille:

Dans son aventure sentimentale, avec la Négrresse, sa chair n'était pas seule en cause. Leur trait d'union mordait profondément au-delà des muscles que massaient, avec une finie tendresse, les douces mains noires. Le lien mordait ses entrailles, secouait ses tripes, bouleversait son âme, l'érigeait en « combattant » et en « ambassadeur d'un peuple »... « Un peuple abâtardi par l'histoire...un peuple étranglé dans des tunnels de peurs et d'humiliations...un peuple... !Ah, je m'étais fourvoyé, jeune étudiant gonflé de lectures et slogans...le piège s'ouvre. J'en sors sans infirmité!²⁹ (Bâ 1981b: 225-226).

The lives of Bâ's fictional characters form part of Senegalese history when the country sought independence in a bid to break free from their colonisers.

The above overview explains the need for translators to be guided by certain parameters in their translation of Mariama Bâ's novels. It will be important to ascertain how Bâ's ardent Feminism was conveyed in the translations of her novels to ensure an international readership. The best way to communicate a message is first by capturing the receiver's undivided attention and subsequently enticing him or her with information they can relate to. Bâ skilfully achieves this by clearly indicating, formulating her message in both novels. As such, both translators of her

²⁹ In his entanglement with Ouleymatou, far more was involved than the mere physical relationship. When those gentle black hands massaged his muscles with infinite tenderness, a deep affinity was established. It ate into his innermost being, shook him to the core, disturbed his very soul, and set him up as a 'fighter', an ambassador of his people...a people bastardised by history, a people stifled in tunnels of fear and humiliation...a people...!Oh! I was led astray; when I was a young student, stuffed with reading and slogans...The trap-door opens up. I am escaping unharmed! (Bâ 1986:150 - all references to Bâ 1986 refer to the translation by Dorothy Blair).

novels must be conscious of this fact when translating in order to capture Bâ's vivid imagination. Therefore, her novels written to all 'women and to men of goodwill' as mentioned in the dedication of *Une si longue lettre*, must be translated in a manner that fulfils Bâ's wish. By means of descriptive translation theory and Feminist translation theory, this study will attempt to show the level of success attained by both translators in their rendition of the English versions of Bâ's novels.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The focal point of this chapter is to present the theoretical assumptions underpinning this research, as well as to introduce the research strategy and empirical techniques applied in this study. This chapter will define the scope and limitations of the research design with regard to analysing the translations of Mariama Bâ's novels. Bâ exposes the level of subjugation that shapes women's lives in a society deeply rooted in patriarchy. She also highlights the plight of post-colonial African women, characterised by oppression and the constraints of tradition and religion. The issue of female domination and oppression has been one of the key focuses in African literature and research in recent years. Female writers such as Nawal El Saadawi (*Woman at point zero*, 1983), Tsitsi Dangaremba (*Nervous conditions*, 1988) and Chimamanda Adichie (*Purple hibiscus*, 2003), have exposed the diversity of women's experiences in different societies through their writing. They have also paved the way for readers to get an insight into the level of subjugation women are faced with. However, it is evident that the issue of female subjugation is an area that was previously overlooked, hence the late response to the fact that women have been exploited both by the traditional practices and the religion of the societies they live in.

This call for awareness about the condition of women is supported by Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie (2001), who identified traditional structures - gender asymmetry, patriarchy, religion and polygamy – as the root cause of women's problems in Africa. For her and many other women, women's silence on the issue of female subjugation is also attributed to the domination of the literary sphere by male writers, hence the need for women to express themselves through their writing. According to Fonchingong (2006:142), contemporary female writers (cf. paragraph 1 above) have made giant strides to focalise on the one-sided presentation of African women in African literature.

This study will be guided by Feminist theory, as well as Feminist translation studies. To illustrate Bâ's concept of Feminism, I shall examine the Feminist aspects of her novels, as well as their translations, using Feminist translation studies as a benchmark for this analysis. This analysis will attempt to ascertain how Bâ's Feminist writing was conveyed in the translated texts. Feminist translation studies began in the 1980s, which coincided with the period when *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate* were written and translated (in 1980 and 1981 respectively). Hence, it may be supposed that the English translations were influenced by the Feminist approach to translation. However, this hypothesis will only be confirmed by analysing the translations of the Feminist aspects of Bâ's novels based on a Feminist approach to translation, as well as using descriptive translation studies. This will facilitate an analysis of the traces of Feminism presented in the source texts and their translations in the target texts. Another purpose of this study is to examine discourse on translation from a Feminist perspective and to determine the extent to which this approach has contributed to the nature of the translations of Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate*. A detailed interpretation of both English translations will be conducted as a means of determining the extent to which the Feminist approach has contributed to the translations of Mariama Bâ's novels. Taking into consideration the quality and nature of Bâ's novels, as well as their translations by female translators, this dissertation will attempt to understand if these translations are in accordance with Bâ's Feminist beliefs and how these beliefs are conveyed in the English translations of both novels. Given the acclaimed status of her novels, there was a need for translation that would not only adequately portray the strength of expression of her ideas in the source language, but also increase the accessibility of her novels for an international, non-Francophone readership.

In the course of this investigation, this study will attempt to answer several related questions identified on page 12 of this dissertation.

In the light of the concerns raised, this study evaluates Mariama Bâ's contribution to the Feminist cause in Africa, as well as the English translations of her novels to ensure their accessibility for an international readership. This study is also relevant in its exploration and analysis of the translations of Bâ's novels, thereby evoking an interest in the Feminist approach to translation. This is based on the argument that only a woman may be in a (better) position to relate to the plight of other women, hence the translation of Mariama Bâ's novels by women.

3.1.1. DATA AND DATA COLLECTION

The data to be used for this research will be categorised under primary and secondary data. To ensure that the data for this research is properly categorised, a brief definition of both primary and secondary data will be given as a means of establishing the basis for this categorisation.

1. **Primary data** refers to original sources serving as a basis for research study, thereby providing the researcher with an original idea. The primary data to be used and analysed in the course of this study will be extracted from the following source texts: *Une si longue lettre* (1980), and *Un chant écarlate* (1981), both published by Les Nouvelles Éditions Africaines. These extracts will mainly comprise of 'Feminist aspects' of the book such as polygamy, patriarchy, female subjugation, to mention but a few. This is in light of the many themes illustrated in the novels by the author. The extracts will be reviewed following an initial analysis using Feminist theory.
2. **Secondary data** refers to sources that analyse and interpret the original source. The secondary data to be used, interpreted and analysed in this research will be equivalent translations of the Feminist aspects from the source texts. The aim of the secondary data is to ascertain the level of equivalence and fidelity, as well as the level of representation of Mariama Bâ's Feminist beliefs in the target texts: *So long a letter* and *Scarlet song*.

The examination of the data will be conducted by carrying out a qualitative analysis of both novels and their English translations using descriptive translation studies and Feminist translation studies as a benchmark. This analysis aims to present a systemic and coherent picture of the strategies used by both translators in depicting Mariama Bâ's Feminist beliefs.

Before attempting to apply or test any of these models, it is important to give an overview of descriptive translation studies and Feminist translation studies to validate the use of these models with regard to my study.

3.2. DESCRIPTIVE TRANSLATION STUDIES

In the light of my choice of descriptive analysis, this present study is inspired by Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS) which provides a framework for the comparison of Bâ's source texts and the two target texts, as well as the strategies used by the two translators to convey Bâ's message of Feminism. Before delving into the theory of descriptive translation studies, it is important to define translation. Translation has multiple meanings as it can be termed as the transfer of a message from a source text to a target text. According to Munday (2001:5), translation can be referred to as a field of study, the product (translated text) or the process (act of translating). However, in his article 'On linguistic aspects of translation' (in Venuti 2000:139), the Structuralist Roman Jakobson distinguishes between three types of translation:

- Intralingual translation or rewording: this is defined as an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language;
- Interlingual translation or translation proper: this is defined as an interpretation of verbal signs by means of another language;
- Intersemiotic translation or transmutation: this is defined as an interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems.

For Jakobson, translation is not merely a transfer of words from a source text to a target text but this process must be based on the different types of translation mentioned above. Furthermore, having established the three types of translation, Jakobson highlights equivalence as the central problem of translation. While there may be adequate code units for the transfer of a text from the source to the target, there is no guarantee of an equivalent text in the target text. According to Jakobson, “equivalence in difference is the cardinal problem of language and the pivotal concern of linguistics” (in Venuti 2000:139). Despite Jakobson’s theory, translators still carry the mandate of conveying a message from the source text to the target text, taking all linguistic and socio-cultural factors – language, culture, target audience - into consideration. Translation is also said to be a social activity which has significant importance in the receiving culture, which is recognised in the target community. Therefore, translation goes beyond linguistic realisation and language comparison but is rather integrated into a social and cultural context.

Consequently, as Peter Newmark (1988) affirms, there are translation strategies which translators must consider before commencing any translation project. Some of these strategies include: literal translation, word-for-word translation, faithful translation, adaptation, semantic translation and communicative translation.

1. **Literal translation:** This type of translation respects the source text and is also referred to as a direct translation. Although the SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents, the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context;
2. **Word-for-word translation:** Like the literal translation, this type of translation, also known as ‘verbum pro verbo’ in Latin, is one in which the SL word order is preserved and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context;
3. **Semantic translation:** This type of translation is culturally neutral and associates meaning with individual elements in the SL to create an equivalent meaning in the TL. It is also flexible and focuses on the aesthetic value of the SL text;

4. **Adaptation:** This type of translation is mainly used in cases where the context referred to in the ST does not exist in the culture of the target text, thereby requiring some form of re-creation in the TT;
5. **Faithful translation:** attempts to produce the precise contextual meaning of the SL within the constraints of the grammatical structures of the TL;
6. **Idiomatic translation:** reproduces the intended meaning in the TT but tends to distort nuances of meaning by opting for colloquialisms and idioms where they are non-existent in the ST;
7. **Communicative translation:** renders the exact contextual meaning of the ST in a way that makes the content and language readily acceptable and comprehensible to the target audience (Newmark 1988: 45-47).

