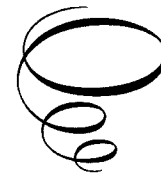


Translation, Ideology and Gender

Edited by

Carmen Camus Camus,
Cristina Gómez Castro
and Julia T. Williams Camus

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CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTEXT MATTERS: FEMINIST TRANSLATION BETWEEN ETHICS AND POLITICS IN EUROPE

ELEONORA FEDERICI

Introduction

In his essay “Gender and Translation: a New European Tradition?” José Santaemilia (2013) mapped a new European tradition of “gender and translation” proposing a “word cloud” field with key issues terms such as gender, sex, woman, translator, genealogy, archaeology and many others, showing that, after the important work of Canadian writers and translators, a number of European researchers began to explore a growing list of themes and perspectives on “feminist translation”. Similarly, I outlined the possibility to retrace a European map on gender and translation in a paper delivered at a conference at the University of Bologna for the Erasmus MA in Gender Studies Gemma (Federici 2013).¹ This search for a European map on translation and gender began in a fruitful discussion with my colleague José Santaemilia in the course of the last years when we met at different conferences on the issue of gender and translation. Two conferences I organized at the University of Calabria, where I worked for some years, were really important to understand the state of art of translation from a gender perspective in different European contexts. The first conference, held in 2009, dealt with translation and gender in an interdisciplinary approach taking into account sociolinguistics, pragmatics, literary studies, media studies, semiotics, cultural studies and philosophy. The results, published in the volume *Translating Gender* (Federici 2011b), clearly outline four major areas of discussion: the theoretical perspective of

translation from a gender perspective, the linguistic questions of translating grammatical gender, the practice of translation by women translators, and the translation of gender performativity in literary and media texts. The second conference, held in 2011, focused on the gap between theory and practice in feminist translation and the results appear in the volume *Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice in Translation and Gender Studies* (Federici and Leonardi 2013). Contributors showed how grammatical, semantic and social gender are entangled in the creation of stereotypes and how gender bias can be retraced both in literary and media genres. Another important step for this mapping of a gender and translation in Europe was the seminar on the topic I organized with my colleague Jose Santaemilia at the ESSE (European Society for the Study of English) conference, which took place in Istanbul in 2012. Our work continues and was enriched by the First Valencia/Naples Colloquium on Gender and Translation, which took place in Valencia, on October 27-28, 2016, and added new perspectives on these issues.

What struck me on all these occasions was the wide response by European scholars and the difference in theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches and practical choices among them. I understood there was a variety of studies in the field of Translation Studies through a gender perspective within Europe, which, with its linguistic, cultural, social and political differences, turned out to be an interesting battleground for both theory and practice that take into account the category of gender in translation.

Translation has always been an instrument of widening up literary canons and “translating” knowledge from one culture to another within Europe. Literatures have crossed national borders through translation and they have been influenced by each other. The rich and fruitful debate that occurred within the interdisciplinary field of Translation Studies after the “Cultural Turn”, together with changes of perspective and developments within the discipline due to the influence of Postcolonial Studies, Deconstruction, Post-Structuralism, Sociolinguistics, French Feminist Theories, has outlined a different path to the notion of translation itself, to the strategies and tools in the translation process and to the debate on the results of translation of texts into different languages. These different theoretical approaches were united by six major points:

- 1) the will to write and read the text in a critical way;
- 2) the importance of the linguistic and cultural context in the writing/reading of the text;

¹ *Gemma Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree in Women's and Gender Studies*, coordinated by Adelina Sánchez Espinosa, University of Granada, website accessed 10.11.16, masteres.ugr.es/gemma/

- 3) the idea of gender as an important category in textual interpretation;
- 4) the notion of female authorship in writing and translation related to a fluid conception of writing and translation as part of the same process;
- 5) the performativity implicit in language and the production of meaning; and
- 6) the social, political and ideological implications of texts.

All these approaches have clearly influenced the way we think about translation from a gender perspective, and the way these theories have been translated (how, when and by whom) certainly has made a difference in the formation of a theory and practice of feminist translation in the various European contexts.

In order to understand how a possible European map on translation and gender may emerge, we have to retrace some important points in question that have arisen in the last decades in the field of Gender and Translation starting from a chronological perspective on feminist translation.

A European Theoretical Framework

The starting points for a possible (and surely partial) mapping on gender and translation in Europe are various, first of all the question of institutionalisation of translation and gender in European countries, that is the academic presence of feminist translation in Europe. For a methodological approach to be influential it should also be visible and form part of the University curriculum. I believe that in the plethora of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Translation Studies very few are dedicated to these theories. The reasons are many, the main one being the non-institutionalization of Gender Studies or Women's Studies in the European context in contrast to the North American context. These academic choices are clearly due not only to economic factors but to ideological ones. In Italy, for example, notwithstanding the strong feminist wave and political/social struggles of the 70s, academia has not given space to the institutionalization of Gender and Women's Studies. There are no chairs or Departments in these fields; we have only Centres for Women and Gender Studies.² At the University of Bologna there are various projects in progress where major scholars in different disciplines

² One example is the "Women and Gender Studies Centre Milly Villa" at the University of Calabria (<http://www.women-unical.it/>).

have worked on the field in a strategic connection with local institutions such as the National Library of Women,³ which is quite active in promoting women's issues, and there is a European Doctorate in Women's and Gender Studies (EDGES). If we look at the presence of Gender issues in Translation Studies programs, there are no official courses on the subject but feminist theories and practices can be included in more general courses on translation. So, if feminist translation questioned the field of Translation Studies through what has been called "The Canadian Factor",⁴ that is to say the work of Canadian scholars which began the debate on this field decades ago, courses and programs on translation and gender have not been institutionalized in Europe and the introduction of these issues occurs in more general courses on translation theories.

