# Compte rendu

## Ouvrage recensé :

Vanessa Leonardi. *Gender and Ideology in Translation: Do Women and Men Translate Differently? A Contrastive Analysis from Italian into English.* Bern, Peter Lang, 2007, 323 p.

par Carolyn Shread

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**Vanessa Leonardi.** ***Gender and Ideology in Translation: Do Women and Men Translate Differently? A Contrastive Analysis from Italian into English*****. Bern, Peter Lang, 2007, 323 p.**

The title of Vanessa Leonardi's book is a promising one, and her project close to the heart of the feminist translator writing this review. Leonardi's contribution to the field lies primarily in her application of the new amalgam of critical contrastive text linguistics, which combines three different linguistic methodologies in order to build "a comparative framework for a contrastive analysis of the translation strategies of male and female translators" (p. 93). This approach is modeled on the systematic study of language that tugs translation towards its association with linguistics, while Leonardi's Cultural Studies interest might have pulled her towards further engagement with recent trends in the field of Translation Studies.

Leonardi divides her argument along classical lines with an overview of theoretical issues followed by empirical analyses of Italian to English translations. Her translation methodology is defined first and foremost by her total acceptance of equivalence as the goal of translation. In this conception, the guiding ideals of accuracy and faithfulness remain unchallenged, the role of the translator is minimized, and the ethic is that fabled "neutrality." Indicators of a translator's "mediation" in a text are invariably viewed as failing to meet an ideal in which the translator would find the closest match with the least intervention. Visibility is treated as a deviant practice on the part of the translator—here usually a "feminist translator" who, unlike more compliant and correct translators, seeks to assert her ideology through "distortions" in the translated texts. Leonardi's own translation ideology is therefore one in which the target will never be anything but a derivative imitation premised on loss, and the power relations between source and target text invariably favor the source.

One point of potential confusion is that, while the title of this book inscribes it within the field of gender and hence, for North American readers, within Gender Studies, the way the term is used in the book more often aligns it with biological

sex than constructed gender. In the European context in which the book was conceived, this interpretation of such a powerful term may be less misleading, but nevertheless, from a Translation Studies perspective, the potential for gender affiliations to exceed the biological sex of author, translator, or fictional characters, is lost. Equally problematic is an underlying heteronormative opposition implicit in the male/female (as opposed to masculine/feminine) reading of gender.

In the analysis of four translations, two each by Stuart Hood and Frances Frenaye, of four texts, by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Carlo Levi and two by Dacia Maraini, Leonardi explores different combinations of the sexes, to consider, in a systematized reading of the various translation ranks, whether differences in the work of these particular translators might be ideologically and/or gender driven. Meticulously exploring grammatical, textual, lexical, semantic and pragmatic levels of translation, Leonardi's accusations of inconsistency in translation strategies reveal her preference for scientific rule or method over creative inspiration, placing translation technique within a closely circumscribed ideal of equivalent matches.

A serious weakness in Leonardi's project lies in the selection of translations. It is not, as she openly acknowledges, that they are not representative; rather, the translations she analyses by women date from 1948 and 1963, that is, from early periods in the feminist movement, moreover, from a time when the concept of feminist translation had not yet been articulated. "Feminist" translation is defined here as translators who use "strong" language or who intervene in the text through omission, addition or explication—a far cry from the creative experiments and in-depth theoretical positioning of feminist translators from the 1980s onwards.

Leonardi's less than ground-breaking conclusion is that "from the point of view of gender differences, this work attempted to show that a translation carried out by a male translator might also be worth investigation because it could be ideologically slanted just as in the case of any female or feminist translation" (p. 303). Indeed, the thesis lacks a clear definition

and consideration of what exactly "ideology" is, and would have benefited from more theoretical discussion of this key term. Instead, "feminist translation" is used here as a foil, representing the extreme of ideology in translation—as if all texts are not ideological, whether or not this is consciously expressed and assumed by their authors.

Overall, while the clarity of expression and thoroughness of Leonardi's approach is admirable, and I certainly benefited from confronting such an unequivocal exposition of the ideals and methods of equivalence-based approaches to translation, as a (feminist) translator committed to identifying a text's ideology and engaging in it in terms of my own ideologies, I can only conclude that the question of differences in translation may not lie so much in gender as in the ideologies of translation theories.

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**Anthony Pym, Miriam Shlesinger, Daniel Simeoni, dirs. *Beyond Descriptive Translation Studies. Investigation in homage to Gideon Toury*. Amsterdam et Philadelphia, Benjamins, 2008, i-xii, 417 p.**

**Toury et le tournant descriptiviste**

Dans ce volume, il est question de réfléchir sur l'au-delà du descriptivisme élaboré dans les années soixante-dix par Even-Zohar, Gideon Toury et José Lambert, au moment où la traductologie cherchait à s'affranchir des modèles théoriques plutôt statiques et normatifs issus de la linguistique moderne. Influencé par Nida, Catford et Even-Zohar, le travail de Toury est également indissociable des influences européennes, notamment du formalisme russe (Jakobson, Tynjanov) et de la sémiotique en France (Barthes, Genette, Greimas, Todorov) (Simeoni, p. 330). Ainsi, le descriptivisme introduit une transition vers le modèle orienté sur les fonctions sociales que la traduction assume dans le contexte cible. Cette approche, qui tient compte de la composante sociale, coïncide cependant avec les théories