Historically, the idea of translation has been based on a paradigm where translators are bound by conventional rules and principles known as the prescriptive approach. However, as translation studies steadily developed, there was a shift from the previous equivalence based study which was more prescriptive, to descriptive translation study – a movement that attempts to describe actual translation products and practices in relation to their cultural context. This development of translation studies has seen translators adopt strategies that define their different translational choices. This theory of ‘Descriptive Translation Studies’ (henceforth DTS) was introduced by the translation scholar; Gideon Toury. His concept of descriptive translation studies enables a translator to be both objective and descriptive in his/her analysis of any translation. As the name implies, the way in which translation is done should not be entirely based on a set of norms, but should be a descriptive process in which the translator acts as a decision-maker in facilitating meaning. In other words, translation should be a pragmatic process which allows the translator to explore both source and target languages as a means of producing a suitable translation for the target recipient. Descriptive translation studies are more

inclined to focus on the target text than prescriptive studies, which emphasises the source text. Rather than give a prescriptive analysis of what a good translation should be like, descriptive translation studies attempt to show the outcome of a given translation. DTS does not depict translation as a simple case of communication and transfer from a source text to a target text, but provides a deeper understanding of how translations function within cultural systems and as such, DTS can be said to be target-oriented. As Bell (1991:22) states:

Instead of making subjective and arbitrary judgments on the extent to which one translation is better than another and insisting that goodness resides in the faithful adherence to an imposed set of commandments, our orientation has to be towards the objective specification of the steps and stages through which the translator works as the ST [Source text] in the original language is transformed into the target text...

On this note, if we take into consideration that there are different ways of rendering a given text, depending on the conditions under which translation takes place, translation theory should not be seen as prescriptive, but descriptive (Zabalbeascoa 1992:37). According to Munday (2001:11), DTS focuses on three areas, namely:

- **Product-oriented DTS** – This aspect of DTS focuses on the target text. It provides a frame work for comparison of both source and target texts, in an attempt to describe the motivations for the possible shifts between the source and target texts;
- **Function-oriented DTS** – As the name implies, the function-oriented DTS involves the function of the target text in the receiving culture, rather than the target text itself. This aspect of DTS attempts to ascertain the motive behind the translator's choice of translation, the time and place of translation and the impact of such translation on the receiving audience;
- **Process-oriented DTS** – This is concerned with the actual process involved in translation as well as the influence a text or culture may have on a translator.

Following Munday's analysis of Gideon Toury's DTS, there are three fundamental aims of DTS;

1. To distinguish trends of translation behaviour;
2. To summarise the decision-making process of the translator;
3. To re-establish the norms that function in the translation.

Toury considered these so-called 'norms' as a tool governing the process of translation to determine the extent to which equivalence was manifested in the actual translations. (Munday 2001:61). DTS no longer considered the concept of equivalence as a benchmark for successful translation. According to Munday (2012:20), the concept of equivalence associated with translation has been "questioned and reconceived", thus making equivalence extremely difficult to define, measure, verify or assess. Therefore, for Gideon Toury (1995:8), one of the objectives of DTS is precisely to confront the position a certain translation has actually assumed in the host culture with the position it was intended to have, and offer explanations for the perceived differences. This paradigm shift in translation resulted in the cultural turn in translation. This shift was not a deformation of translation studies, but a positive step in the development of the discipline. This also signified an interaction between translation studies and other concepts such as post-colonialism and gender studies, amongst others. Therefore, the analysis of Mariama Bâ's novels using DTS as a tool will take into consideration a Feminist approach to translation.

3.3. FEMINIST TRANSLATION STUDIES

The concept of translation has been in existence since the beginning of language and evolved with the different theories that emerged over the years. Language and translation display a level of flexibility given the socio-cultural and linguistic factors that influence them respectively. This flexibility serves as a 'point of departure' for the development of various strategies such as Feminist Translation Theory. The 1980s marked a cultural turn in translation which resulted in the introduction of the Feminist Translation School in Canada, amongst others. This school put

the Feminist aspect of translation into the spotlight (Castro 2009:1). Feminist translation added singularity to translation studies, especially with the introduction of a new approach that did not focus solely on the text, but also on the process of translation, a process similar to that of DTS. Feminist translation developed from experimental work by Quebecois women writers such as Louise Von Flotow, Sherry Simon, Barbara Goddard and Susan De Lotbinière-Harwood. These writer-translators introduced different translation strategies that “reformed many of the techniques and theories that underlie the writing it translates” (Von Flotow 2006:16). These strategies include supplementing, prefacing, footnoting and hijacking. Von Flotow (1991:74-79) summarised these strategies as follows:

- **Prefacing** – a situation whereby the Feminist translator asserts herself by introducing a preface to the target text [TT] where none existed in the source text [ST];
- **Footnoting** – this strategy allows the Feminist translator to remain visible through the use of footnotes as a means of voicing her own opinion in the translated text;
- **Supplementing** – the Feminist translator manipulates the source text and engages in syntactic subversion. An example is the addition of a feminised neologism to the French word ‘professeur’ translated as ‘professeure’. The additional ‘e’ to the word indicates the disruption of the masculine discourse. This syntactic subversion becomes applicable when the ‘professeure’ in question is really a woman;
- **Hijacking** – this strategy refers to the appropriation of a target text with no particular Feminist stance by the translator.

Each of these strategies shows a level of intervention by the translator, as well as defending the visibility of the Feminist translator. According to Von Flotow (1991:72), Feminist translation³⁰

³⁰ In justification of her use of Feminist strategies in translation, De Lotbinière-Harwood argues, “Lisa Gauvin is a Feminist, and so am I. But I am not her. She wrote in the generic masculine. My translation practice is a political activity aimed at making language speak for women...because making the feminine visible in language means making women seen and heard in the real world. Which is what Feminism is about” (De Lotbinière-Harwood 1990 as cited in Von Flotow 1991:79)

developed as a method of translating “patriarchal language”³¹ by Feminist writers. Feminists viewed this “patriarchal language” as an instrument of women’s oppression, hence the call for reform. The Feminist approach sought ways of breaking free from gender-oriented language in order to create neutrality in the language that would represent both male and female equally. The first step towards an examination of the process of translation is acknowledging the fact that translation goes beyond the transfer of words from a source language to a target language, and that there are other socio-cultural aspects involved in this transfer. The Feminist approaches to translation have raised many concerns in the field of translation with regard to fidelity and equivalence. Feminist translators are of the opinion that translators play a far more active role in the creation of meaning than has previously been acknowledged, and therefore a Feminist approach to translation tends to look at translation more from a cultural perspective than from a linguistic point of view (Snell-Hornby 1990: 82). As a mediator between the source and target texts, should a Feminist translator adhere to the conventional style of translating where the translator remains ‘invisible’, or should a Feminist translator be seen in the translated text?

For female African writers such as Mariama Bâ, Feminist issues emerged as a prime preoccupation. This preoccupation arose out of African women’s desire for emancipation from male discrimination and bias. By offering a sensitive portrayal of women’s struggle in her writing, Mariama Bâ became an advocate for the transformation of the plight of women in Africa, particularly in the Senegalese context. She highlights core aspects of society such as marriage, religion, education, polygyny, female subjugation, social injustice, as well as interracial marriage. Mariama Bâ’s Feminist writing made it imperative to translate her novels so as to convey her message of Feminism on a global scale. Therefore, this research will be conducted

³¹A language forged and used by institutions in a society largely ruled by men (Von Flotow 1991:72).

using this approach to ascertain the extent to which Bâ's Feminist writing was represented in both translations.

3.4. CONCLUSION

Translation being an activity that involves the use of at least two languages is subject to several and varying constraints. These extend beyond the source text, the major constraint arising from the differences in the languages themselves. Translation study is indeed a vast discipline which does not involve only one theory but should be researched from different perspectives. Translation does not only depict the use of two or more languages to convey a message from a source text to a target text, but shows the transfer of culture, with the translator acting as a mediator from a source text level to a target text level.

For a translator, the source text is just one of the many factors that influence the translation process. We are well aware of the fact that translators perform under different conditions which are subject to the difference in text types, difference in languages, peculiar target audience and above all the difference in culture. However, these differences enable the translator to approach any given source texts with a different strategy. These different strategies produce different end results in translation, which may in turn be compared with the source text, to ascertain the level of similarity in both source and target texts. This flexibility in the translation process as illustrated by DTS gives the translator a certain level of objectivity, thereby allowing the translator to explore during the course of the translation.

This objective nature of DTS does not imply that the translator need not adhere to the rule of language, which involves grammar. Of course this is applicable. The important factor lies in the translator remembering the role of a mediator in conveying a message from point A to point B, thereby producing an acceptable translation for the target audience. This objective nature of the translator in the decision making process reminds one of the need for modern day theories such as DTS, which advocates the move for a certain level of independence in translation, thus abandoning the conventional prescriptive approach.

Therefore, given Mariama Bâ's use of Feminist writing as a window through which women's voices can be heard, there is need of theories such as DTS and Feminist translation studies to ascertain the level on which both translators were able to convey Mariama Bâ's Feminist message. As DTS approaches translation from an empirical perspective, this model and the Feminist approach to translation will be incorporated in the analysis of the English translations of Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate*. By so doing this research will attempt to showcase the level of Feminism in Bâ's texts, as well as the portrayal of her Feminist beliefs in the English translations.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. INTRODUCTION

As translations studies scholar Susan Bassnett (1998:136) postulates:

A writer does not just write in a vacuum; he or she is the product of a particular culture, of a particular moment in time, and the writing reflects those factors such as race, gender, age, class and birthplace as well as the stylistic idiosyncratic features of the individual.

The above statement is a clear indication that a writer does not write without a context as this represents the result to be achieved by writing. In the same vein, a translator should be bound by the same principle in his or her translation of any work. As Louise Von Flotow stated during a seminar on the re-translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *The second sex* held at the Centre for translation studies at Barnard College in 2011, translation demonstrates a principle of interdependence. This principle implies that translation is dependent on a source text and the source text is equally dependent on it for 'exposure, readership, interpretation and re-interpretation'. With translation as an indispensable activity, there emerged diverse theories and theoretical reflections to guide it. This diversity stems from the different perspectives and approaches to translation.