In contrast, research in this field has been widely done in various European contexts and many volumes and articles on the subject have been published all through Europe. The main results are in the retracing of women translators' works, a central issue in the field of translation and gender because this kind of archival work has produced a lively discussion on the practice of translation both through a thoughtful analysis of translations of key texts by women authors in different historical periods and through a discovery of women translators in the cultural milieu of their time. Researchers also analysed differences in the adaptations of texts not only to different social/cultural contexts but also in the periods of publication. The European panorama on women translators through time and space demonstrates their role as cultural agents and intellectuals in dialogue with writers, philosophers and men of thought of their time.

From the mid-80s a few books on women's role in translation were published such as, for example, Tina Krontiris's *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (1992); Gillian Dow's *Translators, Interpreters, Mediators: Women Writers 1700–1900* (2007); Mirella's Agorni's *Translating Italy for the Eighteenth Century: Women, Translation, and Travel Writing, 1739–1797* (2002); or Jean Delisle's *Portraits de traductrices*, (2002). These works emphasised the importance of women translators in historical periods where the notion of female authorship was not even taken into account. They demonstrated that because translation was considered as a secondary activity women could enter it step by step and become cultural agents of their time. These works also demonstrated how the circulation of texts beyond national borders, the passage from one literary national canon

³ *Biblioteca italiana delle donne* (<http://www.bibliotecadelledonne.it/>).

⁴ I am referring here to main Canadian scholars like Barbara Godard, Sherry Simon, Luise von Flotow and many others working in that context from the 80s.

to a different cultural tradition, the transformation of texts into a target language were always connected to hegemonic practices and power asymmetries. They also made clear the role of ideology beyond translation.

From the amount of scholarly and translators' works that we can retrace in Spain we can say that it is a European country where the issues of gender and translation are increasingly growing and visible notably in academia but also in the editorial world. To give just a few examples of scholarly achievements, in Catalonia issues of identity and language are central to the post-structuralist approach by Pilar Godayol. This is well exemplified by her discussion of translation and of what she defines as "frontier spaces" based on the translator's perception of her identity as hybrid and multicultural. Her work began with *Espais de frontera* (Godayol 2000), and was followed by a massive amount of work on Catalan women writers and translators (Godayol and Bacardi 2011, Godayol 2012). Another region interested in questions about minority languages is Galicia, where scholars like Olga Castro (2009) envisaged a "Third Wave" feminist translation addressing discursive representations of women and men in texts of different typologies. Galicia is also home of Maria Reimondez, writer and feminist translator.⁵ Her work is published and visible in the Spanish context, where the feminist translation of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* was published in 2003. The translation titled *Un cuarto propio*, which was carried out by María Milagros Rivera Garretas and published by the feminist publishing house Horas y Horas, remains exemplary in the practice of feminist translation.

Another research group in Spain is at the University of Valencia, where José Santaemilia coordinates *Gentext* a project on "Gender, Language and Sexual (in)Equality". Author of *Gender, Sex and Translation: The Manipulation of Identities* (Santaemilia 2005) and many articles on feminist translation, he has recently edited with von Flotow a monographic issue of the journal *MonTi* on "Woman and Translation: Geographies, Voices, Identities" (Santaemilia and von Flotow 2011), beginning to map a European landscape of translation and gender.

Discussing the ethical limits of feminist translation, Carmen África Vidal Claramonte, who works at the University of Salamanca, has discussed the debate on issues of cultural identity and gender referring to discourse analysis as a tool for a wider understanding of translation, and has analysed gender representations in the media as acts of translation (Vidal 1998, Álvarez and Vidal 1996). Another important research group

⁵ For an overall view on her translations see her website (<http://www.mariareimondez-escritora.com/home-2/>)

is coordinated by Mercedes Bengoechea at the University of Alcalá, who published various works on literary and specialised feminist translation. Thus, we can assert that in Spain the activity and publication of feminist translations seems to be more visible than in other European countries, and we can, therefore, assume that the practice of feminist translation has been carried out and has at least been discussed by the media and thus rendered public. Many other scholars are working on this issue in Spain and opening a new debate. For example, Carmen Camus and Cristina Gomez Castro have organized two conferences on "Translation, Ideology and Gender" at the University of Cantabria in the last two years widening the discussion to specialized languages and especially the language of medicine and health,⁶ while Adela Martínez García has edited a special issue of *Women's Studies International Forum* (2014) titled *Rethinking Women and Translation in the Third Millennium* (Postigo Pinaza and Martínez García 2014).

