

---

Simon, Sherry. *Gender in Translation – Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*. 1996. New York: Routledge.

---

In *Gender and Translation*, Sherry Simon, a lecturer at Concordia University, Canada, establishes an interesting link between translation, gender and cultural studies. Following the tradition of second wave feminism, she underlines estrangement and not equalitarianism in gender and cultural studies. It follows that she equates translation with difference and not with transparency. Simon's new logic of exchange forecasts that the role of translation is that of recognising and punctuating differences. Within this framework there is little room for textual fluency and invisibility since translation is an activity that, according to her, *at once elicits and confuses the link between self and community, recognition and estrangement*.

In 189 pages divided in five chapters, Simon revisits the history of feminist intellectuals in several activities of intercultural transmission of knowledge, in-

cluding translation. It is, indeed, an interesting and enlightening critical and historical trip into the often times ghostly participation of women translators in cultural and political events. Her prose is light, her arguments interesting although basic knowledge on the principles of post-modern thought can make her reading easier. The women writers and translators whose histories she tells us about are, however, depicted almost as round fictional characters: their work and lives so intrinsically embedded in each other that it becomes difficult to tell them apart. It is in those passages that her text is the most interesting.

She reports, for instance, on Malinche, the Mayan slave who served as interpreter for Cortés, the Spanish *conquistador*. Malinche gave birth and rose Cortes' illegitimate children while translating treatises which condemned her own people to servitude and exploitation becoming, thus, a convenient victim upon whom male Mexican historians could target their anger while associating female translators with the metaphor of translators as traitors. Simon also tells us about Aphra Behn, the first professional

woman writer who translated from Latin and Greek when knowing the classics was barred from women. She goes on with the cosmopolitanism of Madame de Stael and the influence her work had upon the development of translation studies and, particularly, the political consequences exerted by translation in literary exchanges. Her historical account reports on the challenges faced by Eleanor Marx (Karl Marx's daughter) who translated *Madame Bovary* during the time where the author, Flaubert, was on trial for immorality. The examples forwarded by the author of female participation in the contestation and transmission of knowledge are numerous and it is not my aim to report them all here. The objective is just to give a hint of how interesting this part of Simon's book is. Her chronological report extends to the present day with an interesting critique against the use of inclusive lan-

guage in sacred texts as, for example, the Bible.

*Gender in Translation* is a work which tries to put together the several inequalities which postmodernism, post-colonialism and post-structural thought have uncovered. It attempts to incorporate into the project of second wave feminism a translation practice, which abides to post-modern aesthetics while resisting to political, cultural and gender domination. In this context, translation becomes a metaphor for the acknowledgement of the otherness, for a logic of difference, for a process of ongoing negotiation where knowing *them* means knowing *us* and vice-versa. It remains to us, however, as South-Americans/ to have the courage and intellectual means to actually exercise the *vice-versa*.

Maria Cristina Schleder de Borba

UFSC