This also shows the extent to which texts are embedded in their source cultures and in a similar manner, the target text must be conveyed in a way that accommodates both source and target cultures to ensure a better appreciation of the target text. Simply put, the translator should be able to understand the parameters involved in the production of a source text, as well as the transmission of the same text into the target language. It is important to note that translation is not an activity that all bilingual people can engage in without a proper understanding of the procedures involved, as well as the application of the various theories of translation. The process of translating also requires a level of aesthetic sensitivity in order to convey the message of the source text in the target text. As such, Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS)

allows a translator to be both objective and descriptive in the analysis of any translation. As the German translator Schleiermacher elucidates, a 'genuine translator' is one who attempts to bring two completely separated persons – the author and the reader – together (in Venuti 1991:129). Although it is observed that translations differ from the source, given that they exhibit certain properties not necessarily found in the source text, that results in a register shift; the translator, however, should focus on transferring what is foreign into the target language, thereby creating a similar reaction in the target reader as the reader of the source text, to ensure an accurate comprehension of the message by the reader.

In essence, Mariama Bâ's novels reveal her ideology as a Feminist, as well as the singularities of the Senegalese society in which her novels are rooted. Translators thus have the mandate of ensuring that Bâ's message of Feminism is indeed communicated in a manner that reflects the thinking pattern of the author. In order to effectively examine Mariama Bâ's novels, a comparative study of both the source and target texts will be conducted. This analysis of the translated texts will focus on the representation of the Feminist aspects of Bâ's novels in the target texts. As Kruger and Wallmach (1997:123-124) propose, "To proceed with any comparison, two or more entities must be compared and while differing at some point, they must share certain attributes". As such, to carry out any meaningful analysis of Mariama Bâ's source texts and their English translations, a description and analysis of the source text must first of all be carried out to ensure that there is thorough knowledge of the source text and the milieu in which it is embedded. Following the process and product-oriented approach from the DTS, this research will allow the explanation and description of the Feminist aspect of the source text, as conveyed in the target text. Mariama Bâ's novels to be studied include *Une si longue lettre* (1980), translated into English as *So long a letter* (1981) and *Un chant écarlate* (1981), translated into English as *Scarlet Song* (1986). This study will begin by presenting a brief

synopsis of each of the source texts before progressing to the analysis of the English translations.

4.2. SYNOPSIS OF MARIAMA BÂ'S NOVELS

4.2.1. *UNE SI LONGUE LETTRE*

Une si longue lettre was the first book to win the Noma Award³² for publishing in Africa, an award established in 1979. At the time, the book was considered a classic of modern African literature and has since been translated into 18 languages (cf. Chapter 1). This award was presented to Mariama Bâ in 1980 for a unique novel that was described by the late founder of the foundation as:

[a] striking novel, that was elegantly written and concerned not simply with the female condition in Africa, but more broadly with the difficult adjustment which individuals often have to make in a continent undergoing an intense process of rapid and profound social and cultural change. (Noma Award for publishing in Africa 2009: [sp]).

The book narrates Bâ's story through the eyes of her first-person narrator, Ramatoulaye, who writes a long letter to her childhood friend, Aissatou. The reason for her writing this letter is her recent widowhood. Ramatoulaye's husband, Modou Fall, suddenly dies of a heart attack and, following Islamic ritual, Ramatoulaye must remain in seclusion for a long time. It is important to note that those in seclusion tell stories to while the time away, as in the classic example of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*, which is set in an outbreak of the plague in Tuscany. The plague refugees tell stories to pass the time (Reale 2005:3). In the same way, the letter serves as a means for Ramatoulaye to find some relief from all the pressure and burdens she has to cope

³² The Noma award was established in 1979 by the late Soichi Noma, former president of Kodansha Ltd, a Japanese publishing house. The Noma award for publishing worth \$10,000 is one of the most significant and influential book prizes to honour indigenously published African authors who have written outstanding books. Mariama Bâ was a pioneer recipient of this prize (Zell et al 1983:357).

with. In this letter, she recounts the details of her husband's death and recalls past experiences in both her and Aissatou's lives.

Despite the fact that both women in the novel marry partners of their own choice, they are subjected to scrutiny and subjugation by their husbands and in-laws. This letter also narrates the fate of two marriages: the marriage of Ramatoulaye and Modou Fall, as well as that of Aissatou and Mawdo Ba. Both marriages are initially happy, but fail because of polygamy. Society expects both Ramatoulaye and Aissatou to remain loyal and dutiful wives despite being neglected by their husbands. However, Aissatou bitterly rejects the situation she is faced with by choosing to divorce her husband and furthering her education. She sees her situation as an opportunity to seek complete economic and personal independence. Ramatoulaye, on the other hand, chooses to remain within the polygamous marriage, in the hope that Modou will fulfil his responsibilities as her husband as expected, and this eventually leaves her with the dilemma of raising her twelve children alone. In writing this novel, Mariama Bâ breaks the stereotype of silence that surrounds African women, as she exposes the plight of women in Africa in a deeply rooted patriarchal society.

4.2.2. UN CHANT ÉCARLATE

Mariama Bâ's second novel; *Un chant écarlate* has been translated into seven different languages (cf. chapter 1). The different translations of this novel make Bâ's novels accessible to an international, non-Francophone readership. This story exposes the tyranny of tradition and male chauvinism in a society where women are considered as an inferior gender. In this novel, Mariama Bâ again focuses her attention on the role of women in marriage, but this time she highlights ethnicity and interracial marriages. Bâ explores this from the angle of a foreigner, Mireille de la Vallée, a white girl and daughter of a French diplomat in Senegal who, despite

parental objection, marries her high-school love, Ousmane Gueye. Ousmane is a Black Senegalese Muslim from a poor background, but is able to win Mireille through his intelligence and quest for knowledge. Bâ juxtaposes the two characters in the sense that Ousmane's lifestyle is in direct contrast to that of Mireille.

Mireille makes many sacrifices for the sake of love, including abandoning her family and her religion to become Muslim, moving from Paris to Senegal where she resides with her husband and starts a family. When the mixed couple give birth to their first-born child, Ousmane's family is less than enthusiastic. As a result of this, the family fail to organize an elaborate traditional naming ceremony based on the belief that the birth of a child of mixed race (otherwise known as *métis*, derived from the Latin word 'mixus') would highlight the cultural difference that exists between the couple, thus resulting in stigma. This reaction by Ousmane's family stems from the fact that the community did not easily accept *métissage* (racial mixing) as it was believed that such a child would never fit into society, and is thus seen as a symbol of racial and cultural division. Despite the Senegalese name of the child – 'Gorgui'-, he was nicknamed 'Gnouloule Khessoule', a more pejorative term meaning "not black, not white". This was proof of the poor reception of the child's birth as well as his undefined racial and biological category.

Quand Mireille avait accouché d'un beau garçon à la peau d'ambre et aux cheveux frisés, Yaye Khady avait souffert de la frappante ressemblance du bébé avec le fils de son « sang »...Yaye Khady avait pris l'enfant. Ses lèvres pincées trahissaient son mécontentement...le baptême d'un premier fils devait être « sonore ». Au contraire, ce jour est plus triste qu'un jour de deuil³³ (Bâ 1981b:187-188).

Despite Mireille's many sacrifices, Ousmane is drawn back to his family's cultural life and succumbs to the pressure exerted by his mother and by society, thereby betraying his love for

³³ When Mireille gave birth to a fine boy with amber-coloured skin and curly hair, Yaye Khady had suffered to see the infant's resemblance to the son of her 'blood' ...Yaye Khady had picked up the child. Her pinched lips betrayed her dissatisfaction...the baptism of a firstborn son should be a grand affair, the talk of the town. But this day is sadder than a day of mourning (Bâ 1986:124-125).

Mireille. This leads the marriage to fail, as Ousmane becomes passionately involved with his Senegalese childhood girlfriend, Ouleymatou, who eventually becomes his second wife. Ouleymatou bears him another son, whose birth is greatly appreciated and marked by an elaborate traditional naming ceremony. This appreciation of the second birth, in contrast to the disapproval of the initial birth, represents the racial segregation that existed during the post-colonial era. While a black child signified 'racial purity', an interracial child signified a 'cultural hybridity' that was not acceptable to society at the time. This reaction by Ousmane's family also shows Bâ's introduction of 'negritude' which is seen as an affirmation of the value of African culture and identity.

Ouleymatou accoucha d'un fils et Djibril Guèye vit dans le sexe de l'enfant, le signe du destin...Yaye Khady jubilait. Elle allait enfin occuper la première place d'une cérémonie, en être l'organisatrice, en inspirer l'ordonnancement et surtout bénéficier de l'aide matérielle de tous ³⁴(Bâ 1981b :192-193)

Bâ attributes this marriage's failure to family pressure, particularly from Ousmane's mother, who chooses Ouleymatou over Mireille. For Yaye Khady, Mireille is a foreigner who will never fit into her family-in-law's society, despite her efforts. Mireille is looked upon as an outcast. This exclusion of Mireille from the family leaves her heartbroken. In the end, she kills her own son as a means of protecting him from racial prejudice, and also attempts to kill Ousmane, because of his betrayal of her trust.

Based on the above synopsis of the two novels, the focal point of this study involves highlighting the Feminist aspects of Mariama Bâ's novels, which will facilitate a comparative analysis of these aspects in both the source texts and their English translations.

³⁴Ouleymatou gave birth to a son, and Djibril saw in the child's sex the sign of God's will...Yaye Khady was overjoyed. At last she would occupy the place of honour at a ceremony which she would organise, of which she would be the prime mover and, what is most important, from which she would derive material benefits (Bâ 1986:127-128).

4.3. TRACES OF FEMINISM IN MARIAMA BÂ'S NOVELS

Mariama Bâ's writing seeks to expose such conditions that shape women's lives, a procedure which is similar to that advocated by bell hooks [sic], who defines Feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression" (hooks[sic] 2000:1). Like any other theory of emancipation, the Feminist movement not only seeks to break free from patriarchy, but also to emphasize the value and treatment of women irrespective of race.

In *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate*, Bâ introduces her readers to the predicament which the main characters of both novels face in their respective marriages. The following points represent the focal point of Bâ's Feminism:

1. Patriarchy – According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (2009), patriarchy is defined as "a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it". This is a dominant theme in both novels as Bâ reveals a strong patriarchal system that continues to oppress women and keep them subjugated. This patriarchal structure is evident in African society and culture, which regard men as being superior to women, thus aligning with the following assertion by Simone de Beauvoir:

Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him: she is not regarded as an autonomous being... She is defined and differentiated with reference to men and not with reference to her: she is the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the absolute – she is the other (Beauvoir 1953:16).