In France the research group coordinated by Christine Raguet has focused on the linguistic aspects of translation and gender, and Pascale Sardin (2009) has also published about translation and gender issues. In Austria the seminal work by Michaela Wolf (2005) has been central in a re-discussion of these themes. In England Valerie Henitiuk (1999) has considered translation and gender together with issues about globalization and Marcella de Marco (2012) has dealt with gender stereotypes in audiovisual translation.

It is interesting that scholars in a country like Turkey, which we know is not so open to feminist issues, scholars are showing an increasing interest in translation and gender. For example, Emek Ergun (2010) bridges across feminist translation and sociolinguistics and focuses on "transnational feminist knowledge", that is to say, translation and language in use analyzing gender in power structures as identity marker, resistance to sexist language, the use of masculine forms, feminization of the text and discursive visibility. Some archival work has been done by Arzu Akbatur (2011) on Turkish women writers in English translation, and an analysis of translation as a tool to understand the differences between Western feminisms and Turkish Feminism has been carried out by Ayşenaz Koş (2007). From the work of Turkish scholars we understand that feminist

⁶ <http://translationgender.wixsite.com/translationgender>;
<http://translationgender.wixsite.com/translationgenderii>
 These conferences stem from the research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Innovation and Education entitled "TRACEgenci" (FFI2012-39012C04-04) which focuses on translation, ideology and gender in the health sciences field and which has been active from 2012 until now.

translators are making a contribution to feminist translation theory and practice and feminist movements in Turkey. Therefore, the ideological and political feminist stance is perpetuated through the practice of translation in a country which for political reasons, is struggling to enter the European Union, and where tension between Westernization and tradition is strong.

Very interesting areas for translation and gender are also the post-communist countries such as Poland, where scholars like Ewa Kraskowska (2006, 2008, 2010), and Agnieszka Pantuchowicz (1998) have focused on feminist discourses in translation, the debate on translation and gender in Eastern Europe in the 90s, which at the time was highly determined by ethnic, religious and social customs and values. Moreover, they have emphasized how the absence of critical theorizations of identity in translators' approaches to literary texts is reflected in the absence of linguistic practices that can adequately indicate a number of gender and identity related issues. These works make clear how ideology permeated the whole literary and cultural world and where the translation of feminist texts is still influenced by ideological stances.

In these years of great movements of people from one national border to another and from countries outside Europe to the European Union, in a situation of constant migrations and diasporas, the bounded categories of location and space, national identity, national language, literary canon and gender must be reassessed. The urge to rethink Western translation and literary theories is the result of the interweaving of postcolonial theories with Cultural Studies and Gender Studies that have opened even further the fruitful debate on the deconstruction of binary thought and the issue of gender representation. Nowadays the field of Transnational Studies/literatures and its interconnection with Translation Studies is also opening a new perspective on Translation and Gender. From this perspective, the next step in Translation Studies dealing with gender is to take into account a pan-European perspective on "Transnational Studies". Europe has been redefining itself since 1989 with the fall of Berlin Wall and increasingly in the last decades in the light of the vast flux of migrant populations in the literary panorama. European countries have seen an explosion of transnational writings that transcend traditional notions of mother tongue and national literary systems. The cultural European context presents new literary texts which address gender issues from a different perspective. The presence of multilingual and multicultural texts makes us aware of the importance of the ethics of translation, which involves being aware of the risks deriving from speaking for others, erasing a Euro-centric notion of translation and, above all, understanding the geo-socio-political context in which the original texts are produced. Bella Brodzki (2007, 12) asserts that

"translation is now understood to be a politics as well as a poetics, an ethics as well as an aesthetics".

From this perspective two are the main points in this discussion: 1) the role of translating practices in literary/cultural representations; and 2) the importance of the translator and his/her cultural competences. These issues have been strongly debated by feminist scholars in Translation Studies (e.g., Godard 1985; Simon 1996; von Flotow 1997; Godayol 2000; Bassnett 2005; Santaemilia 2005; Federici 2011a, 2011b), who have outlined the ideology behind translating practices and the power of translation in representing "the other" together with the necessity of a gender awareness in translation, that is to say, the recognition of the importance of the context in which the translator lives and the inherent historical, social and political implications. Translating as a feminist means working while keeping in mind differences among women, their diverse "positionality" in terms of race, class, ethnic group, and social and cultural context, the so-called "situated knowledge".⁷ Feminist translators have made clear their role as interpreters of texts and have explained their translation choices and strategies utilizing paratextual elements such as footnotes, preface or the technique of "supplementing" in the text. Intentionality and agency became more and more evident in the work of feminist translators and, if translators have always known that a translation carries the voices of the original but also those of the translated text, they have demonstrated that translation can be considered as an heteroglossic, multivoiced practice, a social act for which the translator is responsible and through which s/he becomes a cultural agent. With their use of paratextual elements (prefaces, footnotes, glossaries) feminist translators have unveiled a dialogic relationship between source text (ST) and target text (TT) and claimed a new authority over the ST. The traditional notion of fidelity as objective, transparent and definite truth has been replaced with more problematic concepts such as experimentation, relativity and

