Abstract

GENDER THEORY IN TRANSLATION PRACTICE

ORLANDO BY VIRGINIA WOOLF: A CASE STUDY

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As a doctoral student (or PhD student) in Translation Studies, I present my in-progress research project developed out of my interest in feminist explorations of gender as a cultural construct and in translation as a cultural transfer.
The aim of this paper is three fold. First of all, it attempts to provide a theoretical overview of gender awareness in translation practice which rises urgent questions about:

i. A politics of identity reflecting on the status of woman in writing and translating (essentialist and constructionist postures, the gender metaphors concerning the patriarchal paradigm of father-author(ity), the relegation of the female-translation to a variety of secondary roles and the subversion of these paradigms).

ii. The consequent interdependence between identity and textuality which makes translation a negotiable practice on which we can (re)conduct our own reading.

iii. The theory and practice of translating as/like a woman, that is an activity which involves making use not of speciously neutral, so-called objective strategies and immobilized subjectivity of patriarchal discourses, but rather dynamic procedures and tactics which negotiate and are negotiable, open and contingent, which never assume the absolute totality of a feminine subjectivity in translation.

Secondly, in the light of these premises, what I propose here is to examine the (en)gendering of translation (practice) by a comparative-contrastive analysis between Orlando by Virginia Woolf and two Italian translations, by a translator and a translatress, respectively. In particular, this case of study seeks to investigate those differences, semantic deviations and equivalences emerging from the translation of specific key-words (he-ma-male; she-female-woman; sex, change) which reveal the leitmotiv of Woolf’s literary work: metamorphosis.

Thirdly, my study also includes a pedagogical agenda as I wish that my research methodology poses questions for a scholarship that may be interested in learning and teaching (the intersections of) gender and translations.

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