In *Une si longue lettre*, Bâ clearly demonstrates how women are subjugated through masculine society. « [...] elle s'ampute de sa personnalité, de sa dignité, devenant une chose au service de l'homme qui l'épouse...sa conduite est conditionnée³⁵ » (Bâ 1981:11). In *Un chant écarlate*, Bâ also demonstrates female subjugation when Mireille discovers that she is treated with less consideration, both by her husband and society. Despite numerous efforts by Mireille to please

³⁵ "[...] she gives up her personality, her dignity, becoming a thing in the service of the man who has married her...her behavior is conditioned" (Bâ 1981a:4).

her husband and his circle of friends, Ousmane and his friends do not appreciate her efforts; they consider it typical for a woman to lead a life of servitude to her male counterparts. According to Ousmane's friends/'cronies' [as translated by Dorothy Blair] «Une femme ne peut être qu'une femme, grande ou petite, noire ou blanche [...] Ousmane est le maître de sa maison! Ousmane a une voix chez lui³⁶ » (Bâ 1981b:132). This statement shows that in the eyes of Bâ's male characters, a woman is relegated to an inferior role, irrespective of her status in society, even if she is educated. A man is considered the 'master' of the house while a woman is likened to an object owned by her 'master' to be used at will. In both novels, Bâ clearly shows women as innocent victims of patriarchal authority.

2. **Polygamy** – The *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (2009) defines polygamy as “the state or practice of having more than one wife or female mate at a time”. Bâ's main characters in both novels are victims of rejection by their husbands due to the immoral nature of the male characters. In each case, she presents the husbands as totally willing participants in and instigators of the dilemma their wives are faced with. In the case of *Ramatoulaye*, the first person narrator, she invests 30 years of her life in marriage, but is later abandoned by her husband Modou, who chooses his own daughter's friend as a second wife. *Ramatoulaye* is overcome with grief and laments:

Et dire que j'ai aimé passionnément cet homme, dire que je lui ai consacré trente ans de ma vie, dire que j'ai porté douze fois son enfant. L'adjonction d'une rivale à ma vie ne lui a pas suffi. En aimant une autre, il a brûlé son passé moralement et matériellement. Il a osé pareil reniement³⁷ (Bâ 1980:23).

³⁶ “A woman's only a woman, tall or short, black or white [...] Ousmane is the master of the house! Ousmane's is the voice that counts” (Bâ 1986: 86).

³⁷ “And to think that I loved this man passionately, to think that I gave him thirty years of my life, to think that twelve times over I carried his child. The addition of a rival to my life was not enough for him. In loving someone else, he burned his past, both morally and materially. He dared to commit such an act of disavowal” (Bâ 1981a: 12).

In a similar manner, Bâ, once again illustrates this theme in her second novel where Mireille is seen as a victim of abandonment as her husband leaves her for a second wife without her knowledge. Bâ's representation of her male characters is such that not only are they portrayed as willing participants in the suppression of women, they are also depicted as having questionable moral traits. She presents her male characters as philanderers who are only after sexual gains and use women to fulfil their sexual desires:

Seule la femme qui momentanément habite le cœur et les sens de l'homme a de l'importance pour lui, accaparant son intérêt et ses élans de conquérant. Son désir comblé, il peut s'apercevoir que "l'unique" ne vaut pas ses devancières³⁸... (Bâ 1981b:237).

3. Unequal opportunities and female subjugation – in a typical patriarchal society as illustrated by Bâ, women remain inferior to men irrespective of their 'acclaimed' status in society. Women are not given the same level of freedom as men, as it is observed that a woman's place remains in the home, as a home maker and not to be seen or heard by society. Although tradition and patriarchal society are intertwined, men interpret tradition to suit their selfish purposes. For Bâ, women face the same level of subjugation irrespective of race. This she clearly represents in *Un chant écarlate* where Mireille's mother – Mathilde de La Vallée – is seen as a docile victim of her husband's domineering and bullying character. Despite the fact that her daughter Mireille left to marry a man the father did not approve of, Mathilde has no choice but to choose her husband over her only daughter. This clearly shows that a woman's cry for freedom is the same everywhere irrespective of race.

Élevée dans une institution religieuse pour filles de familles [sic], elle avait appris entre autres principes à obéir...Mathilde de La Vallée hésitait...et se souvenait. Les problèmes de libéralisation de la femme qu'on inventoriait devant elle, la laissaient indifférente...il ne lui restait

³⁸“Only the woman who momentarily occupies the heart and satisfies the sense of a man is important to him, monopolising his interest and his zest for conquest. Once he has satisfied his desire, he realises that 'the one and only' isn't up to the standard of her predecessors...” (Bâ 1986: 158).

plus que son mari, homme de pierre à server, satisfaire, et applaudir jusqu'à l'éclatement de son cœur³⁹ (Bâ 1981b:119-120).

Also, Bâ ironically criticises this inequality through her protagonist Ramatoulaye, who expressed her concerns to an old suitor; Daouda Dieng, who is now a deputy in the National Assembly:

Nous avons droit, autant que vous, à l'instruction qui peut être poussée jusqu'à la limite de nos possibilités intellectuelles. Nous avons droit au travail impartialement attribué et justement rémunéré... [...] Presque vingt ans d'indépendance! A quand la première femme ministre associée aux décisions qui orientent le devenir de notre pays?...Quand la société éduquée arrivera-t-elle à se déterminer non en fonction du sexe, mais des critères de valeur? ⁴⁰ (Bâ 1980:89-90).

This statement proves that opportunities given to women are not equal to that of their male counterparts, hence the possibility for men to control them. Despite the independence of the country, the division between men and women broadened and, women remained marginalised. Through this statement, Bâ fosters female solidarity and awareness amongst women.

4. Female solidarity/friendship/sisterhood – Bâ's novels show the comforting and healing power of female bonding, which allows women to overcome prejudice and survive the harshness of tradition and society they find themselves in. This female solidarity as presented by Bâ serves as a means of destroying the patriarchal society which is seen as a threat to women's solidarity. Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate* clearly regard female solidarity as a means of integrating women of different social ranking, thereby strengthening their will to survive male prejudice. This friendship is also termed 'sisterhood', as it does not only indicate a blood relationship between women, but shows women who are bound in solidarity to a common cause. Sisterhood and solidarity conveys a revolutionary cry by women to overturn

³⁹She had been brought up in a convent for girls of good family and had learnt among other things, the principle of obedience...Mathilde de La Vallée hesitated...as memories came back. When she heard talk of the problems of women's liberation, she remained indifferent...the only person she had left was her husband, this cold man whom she must wait on, satisfy, applaud, till her heart broke (Bâ 1986: 77-78).

⁴⁰"We have a right, just as you have, to education, which we ought to be able to pursue to the furthest limits of our intellectual capacities. We have a right to equal well-paid employment, to equal opportunities... Nearly twenty years of independence! When will we have the first female minister involved in the decisions concerning the development of our country?...When will education be decided for children on the basis not of sex but of talent?" (Bâ 1981a:61).

the hierarchies of gender, class and race that have plagued women (DeHart 1990:405). As Bâ clearly explains in *Un chant écarlate*:

L'amitié a un code de comportement plus constant que celui de l'amour.
L'amitié peut, dans un cœur, dominer l'affection née des liens de sang.
Un frère et une sœur ne sont pas forcément des amis. L'amitié ne porte pas les stigmates du temps ⁴¹ (Bâ 1981b:228).

The above statement represents the friendship that existed between Mireille and Soukeyna (Ousmane's sister), and between Mireille and Rosalie (the wife of Ousmane's friend). Though their friendship is not as strong as that of the characters in *Une si longue lettre*, both Rosalie and Soukeyna help Mireille adapt to Senegalese ways, so as to withstand the pressure of her marriage although she eventually succumbs (Akung and Onwuegbuche 2011:11).

In the same manner, Bâ portrays an even stronger friendship between Aissatou and Ramatoulaye in *Une si longue lettre*. This bond enables both women to transcend the boundary of gender inequality, which in effect encourages women to form ties that will help them rise against female subjugation. This also shows the epistolary relationship that exists between the two women. This epistolary form serves to reveal the intensity of their friendship. As Ramatoulaye helps Aissatou to overcome her painful experience in a polygamous marriage, Aissatou on the other hand supports Ramatoulaye when she is faced with a similar situation, by buying her friend a car as a means of support. According to Cherekar (2014:409-410), the close friendship of Aissatou and Ramatoulaye allows them to accept their different backgrounds thereby fostering a mutual respect of one another. Their ability to understand and empathise with each other throughout the years causes their friendship to blossom into an even stronger bond. As Ramatoulaye reflects:

L'amitié a des grandeurs inconnues de l'amour. Elle se fortifie dans les difficultés, alors que les contraintes massacrent l'amour. Elle résiste au

⁴¹Friendship has a more constant code of behaviour than that of love. Friendship can be stronger than the affection born of blood-ties. A brother and sister are not necessarily friends. Time does not leave its mark on friendship (Bâ 1986:152).

temps qui lasse et désunit les couples. Elle a des élévations inconnues de l'amour⁴² (Bâ, 1980:79).

This same closeness between the two women and the 'healing powers' of their friendship become basic to the thematic texture of the *Une si longue lettre* (McElenay-Johnson 1999:114).

5. **Female emancipation**—For many centuries, women have had to fight for their survival in a biased and male dominated society. Women also had to face the ultimate challenge of existing as docile objects and mere exotic accompaniment to males. They lacked the voice to express themselves and thus accepted their fate without resistance. This social conditioning stemmed from the traditional and cultural practices which saw women as belonging to an inferior gender hence their domination by men.