⁷ Since Adrienne Rich's famous essay on the "Politics of Location" (1987), many feminists have discussed the importance of a contextualised position as women scholars. We will use the term coined by Donna Haraway in "Situated Knowledges" (1988) as the metaphor for an acknowledgement of the "partial" perspective of each writer, a perspective connected to her geo-political, racial and class position. See also Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (1989); Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (1994); and Susan Stanford Friedman, "Beyond Gynocriticism and Gynesis: the Geographics of Identity and the Future of Feminist Criticism" (1996).

subjectivity.⁸ Rewriting in the feminine has meant to affirm the translator's critical difference while re-reading, interpreting and transforming/re-writing the ST. In the awareness that translation is a discursive act, the feminist translator subverts the linguistic codes of the text and transmits a different cultural value where the question of gender becomes central. Such is the importance of visibility for feminist translators/translators in the feminine that the signature of the translator is given an authority equivalent to that of authorship. The translator becomes a co-writer and the faithfulness to the text passes through her own reading and translating choices. "Translating in the feminine" has meant to take an anti-dogmatic position, an awareness of the work of translation and its influence on the reader according to the choices made. Moreover, feminist translators have pointed out the importance of the issue of textual interpretation. In fact, talking about a "woman-identified approach" Maier and Massardier-Kenney (1996, 60) state that "it is the responsibility of translators to reflect on their thinking in political terms, to reflect on their motives and on the effect their work might have on the reader". A woman-identified translator declares responsibility for the text and the community it is destined for, she takes up a position and is aware of her responsibility as a cultural agent. This is a clear ideological act that in many cases clashes with society's ideological values and norms.

The Practice of Feminist Translation: Is there a Resistance in Italy?

It is very hard to find cases of declared feminist translators working in Italy and one of the biggest difficulties is probably to establish clear principles which allow us to define a translation as "feminist" taking into account acknowledged feminist strategies such as supplementing, prefacing, footnoting and hijacking (see Federici and Leonardi 2012). Translators can refer to the gender issue in language and society and opt for linguistic choices that unveil patriarchal language and representations; they can follow some of these lines but decide they do not want to be defined as "feminist", a highly connotated term. I believe Italian translators can be considered as gender-aware if we consider different aspects:

- if they addressed and subverted gender constructs;

⁸ See Eleonora Federici (2011a) "The Visibility of the Woman Translator" in *Translating Gender*, 79-91.

- if their position in the text was visible;
- if their interpretation shaped the translated text;
- if it was possible to retrace the translator's self-reflection process in the translated texts;
- if strategies considered as feminist were utilised or not.

If we look for manipulated texts in Italy, we will not find them. Why? Is the feminist discourse too ideological to be used in the Italian context? In order to answer this question we should focus on two elements: 1) the translator's identity, his/her linguistic/cultural/social identity, education, background and openness about the feminist political stance, and 2) the historical and social dimension of the translation, that is in which period it has been published and by which publisher. Ideologies permeate not only the individual but also the society in which he or she lives. Translation takes on different shades according to the socio-cultural transformations of each country. Contexts shape, influence, change or prohibit certain texts at certain times, so that some cultures are reluctant to accept change to such cultural politics, and different cultural contexts limit or promote gender awareness in translation. In addition to this, the ideology beyond the publishing market is connected to the potential readers of the text. In fact, readers have distinctive cultural and social backgrounds. Publishers think more about selling the books they publish and not so much about what they offer to new readers. Major publishers will certainly be reluctant to publish a feminist translation which manipulates and changes the original text and which forces the reader to read in a critical way. Both the use of paratextual elements – which interrupt the fluency of the text – and a femininised language will probably be seen as problematic for the "common reader".

Feminist translation theories were born in Canada in the 1980s and 1990s in order to make the feminine visible in language. They were published in a very specific context where ideological and political acts were accepted. Feminist translators perpetuated something that had always been common in translation, that is, the idea that the text was a texture to be composed, re-woven and re-ordered by the translator. The translators' intentionality and agency was evident and explained to the reader. Translators play a vital role in society and a discussion on gender issues and translation is certainly necessary in Italy like elsewhere in the world, but from theory to practice there is a step and probably in Italy it is a difficult one for various reasons. The first reason is economic and it is linked to the publishing market; the second reason is related to the idea of translation itself and to the importance of the notion of fidelity in the

translating process; the third reason is more personal and connected to the translator's division between public and private role, that is to say, translators are sometimes feminist thinkers known for their participation in feminist causes, but they seem convinced that their work as translators is something different and completely detached from the political position they can profess in interviews or other forms of writing like newspaper articles and scholarly essays. Translation is a hard, erudite, passionate and difficult form of work, but it seems to be detached from a political use of gender issues in language; therefore, we do not find a clear feminist position.

