

V. Women and Translation

Whether affirmed or denounced, the femininity of translation is a persistent historical trope. “Woman” and “translator” have been relegated to the same position of discursive inferiority. The hierarchical authority of the original over the reproduction is linked with imagery of masculine and feminine; the original is considered the strong generative male, the translation the weaker and derivative female. We are not surprised to learn that the language used to describe translating dips liberally into the vocabulary of sexism, drawing on images of dominance and inferiority, fidelity and libertinage. The most persistent of these expressions, “les belles infidèles,” has for centuries encouraged an attitude of suspicion toward the seemly but wayward translation.

Feminist translation theory aims to identify and critique the tangle of concepts which relegates both women and translation to the bottom of the social and literary ladder. To do so, it must investigate the processes through which translation has come to be “feminized,” and attempt to trouble the structures of authority which have maintained this association.

What indeed are the processes through which translation maintains and activates gender constructs? To begin to answer this question, I have chosen to move along a number of planes. First, conceptual: how have the sites of translation theory been implicitly gendered and how can

this theory be transformed? This is the task of the introductory chapter, which brings together the work of theorists who seek to disturb the clichéd language used to describe translation, and to replace it with terms which convey the active play of identities within translation practice. They do so through their understanding of the performative, and not simply representational, nature of language. Feminist translation thus reframes the question of “fidelity,” which has played like a stultifying refrain through the history of translation. For feminist translation, fidelity is to be directed toward neither the author nor the reader, but toward the writing project—a project in which both writer and translator participate.

Text by: Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, pp.:12-13.

Reading Guidelines:

Modern academic writing tends to have its own special "difficult" and different language, and college students should train and familiarize themselves with it. Ideas constitute the core of such writing, and students must pay due attention to them.

Q.I Give the exact meaning of the following words first in English and second in Arabic: affirmed, denounced, trope, relegated, discursive, dips into, libertinage, tangle, ladder, maintained, constructs, conceptual, disturb, clichéd language, reframes, stultifying.

Q.II Derive as many words as you can from the following words: affirmed, position, linked, describe, identify, activates, theory, replace, performative, directed, project.

Q.III Give the opposites of the words below and use them in good English sentences of your own: affirmed, relegated to, inferiority, fidelity, bottom, wayward, trouble, implicitly, bring together, active.

Q.IV Answer the following questions briefly:

1. How does the imagery of masculine and feminine work with regard to reproduction?
2. What are the images the language of sexism draw upon?
3. What is the French metaphor used to describe translation? What does it imply?
4. What is the aim of the Feminist Translation Theory?
5. How does the Feminist Translation Theory work?
6. What do (feminist) theorists seek to do?
7. How is the question of fidelity reframed by feminist translators and theorists?

Q.V After doing a thorough reading and analysis of paragraph 1, try to render it into plain Arabic.

Research Activity:

Think of other metaphors and images used to describe translation.

Quote of the Day:

The best thing on translation was said by Cervantes: translation is the other side of a tapestry.

Leonardo Sciascia