Therefore, Bâ's novels call on women to follow the examples of fellow women who were able to withstand the pressures of tradition and society, in order to cultivate the challenging path of sisterhood. Women must be able to offer moral support to each other as a means of restoring the pride and dignity of fellow women. By doing this, they will guarantee nation building which in turn will result in a society filled with equal opportunities for all irrespective of one's gender. Bâ's call is evident in *Une si longue lettre* as she portrays Aissatou as a strong character, who takes a radical decision by divorcing her husband Mawdo Ba and raising her four children alone, rather than remaining in a polygamous marriage. She also makes a choice to be educated, and by doing so she is able to sustain her independence – this is a huge development for Aissatou, considering that women in post-colonial Africa were mainly involved in unskilled labour such as farming and trading. In this case, Mariama Bâ shows that education can be a tool for self-preservation and liberation. Mariama Bâ's insistence on the importance of literacy is not merely

⁴²“Friendship has splendours that love knows not. It grows stronger when crossed, whereas obstacles kill love. Friendship resists time, which wearies and severs couples. It has heights unknown to love” (Bâ 1981a:54).

as a result of fascination with the West but a realisation that literacy is also a tool for empowering women, particularly in post-colonial Africa.

Generally, women are still facing widespread challenges entering the workforce and this challenge dates back to pre- and post-colonial Africa where gender discrimination was predominant, especially where social origins and religion are concerned. Gender remains an area of concern for harnessing the full potential of individuals particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This gender problem is also apparent in Middle Eastern countries where religion hinders employment. In such regions it is believed that a woman's place should be in her home, as a homemaker, although it is widely known that women play an integral role in societies, both modern and ancient. Women are responsible for the upkeep of the household, agriculture, reproduction, amongst others. However, the pre-and post-colonial era saw women being alienated from the lands they owned and used for their daily trade. This withdrawal and control of the lands by men as imposed by the colonial masters implied that women had less diversity in terms of labour and were forced to rely heavily on men, thereby contributing to male supremacy and dominance. There is no doubt that the pre-and post-colonial era presented the African woman with challenges. However, as a display of their resilience, the women responded by standing up for their rights and seeking female emancipation. As illustrated by Bâ, one does not necessarily have to be a Feminist to seek emancipation but must feel the need to rise above subjugation even as an ordinary woman.

Having experienced both the pre-and post-colonial era, Mariama Bâ understands that women's exclusion from education keeps them in exploitative and vulnerable positions, and she presents Aissatou as a clear illustration of a woman aching to free herself from the bondage of tradition. Although the act of liberation is a personal choice, Bâ's call to women informs them of the need

to make such choices in an attempt to put an end to archaic practices and traditions that have kept women subjugated for so long:

Nous étions de véritables sœurs destinées à la même mission d'émancipatrice. Nous sortir de l'enlissement des traditions, superstitions et mœurs; nous faire apprécier de multiples civilisations sans reniement de la nôtre; élever notre vision du monde, cultiver notre personnalité, renforcer nos qualités, mater nos défauts; faire fructifier en nous les valeurs de la morale universelle ⁴³ (Bâ 1980:27-28).

In the conclusion of *Une si longue lettre*, Mariama Bâ emphasizes her stance on female emancipation through the eyes of her first-person narrator, Ramatoulaye, stating:

Les irréversibles courants de libération de la femme qui fouettent le monde, ne me laissent pas indifférente [...] Mon cœur est en fête chaque fois qu'une femme émerge de l'ombre. Je sais mouvant le terrain des acquis, difficile à suivre des conquêtes: les contraintes sociales bousculent toujours et l'égoïsme male résiste. Instruments des uns, appâts pour d'autres, respectées ou méprisées, souvent muselées, toutes les femmes ont presque le même destin que des religions ou des législations abusives ont cimenté ⁴⁴ (Bâ 1980:129).

Bâ calls on the women of Africa to take responsibility for their lives. Based on the scenarios from the two novels, it is tantamount to saying that only a woman can understand and can represent the pains and sufferings of women, the oppression of women and the problems of women. This strong exploration of Feminism is perhaps what makes Bâ's novels a strong voice for the oppressed woman in Africa.

⁴³"We were true sisters, destined for the same mission of emancipation. To lift us out of the bog of tradition, superstition and custom, to make us appreciate a multitude of civilisations without renouncing our own, to raise our vision of the world, cultivate our personalities, strengthen our qualities, to make up for inadequacies, to develop universal moral values in us" (Bâ 1981a: 15).

⁴⁴"I am not indifferent to the irreversible currents of women's liberation that are lashing the world [...] My heart rejoices each time a woman emerges from the shadows. I know that the field of our gains is unstable, the retention of conquests difficult: social constraints are ever-present, and male egoism resists. Instruments for some, baits for others, respected or despised, often muzzled, all women have almost the same fate, which religions or unjust legislations have sealed" (Bâ 1981a: 88).

4.4. CHARACTERISATION OF TRANSLATION STRATEGIES

Translation as a tool for communication plays an important role in facilitating comprehension between two or more parties. Translation is not limited to the transfer of a word from one language to another but involves understanding the intentions of the author and producing a text that conveys the same intentions as the original. However, for the purpose of this analysis, we will limit ourselves to the examination of the strategies used in the translation of Mariama Bâ's novels. These strategies include: literal translation/word-for-word translation and semantic translation (cf. p.44). Furthermore, they represent the main approach used by the translators of Bâ's novels in their English renditions of the two novels.

As Albrecht Neubert states (in Wallmach 2006:14), translation requires a complex set of skills which are acquired differently by the translator. "For this reason, Neubert describes translational creativity as 'derived creativity' – one which involves the manifestation of creative translation strategies, as seen with the creation of Feminist translation strategies which differs from the conventional translation strategies. In view of the above strategies and Neubert's notion of creativity, the following categories of translation (substitution, deletion, addition, borrowing and footnotes) will be used in examining the level of creativity seen in the Feminist translation strategies.

4.5. ANALYSIS OF MARIAMA BÂ'S NOVELS

Mariama Bâ's novels share many common features, especially considering the literary and stylistic devices used in her writing. However, as previously mentioned, the focus of our research will be solely based on the Feminist aspects of the novels. In effect, the novels were published one year apart – *Une si longue lettre* in 1980, and *Un chant écarlate* posthumously in 1981. Bâ's message of Feminism is clearly represented in both novels as the same theme remains dominant. This analysis will be done taking into consideration the above Feminist

aspects of Bâ's novels, which will serve as a '*tertium comparationis*'⁴⁵ (Kruger and Wallmach 1997:123) for the study of both source and target texts. Following Toury's Descriptive Translation Studies, the process of translation involves a shift from the source text (ST). He further proposes the following three-phase methodology for incorporating a description of any given product:

1. Situate the text within the target culture system, looking at its significance or acceptability;
2. Compare the ST and TT for shifts, identifying possible relationships between 'coupled pairs' of ST and TT segments, and attempting generalizations about the underlying concept of translation;
3. Draw implications for decision-making in future translating (Toury 1995 in Munday 2001:112).

The above methodology, as provided by Toury, will facilitate a descriptive analysis of the Feminist aspects of Bâ's novels and their English translations. This will be achieved by comparing both source and target texts for possible shifts, and also by giving a possible explanation of the underlying norms that govern the choices of the translator. For the purpose of this research, the source text, *Une si longue lettre* will be referred to as **ST1**, while its English translation by Modupe Bode-Thomas – *So long a letter* - will be referred to as **TT1**. Similarly, *Un chant écarlate* will be referred to as **ST2**, while its English translation by Dorothy Blair – *Scarlet song* - will be referred to as **TT2**. We will commence this analysis by selecting individual examples from the novels and situating them within their context for close critical analysis. With the *tertium comparationis* established, we begin by examining and comparing the source and target texts at both macro- and micro-textual level, in an attempt to determine the norms and constraints operating on these texts in the specific cultural and historical contexts in which they are found. As Lambert and Van Gorp (1985:48) propose, the degree to which the respective

⁴⁵A common platform for comparison between two texts.

translators adhere to the context that they share with the readers of the target culture will also be examined.

4.5.1. MACRO-TEXTUAL COMPARISON OF THE SOURCE AND TARGET TEXTS

1. Text title(s)

Une si longue lettre is an epistolary novel in the form of a memoir, which reveals the cascade of the past memories and the present pain of Ramatoulaye, who is recently widowed. The letter is also a form of personal therapy as a means of coping with the 'four months' seclusion of widows as mandated by Islam. This process provides Ramatoulaye with an opportunity to reflect inwardly as she corresponds with her friend and soul-sister, Aissatou. Through this long letter Ramatoulaye is able to expose her experiences as an abandoned wife, single mother and recent widow. She is subject to this injustice as a result of the interpretations of tradition and culture in a society that relegates women to the background. Mariama Bâ uses the epistolary genre to highlight the level of subjugation faced by women; her choice of genre serves as a means of engaging her reader in a closer reading of the text as well as having a deeper appreciation of the message. The English translation, *So long a letter*, reveals a close rendering of the source text which indicates a literal translation. Although this literal translation is common between cognate languages (English and French), the translator should be in a position to preserve the same level of ambiguity as contained in the source text. In Modupe Bode-Thomas' translation of *Une si longue lettre*, the ambiguity of the original is sometimes lost in an attempt to preserve the 'foreign flavour' of the original. This is as a result of the translational choices she makes which do not necessarily convey the exact same message as the original intended. On the other hand, *Un chant écarlate*, which focuses on interracial marriage, also contains a level of ambiguity that attracts the reader's attention. Translated as *Scarlet song*, the English version tends to shift away from the literal translation towards a more semantic translation. This translation focuses on the meaning of individual words in the source text, forming a crucial part

of the message to be translated into the target language. Also, the indefinite article 'un' is dropped from the translated version, perhaps to adjust to formal conventions in English. In doing so, the translator preserves the sense of the ST. Such different translational choices reflect the different intentions of both translators.

2. Dedication

The preamble of *Une si longue lettre* contains a dedication by the author which symbolises Bâ's campaign for mutual respect of both sexes:

ST1: À toutes les femmes et aux hommes de bonne volonté (Bâ 1980: [sp]).

TT1: To all women and to men of good will (Bâ 1980: [sp]).