I will now refer to two texts which have been translated into Italian and where gender issues can be seen to come to the fore: the first is Jeannette Winterson's novel *Written on the Body* (1994) and the second is Michele Roberts's *Daughters of the House* (1992). The choice of these texts is due to the authors' willingness to make the reader think about gender issues. This is done in a very different way: on the one hand, Winterson is a lesbian writer who in all her works explores the relationship between reader and text and between language and gender representation; on the other hand, Roberts has always acknowledged her feminist political stance and admitted it is a central part of her work. We know that the translator should have a competence on the author, on her works, thus the translator should do some "archive work" in order to interpret the text with as many elements as possible.

In the first case, Winterson creates an anonymous and ungendered narrator who obliges the reader to confront himself/herself with the logic of a binary gender system and of gender performativity. It is an ideological text because it forces the reader to transcend established norms of gender expectations (Kauer 1998), and for the translator it is a challenging enterprise especially because the passage from English into Italian is gender marked and the translator must choose between a clear feminine or masculine noun and related agreements. The text has been analysed as an example of feminist translation and the ability to keep the gender ambiguity of the original. We must say that the text possesses many elements which could make the translator opt for a feminist translation: the subject (it is a romance which criticizes gender perceptions in society, and it is a romance among women); the language utilized plays with gender roles; and the awareness that the author is a feminist and introduces feminist discourses in all her texts. Since the translator is first and foremost a reader and an interpreter of the text, if he/she knows something about Winterson's work and life he/she will probably read the story as a lesbian romance. In addition to this, I believe there are some hints in the

text which make the reader think it is a woman: for example, when the narrator compares himself/herself to Alice in Wonderland (p. 10), to Lauren Bacall (p. 41), or to a convent virgin (p. 94). Personally, I would find it difficult to imagine a male narrator making these choices. However, this does not change the choices that must be made when translating an ungendered narrator; so, even if the translator supposes it is a woman, he/she has to maintain the gender ambiguity in the target text in order to do what a good translator does, that is, try to make the text as similar as possible to the original and to the writer's intentions. The translator Giovanna Marrone, who has never declared herself to be a feminist translator, carries out her work very well, opting for different strategies that can maintain the gender ambiguity taking into account the social, historical, economic and cultural specificities of the represented context (Winterson 1995). If the ambiguity of the text is kept in the target text, I believe we cannot define this translation as feminist, but as a translation which focuses on the main element of the text, that is, the uncertainty about the narrator's gender. Scholars have underlined how through different strategies Marrone maintains this gender ambiguity (Casagrande 2013; Cordisco and Di Sabato 2010; Leonardi 2013):

1. the Italian translator managed to successfully find an easy way out to the ambiguity problem by opting for Italian gender-indefinite equivalents:
Her lover runs her finger (ST): *L'amante fa scorrere un dito* (TT):
The lovers runs a finger (backtranslation [BT]);
2. the translator takes out the verb "to trust" and opts for ungendered synonyms which require no gender agreement:
I can tell you by now that you are wondering whether I can be trusted as a narrator (ST): *A questo punto vi chiederete senza dubbio se sono affidabile nel mio ruolo di voce narrante* (TT):
At this point you may well wonder if I am reliable in my role as the narrator's voice (BT);
3. the translator adds a substantive which does not reveal the gender:
I was the only one breathing the air (ST): *Nella consapevolezza di essere l'unica persona a respirare quell'aria* (TT):
In the awareness of being the only person breathing the air (BT);
4. since participles in Italian are gender marked, the translator substitutes with a substantive:

You're bored my friend said (ST): *Noia, ecco di cosa si tratta* (TT):
Boredom, that's what it is (BT);

5. the translator uses a periphrasis:
I felt reprieved and virtuous (ST): *Provai una sensazione di sollievo e mi sentii un esempio di virtù* (TT): I experienced a sense of relief and felt a paragon of virtue (BT);
6. the translator opts for impersonal forms:
I was exhausted (ST) : *Era stressante* (TT): It was stressful (BT);
7. the translator changes from passive to active forms:
Did I want to be led? (ST): *Volevo avere una guida?* (TT): Did I want to have a guide? (BT).

These examples clearly demonstrate how the translator chooses to maintain the gender ambiguity at the core of the novel; however, we cannot say this choice is made for a feminist action. Marrone follows Winterson's text and her will to conceal the narrator's gender; she, therefore, decides that she has to maintain as far as possible the central element of the narration. However, in so doing, Marrone demonstrates that it is possible to shape and change a gender-marked language like Italian if we want to translate a text from a feminist perspective. Probably unwittingly, she gives us some hints about the possibility of feminizing the Italian language, if and when as translators we want to deconstruct gender clichés and make the feminine visible in language.

