

Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice
in Translation and Gender Studies

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this work is to share information on two very interesting, yet debatable issues within the field of Translation Studies, namely gender and translation in an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Given the important relationship between translation and gender since the beginning of the theoretical debate in Feminist Translation Studies, the aim of this edited volume is to determine and analyse how this relationship has been approached in different countries, not only in Europe but also worldwide. Feminist translation is undoubtedly a very interesting and widespread phenomenon, which includes and combines questions of language, culture, gender, identity and sexual equality. Feminist Translation Studies have established themselves as a solid field of research and practice in many countries and their purpose is to reverse the subordinate role of both women and translators in society by challenging and fighting against what is perceived as patriarchal language. Although Feminist Translation Studies were born in Québec in the 1980s, as a direct consequence of women writers’ experimental writing wishing to re-inscribe femininity in language and to deconstruct the dominant patriarchal discourse through conscious manipulation of language, Canada and Spain seem to be two of the most important countries where the problems inherent to translation and the category of gender have been most fruitfully discussed by eminent scholars such as Barbara Godard, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow and José Santaemilia, among others. These theorists have given prominence to the translator, whether woman or man, to their choices and to the strategies outlined in order to unveil the gender-related aspects in translation. In Italy, however, the situation is different and a gap seems to exist between theory and practice. Aware of these differences in our country, it was our intention to explore what is the current situation of feminist translation practices also in other countries, to investigate what are the positions of translators who have dealt with gender issues and to determine whether there are translators who deliberately and openly proclaim themselves as feminist translators.

Many are still the issues that can be taken into account focusing on translation and gender and this volume intends to be part of a wider discussion on Translation Studies. The discussion on translation and correlated wider issues is very important in this moment of transformation and transition in TS. The major scholars in TS are underlining the necessity to take into account the ethics of translation and the competence of translators in an era of globalisation and massive movements of people around the world. Today, translation means intercultural exchange with a profound awareness of cultural difference and linguistic boundaries. Translation requires skills that go beyond the linguistic aspect because we know, as also acknowledged by feminist scholars, that it determines national and social identities. Translation is a discursive practice that forms and transforms gender identities and helps reconsider the notion of sexual difference. The concept of self-translation, the use of the term translation as a metaphor for writing and the widening of theoretical perspectives outside the Western world also make us reconsider the debate on gender and translation. Translation theory and practice need an interdisciplinary approach involving various areas of research: sociolinguistics, pragmatics, literary studies, media studies, semiotics and cultural studies among others.

This work is a collection of papers, some of which presented at an international conference held at the University of Calabria in September 2011 and are aimed at addressing the issue of the gap between theory and practice through several different approaches including topics such as: feminist translation and translators through time, women translators as feminist translators, diachronical perspectives of the same text in different translations by men and/or women, the existence of different practices of translation (with a focus on gender), the translation of gender related topics, the translation of grammatical gender and the translation in different genres and gender related issues. After a theoretical insight, the essays follow a diachronical perspective from early modern translators, Aphra Behn, translations of Virginia Woolf's works, translations of contemporary British, Africa-American, Aboriginal and New Zealand authors and audiovisual translation. The essays follow some of the main areas of research in translation and gender: theoretical approaches, historical studies, the revision of the canon, the recovering of translators' works, the analysis of linguistic markers of gender, the representation of femininity/masculinity. The contributors show how grammatical, semantic and social gender are entangled in the creation of stereotypes and how gender bias can be retraced in literary genres but also visual texts such as movies.

The volume intends to outline how scholars in various contexts have approached the question of gender and translation, the use/misuse of the term feminist translation, the problematic issue of bridging the gap between theory and practice and to open a new discussion on this field of research, which we believe is still a very interesting one to exploit.

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