

## *Visuel*

Dans l'ensemble c'est vert avec un toit blanc, allongé, avec des vitres. C'est pas le premier venu qui pourrait faire ça, des vitres. La plate-forme c'est sans couleur, c'est moitié gris moitié marron si l'on veut. C'est surtout plein de courbes, des tas d'S pour ainsi dire. Mais à midi comme ça, heure d'affluence, c'est un drôle d'enchevêtrement. Pour bien faire faudrait étirer hors du magma un rectangle d'ocre pâle, y planter au bout un ovale pâle ocre et là-dessus coller dans les ocres foncés un galurin que cernerait une tresse de terre de Sienne brûlée et entremêlée par-dessus le marché. Puis on t'y foutrait une tache caca d'oie pour représenter la rage, un triangle rouge pour exprimer la colère et une pissée de vert pour rendre la bile rentrée et la trouille foireuse.

# Feminist pens, exercises in translation

There has been much debate on the subject of translatability, not only in the area of literature and the word, but also in reference to the codes that lie beyond the word. In contrast, there has been little talk—here at least—about the translatability of gender resources. Any debate on the translatability of grammatical genders or of public gender roles has been rare indeed. This shortfall has led translators to fail to perceive these issues and even some of the most skilful translators, well used to translating other linguistic resources with the greatest of precision, have ignored gender resources. An example can be seen in one of **Raymond Queneau's** best-known literary works, *Exercices de Style*, masterfully translated (as *Estilo-ariketak*) by **Xabier Olarra**. The excellent translation plays with word and language, and the text contains numerous profound reflections on literature. I was surprised, then, by how little attention had been paid to gender resources in this painstaking translation, and by the tendency to reduce the possible meanings in this area. This was made all the more surprising given that in the original French work, Queneau himself plays in many of these exercises of style with the precision or ambiguity of grammatical gender and with the gender representations his readers are used to making. In other words, Raymond Queneau recognises the capacity of gender (both grammatical and in public roles) as a literary and creative resource and seeks to break down the grammar of language and widen and split those narrow public roles.

In the area of translation, it has become all too common for gender features to be rendered invisible. To address this blindness, since the mid-1980s, American feminist literary criticism has turned its attention to translation, with Europe following in the first years of the twenty-first century (**Goyadol 2000**). Those who have approached translation from a feminist perspective have looked at the translatability of gender resources and the need to translate them, but also at the methods employed for translating literary texts that are open to feminist interpretations. In doing so, they have observed that in many cases the translations discard the feminist reading of the original text, reducing the number of readings and steering the interpretation in other directions. There has been a similar trend here. One example was the film adaptation of **Arantxa Urretabizkaia's** novel *Zergatik Panpox* (1979), directed by **Xabier Elorriaga** (1985). The screenplay—written jointly by Xabier Elorriaga and Arantxa Urretabizkaia—abandoned the ambiguity and identity conflict of the original, with the result that the husband, who is no more than a verbal presence in the original, takes on a strong physical presence in the film narrative, to such an extent that in several important scenes he overshadows that presence of the woman that is reflected throughout the novel. Similarly, when a collection of poems by **Miren Agur Meabe** *Azalaren kodea* (2000) was translated into Spanish, some of the ambiguous readings of the original were lost when the lovers' genders became explicitly marked, thus limiting a text where the sexual tendencies had been open to different readings. There is also

a clear reduction in the baroque dialectical style, a device the poet uses to escape from a blind subordination to syntax, and, as a result, the symbol of Miren Agur Meabe's personal path fades.

Some translation researchers consider literary creation by feminist writers to be an exercise in translation; a translation of the patriarchal code which is also a way of disrupting it. They see the work of these «feminist pens» to be, *inter alia*, an attempt to crack open the unmoving patriarchal code and patriarchal language and to unseat the foundations of the wall. This process has taken many forms, one of the most common being the defamiliarisation of the patriarchal code. And the most widely used in discourse is the stammer. Many feminist writers write stammeringly in order to defamiliarise the common uses of language and mark the path to new methods and new meanings. An example of this stammering language can be seen in Lourdes Oñederra's novel *Eta emakumeari sugeak esan zion* (1999). Here the character of Teresa stammers, her breathing laboured, showing with each sentence a burden, and together with the burden, a desire to free herself from charged language, to split open the heavy code received. Poetry, too, contains many examples of stammering discourses, including some in Miren Agur Meabe's work. But the stammering of this poet from Lekeitio is different; it is created by the baroque discourse, not by panting. Miren Agur Meabe, in her collection of poems *Oi, hondarrezko emakaitz* (1999) and *Azalaren kodea* (2000), empties the discourse of verbs and creates a faltering and stammering discourse using personal noun-adjective associations.

Other methods, too, have been used to shake the walls of the patriarchy. Some women authors have argued that the wall is a building, and highlighted the associations between its component bricks. Yolanda Arrieta did this in her symbolic novel *Jostorratza eta haria* (1998), which follows

the structure of a sewing manual. Here she shows that gender roles are a social construct, displaying the reverse of those constructions, of these roles, to reveal the hidden foundations.

There are also authors who perform exercises in translation to show the true subjective character of the architect's supposedly neutral voice. In our area, **Itxaro Borda** has been the most skilful in disrupting that «neutral voice», parodying the omniscient and omnipotent narrator, judge and critic in her first novel, *Basilika* (1984).

Other authors are irreverent in their questioning of the wall, using stark discourse, syntax, and vocabulary, and by highlighting the loss of innocence and breaking the myth of innocence. **Uxue Apaolaza** has adopted this personal procedure in her book of narratives *Umeek gezurra esaten dutenetik* (2005).

Many pens, many ways of trying to undermine the stability of the wall: disrupting codes, some circumspectly, others more directly, but all determined to reinvent, in one way or another, the heavy received code.

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