If we look at the second example, the Italian translation of Roberts's *Daughters of the House* (Roberts 1998a), we find something different, that is the decision to render the text less "feminised". First of all, the translator knows that she is dealing with a feminist author because Roberts is an overtly feminist writer and has always acknowledged the importance and influence of feminist thought and movement in her writing (Roberts 1998b; Schiavi 1987).⁹ Moreover, Roberts is an author who focuses on language and the ability as a writer to create her own language, what she defines as "the fabric of language" (Roberts 1998b, 25). The utilisation of language as a means to unveil the various aspects of a fictional reality is linked to Roberts's notion of the writer as someone who has the duty to be honest with the reader, catch all the meanings and not shut himself/herself

⁹ Giuliana Schiavi, Interview "Michèle Roberts" *Writers in Conversation*, 16 Videocassette, (London: Institute of Contemporary Art Video, 1987).

in the ivory tower. The story of this novel centres on two women: Thérèse, who is a nun coming back home after twenty years in a convent and decides to write her own autobiography entitled "Story of a Soul", where she wants to unveil her family past, and her cousin Léonie, who, unlike Thérèse, prefers to forget events of the past that can be painful to recover and can change the perspective on their present and also future. Léonie, for example, avoids the knowledge of the room where the Jewish family was hidden from the Nazis but later found and shot. *Daughters of the House* is a novel based on childhood memories and the characters' tales about the traumatic experiences and discoveries as adolescents (White 1993). As a matter of fact, talking about the writing of this novel, Roberts affirmed that she was haunted by "news stories in the papers about the resurgence of Fascism in Europe, the desecration of graves in Jewish cemeteries in France, the red swastikas daubed on the headstones" (Roberts 1998b, 194). As a response to this, Roberts decided to represent a period of history through two women's points of view, and to interweave personal and public memory in the novel. As a matter of fact, the author said she was partially influenced by an urge to tell about her family past during the war in France (Roberts 1998b, 195):

I began to think about my parents' history during the war, and that of the French side of my family who had endured the Nazi occupation in Normandy. Chucked out of their house. I began to wonder about how history was recorded. Could little girls be responsible historians or were they inevitably unreliable narrators? The feminine view is often dismissed as narrow. I liked the idea of exploiting that, of using a feminine peep-hole and perspective, of letting something apparently little (girls' perceptions) stand for, swivel towards, something big (the suffering of France in the war).

For Roberts the recovery of the past through women's voices is founded on a feminine way of using language and this gives considerable food for thought for the translator. Moreover, Roberts's prose is highly poetical, it possesses a mystical and religious rhythm that is reminiscent of the writings of famous mystical women writers such as Margery Kempe or Julian of Norwich. Therefore, it is not easy to translate. The author makes it clear how her use of language is strictly connected with her religious education and her mother when she says: "These rhythms of language, and particularly those of the psalms, are inside me now like my bones. I took them in like my mother's milk" (Roberts 1998b, 66). Roberts is feminist also in her self-portrayal as a writer. In her essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent by T. S. Eliot", the author affirms that she had no female

model for becoming a poet, and she had to discover and invent a tradition that allowed her to be a poet. She suggests: “I had to imagine a maternal body made of words and milk and music and permissiveness and fierceness and sweetness and power and and and. This invisible woman became my muse” (Roberts 1998b, 121). Roberts’s words clearly recall French Feminism theories and the notion of *écriture féminine* and, therefore, prepares the translator for a translation which should emphasise the notion of feminine language (Parker 2000).

The Italian translation of the novel, *Figlie della casa* was published in 1998 by Editrice Luciana Tufani, a small feminist publishing house, a publisher, therefore, that could be interested and allow a feminist translation. In the last decades Luciana Tufani has published only women’s works of different historical periods in order to make them visible on the publishing market. The translator is Giorgia Sensi, a well known translator who mainly translates poetry and believes that to know the author and get in touch with him/her as a translator is an important aspect of achieving a better understanding of his/her work.

In the Italian translation we find a postface to the text where the reader can find an interview with the author carried out by the translator. It is an important paratextual element which gives visibility to the translator while offering a key to the reading of the novel. The interview reveals information about the novel, the choice of the themes used and the linguistic choices made by Roberts. The Italian translation is certainly well done and very poetic, but Sensi fails to present to the reader what is visible and central in the text, that is, the pervasiveness of feminine language. Probably, she preferred to give priority to a more accessible reading of the text for an Italian reader rather than to a feminisation of the text that would have rendered the author’s choices in the ST. I want to refer to a specific aspect which becomes clear when we compare ST and TT, that is to say, how the use of the feminine pronoun and its repetition so central in the original text is undoubtedly lost in the target text. This choice clearly changes the reader’s perception of Roberts’s use of the feminine voice in the Italian text:

Example 1.

S.T. **Thérèse** lay flat on the floor, face down, hands outstretched. **She** lay in the shape of a cross. As still as possible. Eyelashes tickling the floor, mouth kissing its varnished whorls. **She** shut **her** eyes and concentrated on the four last things listed by the catechism: death, judgment, heaven and hell. [...] Thérèse performed as many acts of mortification daily as she could think of. [...] **She, Thérèse**, would storm heaven to make sure that didn’t happen. So **she** jumped under the cold shower every morning. **She**

took **her** coffee black, without sugar. **She** asked for a second helping of spinach. **She** allowed **herself** to read for no more than half an hour day. When **she** sat down **she** didn’t let **herself** rest against the back of the chair. Under **her** breath, thousands of times a day, **she** invoked the Holy Name of Jesus. Clearly **she** heard the crackling of the flames, saw **her** mother’s flesh scorch and blacken. **She** shrivelled up, fell forwards, like a paper doll. Cancer was a fire. It ate **her** mother away. Thérèse did not possess a hair shirt, or a belt spiked with rusty nails, or a scourge. So **she** lay on the floor in the shape of a cross, and prayed (pp.75-76).

