

Jean Delisle (dir.). *Portraits de traductrices*. Ottawa, Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, coll. "Regards sur la traduction" / Arras, Artois Presses Université, coll. "Traductologie", 2002. viii + 408 p.

Patriarchy has traditionally condemned women to silence, considering them unintelligent and uneducable. Yet exceptional women throughout history, often supported by their unconventional fathers and other male figures as certain *Portraits de traductrices* reveal, have left writings—translations and original works—that clearly show not only the extent to which they benefited from their respective educations, but also their unquestionable intelligence. Not surprisingly, patriarchal versions of history tend to remember the more non-conformist of these women in depreciatory and deprecatory terms (e.g., Madame Pompon-Newton)—more interested in their love interests or eccentricities than in their intellectual accomplishments—or to forget them, remembering rather their husbands and their sons (e.g., Jane Elgee Wilde). Only on rare occasions has history taken an interest in their translation activity. This collection brings the many and varied contributions of women translators from out of the shadows, each portrait presenting a detailed account of the life and legacy of an extraordinary woman who has left posterity noteworthy translations, among other writings. A number of the translators included in the collection and their translations have already been studied in books, theses or articles, e.g., Anne Dacier, Émilie du Châtelet, Albertine Necker de Saussure, Clémence Royer, Jane E. Smith, Eleanor Marx, as confirmed by the list of sources

following each portrait. The originality of this publication lies in bringing together in a single publication exclusively feminine translating subjects and in its study of the ideological imprint left by the translator on her translations, the contributors, in Jean Delisle's words, having "*su peindre en nuances des traductrices indissociables de leur œuvre* (Delisle, 10)."

Portraits de traductrices, edited by Jean Delisle, is a tribute to these eleven women translators — each one remarkable in her own right — who have contributed to the advancement of knowledge and to the betterment of the human condition, more specifically the condition of women, through their translation activities. Ten translation studies scholars have contributed in-depth portraits to this collection that follows in the prestigious footsteps of *Histoire de la traduction* (2000)¹, *Portraits de traducteurs* (1999)² and *Les Traducteurs dans l'histoire* (1995)³, works that are adding to our knowledge of the translating subject placed in his or her socio-historical context. This knowledge is essential to our understanding of the translation process and product, to use Toury's terminology, specific to each translating subject and her context. In his introduction, Delisle refers specifically to André Lefevere and his insistence in a "Report" published in *La traduction dans le système d'enseignement des langues*⁴ on the necessity of drawing "more attention to the translator and his or her task, and to the role he or she plays in different cultures (Lefevere, 28)." Previous collections have emphasized the contributions of men to the history and theory of translation. This most recent collection is dedicated to women translators from the seventeenth (Madame Dacier and Mademoiselle de la Roche) through to the twentieth century (Irène de Buisseret), who

¹ Jean Delisle and Gilbert Lafond (2000), *Histoire de la traduction* [cédérom pour PC], modules « Portraits », « Biographies », Gatineau (Québec), édition restreinte aux seules fins d'enseignement par Jean Delisle, professeur titulaire, École de traduction et d'interprétation, Université d'Ottawa.

² Jean Delisle (ed.) (1999). *Portraits de traducteurs*, Ottawa, Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa / Arras, Artois Presses Université.

³ Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth (eds.) (1995). *Translators through History*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing / Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing.

⁴ E. Nikolova et al., eds., Sofia, Union des traducteurs bulgares, 1983, pp. 18-28.

carried out intellectual work despite the generalized stereotypes against the intellectual abilities of women. The following paragraphs provide a short introduction to the eleven portraits that make up the collection. Each portrait includes the reproduction of a painting or a photograph of the translator to enable the reader to put a face to the name (except for the “invisible” Mademoiselle de la Roche).

Bruno Garnier’s portrait of France’s Anne Dacier, née Le Fèvre (1647-1720), paints the picture of a woman whose considerable intellectual ability was nurtured by her Protestant father, her life partner André Dacier also supporting her in her philological activities. This woman of independent mind would develop a personal method of translation that emphasized faithfulness to the source language text and a target text that ensured the broadest possible readership. Her method resulted in a dispute with La Motte over how to translate Homer. Madame Dacier translated many Latin and Greek classics, and her scholarly translation of Homer was considered authoritative until the early twentieth century.