The ST1 reveals a passionate plea for continuity in her Feminist quest. Humanity is made up of individuals, and each individual is an integral part of the whole. Bâ does not advocate animosity between men and women but rather, admonishes both sexes to work together for the benefit of society as a whole. Bâ hands over the baton to young women and also to men who relate empathically to the plight of women, to change the status quo of society. As such, this dedication is Bâ's way of inspiring the conscience of those who tend to promote gender inequality, to create a better way of life for all. The French version first pays attention to the women before men are addressed. For Bâ, women must realise the need for a transformed society, hence the call for them to champion this cause. Her hopes are that through the younger generation, the negative attachment to tradition will be broken and a new modus operandi will be introduced, one that will respect and treat women equally in the face of tradition and culture. This reveals a deeper meaning to Bâ's Feminist message. The English translation of the same dedication results from a literal translation which does not appear precise enough, considering the emphatic tone of the same message in ST1. This translation implies that all of the features of the source text are directly reproduced in the target text.

3. Footnotes

It is observed that whereas both *Une si longue lettre* and *Un chant écarlate* provide footnotes which define and explain some of the local words and expressions for a better comprehension of the novel, the two translations rather present a glossary at the end of the text as a means of explaining the same terms. Bâ's preference of footnotes to glossaries shows her desire to keep readers captivated by providing instant access to explanations of terms in the local language, Wolof. It should, however, be observed that notes are not only placed at the bottom of the page where the word is referred to, but the substance of such notes may also be summarized in the form of tables or glossaries and placed at the back of the text. Both translated texts reveal the translators' preference for glossaries placed at the back of the novels. However, the downside of the use of glossaries is that it breaks the line of thought and compels the reader to continuously turn to the end of the novel for explanations.

Another interesting point is Dorothy Blair's mention of her own name⁴⁶ at the end of her translated text, which reflects the translator's visibility in the text. Although it is obvious that the text is a translation of the original, Dorothy Blair gives an acknowledgement at the end of the book, and signs off with her name, thus indicating the need to make her presence felt in the novel. While Lawrence Venuti (1995:1) advocates for translator invisibility resulting in a translated text being transparent and devoid of any stylistic peculiarities and references to the translator, Von Flotow's Feminist strategies defend translator visibility, thus displaying a level of intervention by the translator (Von Flotow 1991:72).

⁴⁶ I wish to acknowledge the friendly assistance of Ahmed Sheikh with the explanation of certain Wolof words. Dorothy S. Blair (Bâ 1986:171).

4.5.2. MICRO-TEXTUAL COMPARISON OF THE SOURCE AND TARGET TEXTS

This involves the identification of shifts on different linguistic levels which include the lexical level and the grammatical choices. As such, this section focuses mainly on mapping out the Feminist aspects of the STs which actually contribute to conveying Bâ's Feminism, to ascertain the level to which this Feminism was relayed in the TTs.

As evidence of the novel's epistolary form and Bâ's creative use of this genre, *Une si longue lettre* begins with an introductory message from Ramatoulaye - who is clearly distraught at the death of her husband - to her friend Aissatou,:

ST1: Aissatou, j'ai reçu ton mot. En guise de réponse, j'ouvre ce cahier, point d'appui, dans mon désarroi: notre longue pratique m'a enseigné que la confiance noie la douleur (Bâ 1980:7).

Back translation: Aissatou, I received your letter. In response, I am opening this book, a support in my distress: our long experience has taught me that confidence drowns pain

TT1: Dear Aissatou, I have received your letter. By way of reply, I am beginning this diary, my prop in my distress. Our long association has taught me that confiding in others allays pain (Bâ 1981a:1).

The first sentence in TT1 catches the attention of the reader as it lays emphasis on the epistolary form of the novel. It also provides an interpretative insight into the body of the novel and shows Ramatoulaye's struggles as she deals with her husband's polygamous marriage, his death and the traditions that must be observed. On the other hand it is obvious in the original French version; the opening line of this text intended for Aïssatou opens with a surprisingly curt salutation. In the French one finds no hint of emotion or warmth as the reader might expect, given that this is a correspondence between soul-sisters upon the death of the husband of one of them. The English translation reveals a clear indication of a change of the terms of address. Note the use of the word 'dear' in the English translation, indicating a level of formality and politeness which are not overtly conveyed in the French original, as one would expect from close friends. This signifies the addition of a new word not originally found in the ST. While

simple preservation of the original word may not provide the desired effect, resulting in obscurity, the translator may decide to keep the original item but supplement the text with whatever information is judged necessary, hence Modupe Bode-Thomas' addition of the word 'dear'. Furthermore, the word 'mot' reveals the translator's choice of the word 'letter' as a suitable equivalent, given that the word 'mot' also signifies 'word', 'note'. Not only does the translator change the terms of address, she also interestingly changes the meaning of the word 'cahier' in the English version. The word 'cahier' is replaced with 'diary' instead of notebook. This shows the translator's choice of substitution as a strategy. This translation, although not inaccurate, tends to deny the source text its richness and ambiguity. The choice of the word 'diary' in the English version, takes the text away from its dialogic nature, and moves it towards a purely introspective text that is likened to a diary.

The use of addition is also evident in ST2, where the translator introduces words to the TT2 that are not originally contained in ST2. One of such uses of addition is illustrated in the following statement, which occurs as Mireille re-examines her life and the fact that she is left alone in a foreign country with a cheating and polygamous husband.

ST2: Et puis l'infidélité n'est point l'exclusivité des Noirs! (Bâ 1981b:242).

Back translation: And then, infidelity is not the exclusivity of Blacks!

TT2: And when all's said and done, black men are not the only ones who are unfaithful to their wives! (Bâ 1986:162).

Note the selective replacement of the two words in the SL and TL. The underlined words reveal the differences in both the ST2 and TT2. While ST2 makes no mention of an additional word to the introductory sentence, the TT2 introduces the same sentence with 'And when all's said and done'. This suggests the translator's conscious decision to introduce an additional linguistic element that is not contained in the ST, thereby manipulating the SL in the TL. The word 'exclusivité' is subsequently substituted for 'only ones'. Furthermore, while the ST2 makes use

of an ambiguous word, 'Noirs', the translator capitalises on the gendered nature of the French language to provide an in-depth meaning to the word, 'Noirs', which is translated as 'black men'. As such, the introduction of the word 'wives' gives the TT an additional meaning and removes all forms of ambiguity from the TT. Basing this hypothesis on the Feminist translation strategy, hijacking is used as a strategy that clearly rebels against the ambiguity of the ST by deconstructing and transforming the original text. As Louise Von Flotow states, this translation strategy makes the feminine visible in the translation, thereby tailoring the TT to conform to the Feminist standards (Von Flotow 1997:44).

Mariama Bâ stirs the emotions of the reader by appealing to their imagination as a means of indirectly compelling them to act. She presents the case of Ramatoulaye who, after twenty-five years of service, dedication to her husband (Modou Fall) and the birth of twelve children, is abandoned for the school friend of his older daughter. Modou not only marries a younger bride, but also mortgages their home and squanders the resources jointly accumulated over twenty-five years of marriage to buy cars and villas to meet the frivolous needs of his young bride and her family. Despite Ramatoulaye being a deserving and non-vindictive wife, even in her present pain, equal consideration is given to both wives by the sisters in law irrespective of their ranks.

ST1 : Nos belles-sœurs traitent avec la même égalité trente et cinq ans de vie conjugale. Elles célèbrent, avec la même aisance et les mêmes mots, douze et trois maternités. J'enregistre, courroucée, cette volonté de nivellement qui réjouit la nouvelle belle-mère de Modou (Bâ 1980:11).

TT1: Our sisters-in-law give equal consideration to thirty and five years of married life. With the same ease and the same words, they celebrate twelve maternities and three. I note with outrage this desire to level out, in which Modou's new mother-in-law rejoices (Bâ 1981a:4).

I have chosen to highlight the important points in the above ST and TT to show the difference between the diction of the author and that of the translator. While Bâ's style reveals the emphasis and intensity of the message she portrays, the translation can be considered as stiff and unidiomatic given that the translator misses out on the exact meaning and emotion Bâ is

trying to convey in her writing. In a bid to convey a literal translation of Bâ's message, this choice of translation renders the translation weighty and emotionless. The use of the word 'maternities' in the TT, diminishes the effect and hidden meaning of the word. Bâ's use of the French version 'maternité' encompasses the process of pregnancy to childbearing. However, the use of the term 'maternity' in English is an orthodox way of expression and could be replaced with the word 'pregnancy/motherhood' which is a more conventional way of speaking. The number twelve and three represents a parallel comparison between the numbers of times each wife has conceived as a means of placing emphasis on the inequality that existed in the treatment of both wives. Bâ places emphasis on the Feminism in her writing but the translator represents her idea in a literal manner by describing the pregnancies as 'twelve maternities and three'. A suitable translation of the phrase would be twelve phases of motherhood in comparison to three. Translation should not only focus on the readership, but about conveying the exact ideas of the author so as to create a similar impact on the readers. In this case, the translator has provided a literal translation of the target text and once again, diminishes the impact of the text on the readers.

Mariama Bâ does not strive for linguistic substitutes for loanwords. When required, she simply borrows a Wolof expression and incorporates it into the French version without adapting the word to suit the SL. Rather, she provides footnotes, explaining the meaning of the words in order to provide clarity on such terms for an audience outside the Senegalese context. Some of the examples of the loanwords contained in *Une si longue lettre* include: 'gongo', 'Djin', 'djou-djoug', 'ndol', 'gnac', 'safara', 'guer' 'boubou' etc. Bâ's retention of these Wolof words in the SL aims at preserving the authenticity of the Senegalese language and culture, thereby showcasing her remarkable ability to write and incorporate ideas consecutively in French and in Wolof. While it is true that no one can be commanded to react emotionally, Bâ's literary device showcases the use of hyperbolic words that appeal to the emotions of the reader, thereby

provoking an aspiration for goodwill. An example is seen in Ramatoulaye's expression on the state of affairs of women who are used by their husbands and discarded for younger brides.

ST1: J'avais entendu trop de détresses pour ne pas comprendre la mienne. Ton cas Aissatou, le cas de bien d'autres femmes, méprisées, reléguées ou échangées, dont s'est séparé [sic] comme d'un boubou⁴⁷ usé ou démodé (Bâ 1980:62).

TT1: I had heard of too many misfortunes not to understand my own. There was your own case, Aissatou, the cases of many other women, despised, relegated or exchanged, who were abandoned like a worn-out or out-dated boubou (Bâ 1981a:41).