T.T. *Thérèse era sdraiata supina sul pavimento, a braccia aperte. A forma di croce. Immobile. Le ciglia sfioravano il pavimento, la bocca ne baciava i ghirigori verniciati. Chiuse gli occhi e si concentrò sulle ultime quattro cose elencate dal catechismo: morte, giudizio, inferno, paradiso. [...] Thérèse faceva ogni giorno tutti gli atti di mortificazione che le venivano in mente. [...] Lei, Thérèse, avrebbe fatto irruzione in paradiso per accertarsi che non succedesse. Così ogni mattina si infilava sotto la doccia fredda. Prendeva il caffè nero, senza zucchero. Chiedeva degli altri spinaci. Si concedeva non più di una mezz’ora al giorno di lettura. Quando si sedeva, non si appoggiava allo schienale della sedia. Sottovoce, mille volte al giorno, invocava il Sacro Nome di Gesù. Sentiva chiaramente il crepitio delle fiamme, vedeva la carne di sua madre bruciata e annerita. Si accartocciava, cadeva in avanti, come una bambola di carta. Il cancro era un fuoco. Divorava sua madre. Thérèse non possedeva un cilicio, o una cintura munita di chiodi arrugginiti, o una frusta. Così stava sdraiata sul pavimento in forma di croce e pregava (pp. 87-88).*

In this passage it is clear that the use of punctuation together with the choice to insert short sentences creates a specific reading rhythm which mirrors the content, that is the idea of punishment Thérèse inflicts on herself following her Catholic ideology. This rhythm is lost in the TT in favour of a linguistic fluidity in Italian, but what is more striking in the translator’s choice is the way the use of the feminine pronoun is not repeated in the TT. Sensi leaves the pronoun *lei* in only one sentence “*Lei, Thérèse, avrebbe fatto irruzione in paradiso per accertarsi che non succedesse*”, and leaves the possessive adjective only in the expression “*Divorava sua madre*”. The Italian reader does not perceive how the character is represented through the repetition of the feminine form and how the relationship mother/daughter, also sustained through a “feminised’ language”, permeates all the text.

Example 2

S.T. Léonie had **her** first period on the day that Madeleine finished replying to all letters of condolence sent to Louis. [...] **She** kitted **her** out in a belt and thick wad of gauze. This felt soft, rather comfortable, a bulky caress between the legs. Léonie held **herself** straight so that no one should know her secret. **She** felt different but didn't know how to express it. Not walking around. Not more grown-up. It was like putting on a costume for a play, or running in the three-legged race. [...] Léonie strutted stiff-legged like a cowboy. **She** felt wetness leave **her** and sink into the towel. Thérèse didn't seem to have noticed. Léonie wondered if **she** were extremely pale or just moderately so. [...] **Her** stomach clenched itself and ached. Between **her** legs the wetness gushed again (p.122).

T.T. *Léonie ebbe il suo primo ciclo mestruale il giorno che Madeleine finì di rispondere a tutte le lettere di condoglianze che Louis aveva ricevuto. [...] La fornì di una cintura e di uno spesso tampone di garza. Era morbido, abbastanza confortevole, una carezza voluminosa tra le gambe. Léonie si teneva dritta in modo che nessuno si accorgesse del suo segreto. Si sentiva diversa ma non sapeva come esprimerlo. Non come camminare con una ferita. Non come essere diventata più grande. Era come mettersi un costume per una commedia, o fare la corsa a tre gambe in coppia. [...] Léonie camminava dritta con le gambe rigide come un cow-boy. Sentiva il bagnato colare e impregnare il tampone. Thérèse non sembrava essersene accorta. Léonie si chiese se era molto pallida o solo un pò. [...] Le si contrasse la pancia, le faceva male. Sentì un altro fiotto tra le gambe (pp. 141-42).*

Reading in parallel the ST and the TT, it is evident that personal pronouns are used to valorize the feminine body, portrayed as a suffering body because of menstruation. The author describes the feminine body and the physical/psychological response to this important moment in a girl's life. While the centrality of the feminine body is maintained in the TT, the repetitive use of the possessive adjectives and of the pronouns is not transferred in the TT. The sentence "her stomach clenched itself and ached" is transformed into a passive form where the pronominal particle *le* is repeated twice: "*Le si contrasse la pancia, le faceva male*". The translator could have used the pronoun *lei* for the original "she" repeated in the various sentences in order to recreate the same effect as in the ST, but has decided, possibly for a greater fluidity of the text, not to do so.

Similarly in the chapter entitled "The Pillows", where Roberts represents Thérèse's anorexic body, the translator opts for a similar choice by omitting the feminine forms:

Example 3.