Amela Sanz paints a portrait of France’s Anne de La Roche-Guilhem (1644-1707), a Huguenot refugee exiled in England with her two younger and sickly sisters, and who, as a woman and a Huguenot, is absent from the history books, making documentation about her life hard to find. The eldest de La Roche daughter was born in the Protestant city of Rouen that had a large Spanish-speaking population. With access to some of France’s best teachers and to three times more books than those educated in Catholic cities, Anne received a solid education, learning Spanish and reading Spanish literature. Upon the mother’s death, the remaining family moved to Paris in 1664. After the death of their father in 1682, the unmarried daughters fled to London sometime between 1682 and 1685. Mademoiselle de La Roche-Guilhem is known as a writer of fictional works and a rewriter; she penned abridgements, adaptations and target-oriented translations, her first translation from the Spanish, *Histoire des guerres civiles de Grenade*, completed prior to 1663 and published in 1683 in Paris. She would later publish primarily outside France.

Agnès Whitfield has contributed a portrait of France’s Émilie du Châtelet, née de Breteuil (1706-1749), translator of Newton, who for far too long was remembered primarily as Voltaire’s lover and given the deprecatory name Mme Pompon-Newton. Émilie was born into Parisian aristocracy; from an early age, she had full access to her

parent's voluminous library and attended her parent's salons. She left French translations of scientific texts, the most famous being her translation of Newton's *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, as well as numerous scientific writings, including *Institutions de physique*. Father Jacquier supported her nomination to the Institute of Bologna—that, unlike French *Académies*, was not closed to women members—, thus ensuring the institutional recognition of Émilie du Châtelet's contribution to the advancement of science.

Jean Delisle's touching portrait of Geneva's Albertine Necker, née de Saussure (1766-1841), gives us an intimate glimpse of a wife, mother, translator and writer, and her arduous life that bridged the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Born into an aristocratic, Protestant family, her father provided her with a solid education. Her mastery of English and German enabled her to translate Sir Walter Scott's, Karl Philipp Moritz's and August Wilhelm von Schlegel's writings, the most famous of which is Schlegel's controversial *Cours de littérature dramatique*. Her name is absent from the translation, even her erudite preface to the translation anonymous. From 1817 until her death, she devoted herself to writing, her most important work being *L'éducation progressive*, translated into American, English, German, Italian, among other languages, its ninth French edition published in Paris in 1911.

Annie Brisset gives us a penetrating portrait of French-born Clémence Royer (1830-1902) “one of the cleverest and oddest women of Europe,” according to Charles Darwin (in Brisset, 180). Clémence was a prolific writer of scientific and philosophical texts, teacher and translator, best known for her translation of Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. During the tumultuous nineteenth century, her royalist family was forced into exile, resulting in an intermittent education. After completing the equivalent of *lycée*, in 1849 she left for Wales to teach French and piano and to learn English, finally settling in Lausanne in 1855 after returning to the Continent via France. In 1862, her controversial first edition of *L'Origine des espèces* was published, accompanied by copious notes and her introduction denouncing France's scientific establishment. Clémence Royer became the first woman member of the *Société anthropologique de Paris* in 1870, her service to science and philosophy recognized by the *Légion d'honneur* in 1900, yet the social recognition and financial stability of a university appointment was denied her.

Marie Vrinat-Nikolov's moving portrait introduces us to Bulgarian Ekaterina Karavelova, née Velikova Peneva (1860-1947), translator, teacher, and prolific author of political pamphlets and literary articles. Born into a humble family, a paternal aunt ensured that her niece received a sound education first in Nikoalev, later sending her to Moscow where she was taken in by an aristocratic family that sent her to the best *lycée*. She returned to Bulgaria in 1878 to teach, marrying Petko Karavelov in 1880, the same year he became Prime Minister and she began to write and translate. After the Prince reassumed full state power in 1881, Ekaterina joined her husband in exile and completed her first literary translation. Until 1903, she translated French writers Flaubert, Maupassant and Hugo, among others, as well as Russian (Turgenev) and German (Goethe, Heine) writers. The couple returned to Sofia in 1884 and remained in the political fray until Petko's death in 1903. From the time of her husband's death until her own, she untiringly promoted three causes: women, peace and the international recognition of Bulgaria.

Rosanna Masiola Rosini introduces us to Italy's fascinating Marianna Florenzi Waddington, née Bacinetti (1802-1870), translator, author, and commentator of philosophical and scientific texts, her translations scrutinized by religious authorities. In 1819, the young woman married the much older Marquis Florenzi of Perugia, attending university in the capital city of Umbria, where she was the only woman to study chemistry, physics, medicine and the natural sciences. While married to Charles Waddington, a philosophy professor in Paris, Marianna translated Leibniz's *Monadology* into Italian, undoubtedly reading Émilie du Châtelet's commentary on Leibniz's philosophy. She also introduced the ideas of Kant, Spinoza and Friedrich Wilhelm von Schelling, among others, to Italy. Marianna Florenzi is the only woman to have been admitted to the *Reale Accademia di Scienze morali et politiche di Napoli*.