The above example shows Mariama Bâ's comparison of an abandoned wife to a 'worn-out boubou'. This implies that just as a boubou, as an attire of value with its intricate embroidery loses its value and is discarded if out of fashion or worn-out, so can a woman be discarded by the presence of a younger bride. As such Bâ exaggerates the condition of a woman to evoke an emotional reaction from her readers. However, the translation of the underlined words in TT2 reflect a case of mistranslation as the translator opts for the word 'out-dated' to describe 'boubou' which as a fashion item, cannot be classified as 'out-dated' but rather 'out of fashion'.

Bâ also uses loanwords in her writing of *Un chant écarlate*. Some of the words used in the ST2 are also reflected in the ST1. Some examples include: 'guer', 'boubou', 'gongo', etc. Another example is seen in ST2 where Ousmane's white wife - Mireille - is referred to as a 'Toubab'.⁴⁸ What is interesting in both translations is the retention of Bâ's Wolof terms in the translations. Also, the fact that these words are italicized, emphasize the translators' choice of staying true to the original words from the SL. Faced with a reference to an entity which has no close equivalent in the target culture, a translator may simply decide to retain the source text term in

⁴⁷ This is a sort of voluminous robe worn as an outer garment by men and women in parts of West Africa.

⁴⁸ The word Toubab means "European" and is a name by which whites are designated in Francophone West Africa. The term in itself does not have derogatory connotations and it is used to label foreigners. Etymologically, "Toubab" is derived from the distortion of the Arabic word "Tabib" which means Doctor. The colonial era saw many white missionary doctors settle in Francophone West Africa hence their being called Toubab. In the Wolof language of Senegal, the verb "Toub" means "to convert" or "to change" and notably, the French colonizers and Missionary doctors attempted to convert many Africans to adopt their own foreign beliefs and religion (Curry 2007:1).

the translation. Both translators do not adapt the words to suit the target audience, but just like Bâ, they provide a glossary of the terms with their explanations. In so doing, the sense of the ST is preserved in the TL. The advantage of the borrowing strategy is that it brings an original nuance to the word in the TL. Also, Ousmane's friends prove their masculinity by showing little respect for Mireille. Rather, they ignore her rules in her own home as they believe that a woman has no say in her husband's house. Despite the saying that 'a woman's place is in the home, men like Ousmane's friends display a high level of chauvinism thus espousing misogynistic views publicly.

ST2: Un Nègre marié à une Toubab qui conserve des rapports avec père, mère, famille et amis tient du miracle, sans exagération...Ousmane est le maître de sa maison! Ousmane a une voix chez lui (Bâ 1981b:132).

TT2: A black man who marries a Toubab, and keeps up with his father, mother, family and friends, is something of a miracle, and that's no exaggeration...Ousmane is the master of the house! Ousmane's is the voice that counts (Bâ 1986:86).

Bâ uses the word 'Ousmane a une voix chez lui' which can be interpreted as Ousmane has a say/voice in his house. However, the translation takes a rather semantic turn which can be seen as assertive as the same sentence is translated as 'Ousmane's is the voice that counts'. This sees the translator's substitution of the word 'voix' with an apostrophe 's', thereby showcasing a more conventional approach to translation, as well as a shift in translation. Here, there is no attempt at providing a literal translation of this part of the text in the TL. This is also common in Feminist translations where the translator tends to be assertive, thereby painting a lively and vivid picture of the TT.

The literal transfer of the SL expressions results in gaps in the cohesion of a given text. As Mona Baker (1992: 217) explains, "pragmatics is the study of the language in use. It is also the study of the meaning conveyed and manipulated by participants in a communicative situation and not as generated by the linguistic system".

ST1: Mon cœur est en fête chaque fois qu'une femme émerge de l'ombre. Je sais mouvant le terrain des acquis, difficile la survie des conquêtes : les contraintes sociales bousculent toujours et l'égoïsme male résiste... instruments des uns, appâts pour d'autres, respectées ou méprisées, souvent muselées, toutes les femmes ont presque le même destin que des religions ou des législations abusives ont cimenté (Bâ 1980 :129).

TT1: My heart rejoices each time a woman emerges from the shadows. I know that the fields of our gains is[sic] unstable, the retention of conquests difficult: social constraints are ever-present, and male egoism resists...instruments for some, baits for others, respected or despised, often muzzled, all women have almost the same fate, which religions or unjust legislation have sealed (Bâ 1981a:88).

The above translation reveals a very literal/word for word translation of the ST which blurs the meaning in the TT. As Newmark (1988:45) explains, literal translation respects the source text and conveys the information in the target text as a direct translation of the source where the lexical words are translated singly out of context despite the grammatical constructions being converted to their nearest TL equivalents. An example is the translation of the ST expression 'difficile la survie des conquêtes' as 'the retention of conquests difficult' in the TT. Although the initial expression in the ST may be loaded with meaning, the meaning is lost in the TL thus making the exact same expression meaningless to the target reader as such; a suitable translation of the same expression will be 'the difficulty surviving these challenges'. However, in a bid to use a literal translation as a strategy, the translator should pay extra attention to the meaning and context of the word used in the TL. A back translation of the underlined word 'la survie' means survival; however, the translator chooses to interpret the same word as 'retention' which changes the meaning of the word, thus taking it out of context and blurring the meaning of the word. Furthermore, the second underlined word, 'appâts', is translated as 'baits' in the TT. However, given the context of the text in the SL, the word should be reflected in the singular in the TL and not plural as indicated in the TT2 (bait and not baits). As translation involves a process of decoding and encoding language units, the translator must be aware of the relevance of a message that activates the same meaning in the TL. As language patterns differ

from country to country, the translator as a decision maker should be in a position to make choices that will facilitate a better comprehension of the text.

Another example of Modupe Bodé-Thomas' translational choice of literal translation is seen below:

ST1 : Je n'étais donc pas trompée. Je n'intéressais plus Modou et le savais. J'étais abandonnée : une feuille qui voltige mais qu'aucune main n'ose ramasser, aurait dit ma grand'mère (Bâ 1980 :77).

TT1: I was not deceived, therefore. I no longer interested Modou, and I knew it. I was abandoned: a fluttering leaf that no hand dares pick up, as my grandmother would have said (Bâ 1981a: 52).

An interpretative analysis of this translation shows the need to guard against adhering too closely to literal translation, which can result in cases of mistranslation of the original intended idea. The literal rendition of the above translation results in an incorrect translation of the original. Note the use of the punctuation in the TT1. Modupe Bodé-Thomas presents a close rendition of the ST, thereby leading to an inappropriate use of punctuation in the English translation. She inserts a comma after the first line of words, and ends abruptly with a full stop. This action changes the sense and the structure of the message thereby invalidating the translation done in this instance.

On the other hand, Blair's semantic approach is not a consistent pattern in her translation as she tends to adopt a literal translation of some expressions. An example is shown below:

ST2: Seule la femme qui momentanément habite le cœur et le sens de l'homme a de l'importance pour lui, accaparant son intérêt et ses élans de conquérant. Son désir comblé, il peut s'apercevoir que « l'unique » ne vaut pas ses devancières (Bâ 1981b :237).

TT2: Only the woman who momentarily occupies the heart and satisfies the sense of a man is important to him, monopolising [sic] his interest and his zest for conquest. Once he has satisfied his desire, he realizes that 'the one and only' isn't up to the standard of her predecessors... (Bâ 1986:158).

The above illustration reveals Dorothy Blair's choice of literal translation which like Modupe Bodé-Thomas, results in ambiguity as she interprets the word 'le sens de l'homme' as representing 'the sense of a man', thus depriving the expression of its originality and richness. Her translation fails to capture Bâ's original intention in the word 'le sens de l'homme' which represents a metaphorical expression that shows the inconsistency of man's desire of women as it affects 'all' of his senses. However, the overall impression of Blair's translation is that it is TL oriented, thus creating a strong impression on the target reader.

4. Change in tenses

As Mona Baker (1992:98) explains, tense and aspect are grammatical categories which indicate time and aspectual relations in a large number of languages. An example is seen in ST1 where the translator consciously changes the tense in the TL:

ST1 : Je ne renonce pas à refaire ma vie. Malgré tout – déceptions et humiliations – l'espérance m'habite (Bâ 1980:131).

Back translation: I am not giving up on rebuilding my life. Despite everything – disappointments and humiliations – hope still lives on within me.

TT1: I have not given up wanting to refashion my life. Despite everything – disappointments and humiliations – hope still lives on within me (Bâ 1981a:89).

Each action performed in time, is marked to show whether the event in question is connected to a past, present or future. In this instance, the use of the present indicative tense; 'je ne renonce pas' signifies Ramatoulaye's determination to rise above her present situation following her personal assessment of her life. She realises that the journey to rebuilding her life is a continuous process, one which she is only starting. The translation on the other hand, presents the same sentence using a past tense; 'I have not given up', which would imply that this process of rebuilding her life has already been completed. Another example is seen below:

ST1 : Je pleurais de joie et de tristesse mêlées [sic]: joie d'être aimé de mes enfants, tristesse d'une mère qui n'avait pas les moyens de changer le cours des choses (Bâ 1980 :79).

Back translation: I wept with mixed joy and sadness: joy of being loved by my children, sadness of a mother who did not have the means to change the course of things.

TT1: I shed tears of joy and sadness together: joy in being loved by my children, the sadness of a mother who does not have the means to change the course of events (Bâ 1981a:53).

Once again, the underlined words show a change of tense from the imperfect tense, thus representing a mother who, at the time did not have the means to change the course of events, but is making the necessary effort to effect a change. The translator's use of the present tense therefore symbolizes a mother who accepts her present situation and does nothing further to improve.

5. Active and passive voice in translation

Voice is a grammatical category which defines the relationship between a verb and its subject (Baker, 1992:102). In the active clauses, the subject performs the action designated by the verb, while in the passive clause; the subject becomes dormant and is instead being acted upon by the verb. The example below from ST1 reflects the change of voice in translation:

ST1: Tu ne t'inquiétais pas de Mawdo. Oui, tu étais bien là, le passé écrasé sous ton talon. Tu étais là, victime innocente d'une injuste cause et pionnière hardie d'une nouvelle vie (Bâ 1980:53).