S.T. I'm not hungry. **If she let it**, the food would jump into **her** mouth and swell **her** up to **grossness**. **She** hated the way **her** skirts strained at the seams, the way **her** thighs lolled on **her** chair, rubbed together when **she** walked. **She** hated **her** stomach which stuck out as though **she** were pregnant however **hard she** tried to suck **it** in. **She** hated **her** breasts. Ugly fat cow, **she** told **herself** over and over again. It's puppyfat, it's just a phase, Madeleine had dummed to **her** unhelpfully: I was just like that at your age. Madeleine said now: I hope you're not going on a diet. (p. 73)

T.T. *Non ho fame. Se l'avesse lasciato fare, il cibo le sarebbe saltato in bocca, gonfiandola in modo volgare. Odiava le gonne che tiravano alle cuciture, le cosce che si allargavano sulla sedia, che si strofinavano quando camminava. Odiava la pancia che sporgeva come se fosse incinta per quanto si sforzasse di tenerla in dentro. Odiava il suo seno. Brutta vacca grassa, si ripeteva in continuazione. È grasso di bambina, passerà, Madeleine le aveva sussurrato senza riuscire a convincerla, ero così anch'io alla tua età. Madeleine ora disse: spero che non ti metterai a dieta (p. 86).*

The translator here uses the pronominal particle of the Italian language (*gonfiandola; convincerla*) and she makes a significant shift in the translation of "if she let it", translated as *Se l'avesse lasciato fare* emphasising even more Thérèse's idea of control over her body. Similarly, the lexical choices in Italian echo Roberts's description of the anorexic's perception of the body. If, on the one hand, the translator transmits the theme of the difficult relationship with nourishment and the female malady (Sceats 1996), she decides not to adjust her translation to Roberts's "hyper-feminine" language by opting for a translation which reflects a more common use and once again a fluidity in the TT.

Conclusions

The examples from this second text demonstrate that even when confronted with a feminist text, which clearly focuses on gender issues and is written utilising a "language in the feminine", the translator decides to opt for a translation that gives priority to language fluidity in the target language. The translator's ethics seems directed to the text as something detached from the author's life and thought, following a more traditional way of presenting a foreign text to an Italian audience. The Italian translation clearly outlines the main issues of the novel; thus the author's core message and the main themes are transmitted in the target language, but the TT does not visualize Roberts's work on language to make the

feminine visible in the chinks of the patriarchal language. The translator's political stance is subdued to an idea of translation ethics and fidelity to the original text.

If in literary texts one of the ways to carry out a feminist practice is through paratextual elements, the translator here could have inserted in the postface a discussion of the text from a linguistic perspective, emphasising how Roberts's feminine language could have been translated utilising feminine forms, while underlining that this was not done because of a possible difficulty in reading the text in a less traditional manner. In this way, she could have used the paratextual element to introduce the issue of gender and language in order to make the reader understand what is implied by one linguistic choice or another in a text where the author openly plays with language and gender stereotypes and where the characters are portrayed through a "feminine language". This could have been a practice of useful self-reflexiveness since it implies a more acceptable action than the direct working on the language of the text in a context like Italy, which is clearly not ready for this kind of feminist rewriting/reading.

The problems are not the grammatical, semantic, or syntactical differences in the transfer from English into Italian, but the main point is a cultural one. Feminist translations are thought out and adapted according to the social and cultural ground where they are born and grow. Generally speaking, in Italy translators tend to mould their translations according to the paradigm of dominant discourses. Even translators who know about feminist translation practices and who are feminist (because of their writing, political activity, social visibility) do not dare to publish a feminist translation. However, this does not mean that it is not important to maintain the political aim of feminist translation. If we want to make the common reader aware of gender issues, probably a mediating action is necessary. We can certainly find a political space for "protest" to present to the public something that is different from what they are used to. In the Italian context, this is probably seen as an "over interpretation" as Umberto Eco (1992) said, but to do so would allow the translator to make gender issues visible in translation. Politics can certainly go hand in hand with ethics without manipulating and changing the author's intention, especially when we are dealing with feminist texts and authors, and readers can discover that a language that reflects gender ideology can be read in a pleasurable way.

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CHAPTER NINE

TRANSLATION AND IDEOLOGY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN MAGAZINES AIMED AT WOMEN¹

IRENE RODRÍGUEZ ARCOS²

Introduction

For some decades now, we have been witnessing a process of globalisation thanks to the development of new technologies and the Internet, which in turn has favoured an unprecedented hybridisation of cultures and identities. This new economic, political and social background has radically changed the way in which we understand a number of fields, including both Gender Studies and Translation Studies. This ability to eliminate distances and blur borders allows the almost instantaneous movement of people, goods and discourses which, in their entirety, become a melting pot which represents the alterity and diversity characteristic of the reality in which we now live (Bauman 1998, Beck 2008). In the present chapter, we will mostly address those movements related to discourses and ideologies, taking into consideration that some voices can be heard all around the globe, in particular those of the Anglo-Saxon elite (Vidal Claramonte 2010), and the fact that some others do not even have the ability to speak or, rather, that such discourses are overlooked by the institutions which govern present international agendas (Spivak 1988). In this sense, this so-called globalisation is not a uniform,

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