Michael Cronin gives us a compelling portrait of Ireland's Lady Jane Wilde, née Elgee (1821-1896). Born into a pro-British bourgeois Protestant family, Jane Elgee translated nationalist poetry, primarily from the popular German, and wrote verse for publication in Young Ireland's *The Nation* from 1846 until 1848, the year of the failed revolt, under the pen name Speranza. She was fully aware of the power of translation as a tool of propaganda. Her notable translation is Wilhelm Meinhold's *Sidonia the Sorceress* (a book that influenced her son Oscar), though she also translated some of Lamartine's and

Alexandre Dumas *père's* writings, among others, her translations generally deemed to be of very high quality. After a trip to Sweden, Lady Jane Wilde learned Swedish, seeing in Sweden's woman's movement a model that confirmed her thoughts on the woman question.

Luise von Flotow's portrait of Julia E. Smith (1792-1886) tells the story of a woman searching for truth through her translation activity. Born into a religious and studious New England family committed to social and political causes, Julia Smith became a teacher. First a minister, her father turned to law, later becoming a judge. He encouraged his five daughters to read and comment on the Bible. From her highly educated mother, she acquired the love and gift for languages. When the world did not end in 1844, in keeping with Miller's apocalyptic revelations gleaned from a literal reading of the Bible, Julia Smith decided to retranslate it. From 1847-1855, she alone translated it five times from the Hebrew, Greek and Latin. In her paratext, she explains that she wished to make a literal translation in an attempt to reproduce the truth of God's word. The translation was published in 1876, because Julia and her surviving sister wanted "to show those people who think women unfit to vote and otherwise so much inferior to men intellectually, that here one woman has done a thing which no man ever did—translate the whole Bible" (in von Flotow, 303). All profits from the sale of the Bible were donated to the suffragette movement.

Hannelore Lee-Jahnke's original portrait of England's Eleanor Marx (1855-1898) is presented in three acts giving us a thorough introduction to the life and work of the only Marx daughter to keep her name. Act I describes Eleanor's happy childhood and her education under her parent's guidance. Act II explains her position on the woman question and her search for an identity independent of her father's. Act III presents a comprehensive introduction to Eleanor Marx's translation of literary (e.g., Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*) and political (e.g. Lissagaray's *Histoire de la commune*) texts, primarily from the French, including numerous retranlations of a passage from *Madame Bovary* for comparative purposes. Eleanor Marx also learned Norwegian in order to translate Ibsen and Kielland.

Jean Delisle concludes the collection with a portrait of the collection's only Canadian translator, Irène de Buisseret (1918-1971). Born in France of Russian and Belgian parentage, de Buisseret

mastered French, Russian and English. She immigrated to Canada in 1947 and, after moving from the Eastern Townships to Edmonton to teach French and Russian language and literature, returned to Ottawa in 1950 to start working as a translator for the Secretary of State. She headed the Supreme Court of Canada's translation department and taught translation at the University of Ottawa, when she committed suicide in 1971. Not only a highly respected translator and teacher, she also contributed articles to numerous newspapers and wrote a children's book as well as a rather dark philosophical novel, *L'Homme périphérique*. She is best known to translators for her *Deux langues, six idiomes : manuel pratique de traduction de l'anglais au français*, published posthumously.

The well-known translation studies scholars who have contributed to this collection have written comprehensive, very readable and fascinating profiles, making this collection of interest not only to scholars, but also to a more general readership. The portraits are well-documented, each one followed by a list of translated and authored works, as well as a generally exhaustive⁵ list of existing scholarship on the translator. Six of the portraits are also followed by annexes that provide examples of translation or paratextual information (Dacier, Necker de Saussure, Karavelova, Smith, Marx, de Buisseret). This documentation will prove immensely useful to students and scholars who wish to study the translations produced by these women, the paratextual documentation that accompanies their translations or their writings. As well some of the portraits will certainly spark healthy intellectual debate. There is no doubt that this excellent contribution to translation studies scholarship will ensure the continued advancement of this dynamic discipline.

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⁵ Flaubert specialist Graham Falconer's "Mme Bovary and the Translators," in *Significations: Essays in Honour of Henry Schogt*, Parth Bhatt, ed. (Toronto, Canadian Scholars Press, 1997, 41-50), is curiously absent from the Eleanor Marx bibliography.