Back translation: You did not care about Mawdo. Yes, you were there, the past crushed under your heel. You were there, an innocent victim of an unjust cause and brave pioneer of a new life.

TT1: You did not care about Mawdo. Yes, indeed, there you were, the past crushed beneath your heel. There you were, an innocent victim of an unjust cause and the courageous pioneer of a new life (Bâ 1981a:34).

Note that the form of the verb changes the passive clause to indicate that its subject is the affected unit rather than the object, thus displaying a change of modality in the translated version.

In view of the above analysis, we have successfully highlighted the specific characteristics of Bâ's Feminism in the STs and the way in which both translators have mapped them into the

target texts. As such, the following chapter will therefore analyse both translators' choice of strategies to ascertain if Bâ's Feminism is indeed reflected in the translations.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this analysis was to attempt to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Given the Feminist nature of Mariama Bâ's novels, to what extent and in what ways were the translators able to produce equivalent English translations of the source texts, based on the existing theories of Feminist translation?
2. Does the difference between African Feminism and Western Feminism have an impact on the translations of the source texts?
3. Are Feminist translators bound by a different code of ethics from non-Feminist translators?

Having provided an insight to the texts under discussion, it seemed necessary to present the Feminist thought contained in the texts as this constitutes the foundation upon which these novels were written. However, faced with the challenge of not being able to interview either the translators or the publishing house for a better understanding of the translation procedures and strategies used, we have presented a holistic and descriptive approach in the analysis of the novels and their translations as a means of facilitating a better understanding of the translated versions. In order to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the texts and their translations, a sociological approach was first and foremost utilised. This sociological approach revealed the circumstances surrounding the composition of Mariama Bâ's novels such as the biography of the author, social and historical factors like the influence of the post-colonial era, which is relevant for the understanding of her novels. From a theoretical stand point, emphasis was placed on existing Feminist translation theory. This theory served as a benchmark in an attempt to ascertain how successful both translators were in conveying Bâ's Feminist beliefs. This

theoretical approach has also allowed us to understand the logic behind the Feminist approach to translation and its use in translating Bâ's novels.

The methodological aspect of this research focused on the use of descriptive analysis in order to ensure a detailed mapping of the distinctive Feminist characteristics in both the novels and their translations. This descriptive aspect of the research led to a comparison of the source and target texts based on the models outlined within the framework of Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS). The analysis commenced with an initial comparison of the paratextual elements of both source and target texts before progressing to the analysis of the Feminist aspects of the two texts. Having established from the analysis in the previous section that both translators chose differing strategies, it is important to compare Modupe Bodé-Thomas' strategy to that of Dorothy Blair. When analysing the transfer of Bâ's Feminist beliefs in accordance with her novels, it becomes apparent that Modupe Bodé-Thomas' preference for literal translation as a strategy in *So long a letter*, is revealed in her renderings of the ST in the TL. She provides a close rendition of the TT which is reflected in the syntactic structure and sequence of information. This is the case due to the highly cognate nature of both languages (French-English). By contrast, Dorothy Blair makes the most alterations to the ST by means of dominant translation strategies such as omission, substitution and addition. This she achieves by restructuring the sequence of details in the TT. Whereas Modupe Bodé-Thomas utilizes literal translation that tends to give a subtle meaning to an expression in the ST, Dorothy Blair has a tendency to create strong expressions in an attempt to place emphasis on the Feminist message contained in the ST. This effort shows a flexible and creative rendition of *Un chant écarlate* in the TL. This flexibility and creativity displayed in Dorothy Blair's translation shows her move towards a more semantic approach in conveying meaning from the SL to the TL. This

would imply that, where Dorothy Blair opts for free modulation⁴⁹ as a strategy which results in a semantic translation, Modupe Bodé-Thomas employs more instances of literal translation.

Thus, according to Oana-Helena Andone in her article entitled *Gender issues in translation* (2002:146):

Some translators decide to translate literally and thus focus on the meaning of the Feminist text. They eliminate the wordplay and humour, the irony and jocular effect of the original. This makes the target text more serious than the source text, but at the same time it neutralizes the Feminist experimental language and by doing so deprives the text of much of its Feminist quality.

Although Modupe Bodé-Thomas' use of literal translation stems from the desire to remain faithful to the intention of the author, her rendition of metaphorical expressions in the target language robs the expression(s) in the source text of their richness and ambiguity, thereby leaving the translated version as a mere word for word rendition of the source.

Furthermore, by comparing both translations, it does not go unnoticed that a common factor exists between them. This common factor pertains to both translators' choice of retaining the Senegalese names and Wolof loanwords as used in the STs. In both texts, the translators make no attempt to use adaptation as a translation strategy. To an extent, both translators follow the principle of the adoption of Lawrence Venuti's 'foreignisation' as a strategy which preserves the exotic culture of Bâ's native Senegalese society as depicted in the source texts. This strategy maintains the relevance of the author's cultural identity in the writing of a given text. As such, this strategy of foreignisation can best be understood in the light of the prevailing creative trend of African writers at the time, who preferred to introduce elements of their local dialect and culture in the novels they were writing. The message was not adapted to suit the target audience but was written in a manner that heightened the Senegalese context in which the

⁴⁹This is an oblique translation procedure which involves a variation of the form of the message, which is usually achieved by a change in the point of view (Venuti 2000:89).

novels were rooted. Furthermore, another conspicuous feature of both texts is the inclusion of the translators' names on the first inside page of the book. This indicates a foreignisation strategy whereby the publisher makes it clear to the reader that the text is indeed a translation of the original text written in another language.

A positive aspect of the strategies utilised by both translators, is the fact that they understood Bâ's creativity and language hybridity portrayed in her writing of the novels, and did not put aside the African culture and language in favour of a language that did not convey the same level of information as the original texts. Considering the content and form of *Une si longue lettre*, although situated in a Senegalese context, Modupe Bodé-Thomas is charged with the responsibility of conveying the 'Africanness' as well as Bâ's Feminist beliefs in a manner that reflects Bâ's initial ideas. This is done to enable the translated version to convey the African aesthetic in a European language, thus facilitating an international readership of the text. In a similar manner, *Un chant écarlate*, although focusing on interracial marriages does not fail to convey the richness of the African aesthetic values and concepts in Bâ's style of writing. As such, Dorothy Blair is also charged with the mandate of maintaining a blend of the Africanness and the European culture as contained in the ST to facilitate a better comprehension by the target audience.

In asking and answering questions 2 and 3 above, the difference between African Feminism and Western Feminism lies in the fact that African Feminism raises a universal awareness which sympathises with African women's histories, present realities as well as their future expectations. Western Feminism on the other hand advocates for gender neutrality and is even termed 'extreme'. However, the fact that race is a cornerstone for many arguments about the distinguishing factor between African and Western Feminisms has led to some sort of resistance of the word 'Feminism'. In light of the above, while it cannot be categorically said that Modupe Bodé-Thomas' translation of Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* is guided by the concept of

African Feminism, her 'conservative' translational choices make it possible to identify her with this school of thought. However, a further study will also be conducted to validate this hypothesis. Dorothy Blair's 'bold' choices reveal vivid aspects of the feminist translation theory which makes her more inclined towards the Feminist school of thought. Looking at translation from the angle of *Skopostheorie*⁵⁰, a 'good translation' is one that fulfils a specific purpose of the translation project. As Anthony Pym states, "a traditional ethics of translation is founded on the notion of fidelity" (Pym 2003: [sp]). However, this traditional ethics of fidelity has aided in perpetuating inequalities in the field of translation because it ignores the difference that exists between languages and cultures and how these can be manipulated by translators. In other words, even outside of specific Feminist and postcolonial projects, translation cannot be contemplated as if it functioned in a vacuum, free from any extra-linguistic factor.

As the complexities of translation gain visibility, the role of translators as well as their individual choices is increasingly far from uniform. For instance, Modupe Bodé-Thomas choice of literal translation as a strategy tends to downplay certain aspects of Bâ's Feminism in the TT. Dorothy Blair's own choice of semantic translation does not see her TT as 'mechanical'. She also asserts herself in her translation through a strategy that brings light to the cross-cultural interactions taking place within the TT. Moreover, it is important to recognise that the ideology of translation is quite complex and cannot be governed by a single rule as translators are always required to make choices which may or may not be accepted by everyone. According to Maria Tymoczko (2006:453):

Translators must make choices: they cannot capture all aspects of a source text, and their choices establish a place of enunciation, as well as a context of affiliation...translators must set priorities for their translations. They must make choices about what to translate and what to silence. Translation is thus a metonymic process.

⁵⁰ The work 'Skopos' is the Greek word for purpose. Therefore, this theory maintains that translational action is determined by its purpose (Reiss and Vermeer 1984:101).

In light of the above, translators, irrespective of the specific school of thought, should be guided by 'best practices' which will help to align the translation process as well as produce meaningful translations for the intended audience.

In conclusion, although both translators are translating the same author, there is little similarity between the two translators' choice of strategy. Modupe Bodé-Thomas' translation is characterised by a vast use of literal translation strategies and does not present a cohesive form which could be likened to a Feminist translation. Of course, this can be as a result of the translator's individual norms which would explain the choices of the strategies used in the translations, rather than the general norms of Feminist translation. On the other hand, Dorothy Blair attempts to distance herself from the use of literal translation as a dominant strategy, thus revealing a lesser number of expressions translated literally. Her choice of modulation as a strategy represents her rejection of literal translation as a sole strategy. According to Kim Wallmach (2006:23):

It can be said that Feminist translation provides an admirable demonstration of the workings of ideology in texts. It illustrates how a principle, or a belief, linked to power relationships is transmuted, through language, as an effect of discourse, and becomes naturalised.

Feminist translation signifies difference despite similarity. As such this difference shines through the translations done by both Dorothy Blair and Modupé Bode-Thomas. While Dorothy Blair's translation can be seen in the context of a Feminist translation as she attempts to make the feminine visible in language in order to subvert patriarchy, Modupé Bode-Thomas' translation produces a very literal translation of the ST which tends to distort the effect of the intended message thereby making it more ambiguous and rigid in the translated version. Therefore, the entirety of this research indicates that the Feminist translator's shift from prescriptive translation studies to descriptive translation studies serves as a means of defining and establishing

strategies that are peculiar to the Feminist translators irrespective of the region the translators find themselves in.

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