

*Le masque de l'écriture: Philosophie et traduction de la Renaissance aux Lumières.*

Charles Le Blanc and Luisa Simonutti, eds.

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This volume is the material output of a long-lasting scholarly collaboration that was initiated in 2005 by Charles Le Blanc and Luisa Simonutti. Since then, the editors managed to gather a large group of excellent scholars whose research interests oscillate around the problems of theory and practice of translation since the beginning of the Renaissance up to the Enlightenment. Between the covers of this 860-page volume, Le Blanc and Simonutti gathered forty-two original studies. Nearly each one of them contributes new ideas to the particular subfields of early modern literary and intellectual history and, taken together, they create an impressive mosaic representation of various theoretical positions, diverse philological strategies, and different philosophical and at times theological approaches toward the issue of translation.

The contents of the volume have been divided into four distinct parts: an introduction and sections on translation and the relation between text and thought, on philosophical problems of translation and translation practices in the field of philosophy, and on philosophy of translation understood broadly as a form of hermeneutical inquiry and criticism. In the last three sections, the studies are organized in smaller thematic clusters of three to six papers. It is the editors' preface and opening studies by Le Blanc and Michele Vittori that provide a general conceptual and historical framework for detailed studies. While Vittori's article is a panoramic and, by necessity, a telegraphic overview of shifts in the theory of translation and their

relation to humanist philology, the emergence of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and the rise of the Enlightenment, Le Blanc, in his own paper as well as in the preface cowritten with Simonutti, gives a set of philosophical reflections and historical assumptions that are expected to organize readers' perception of the entire volume. Among these, one has to point out such issues and categories as the problem of universal background for every natural language; historicity and contextuality of translated text and translation; the tension between translation as a process and a product of this process, characterized by its own distinct essence; conflict between translation strategies; translation as a crystallization of an act of deep and close reading, as well as a point of departure for further writing; and, finally, translation as an encounter with a sometimes historically and geographically distant Other. These categories and problems serve for the rest of the studies as points of orientation and are addressed, either explicitly or in a more discreet manner, in nearly every study, albeit in different proportions.

The remaining three major sections provide detailed and learned, though not necessarily exhaustive, analyses that illustrate the constellation of problems outlined in the introductory section and cover such well-known figures as Ficino, Luther, Calvin, Ronsard, Montaigne, Comenius, Leibniz, and Descartes. The essays tackle such issues as the tension between Latin as a language of learned community and the emerging vernacular languages, methods of rendering ancient texts, translations from Oriental languages, and such curious cases as Campanella and Hobbes, who worked as translators of their own works. While the volume unfolds quite logically from one study to another, it must be said that the editors' decision to put some papers into particular sections is somewhat arbitrary, but this comes from the fact that some of the issues are so tightly connected that it is nearly impossible to draw precise demarcating lines between them.

However, the map drawn by the contributors is still full of uncharted territories; suffice it to mention the lack of studies dedicated to the Iberian Peninsula and a noticeable underrepresentation of Central Europe with its own linguistic, literary, and cultural encounters. If one ever writes a synthetic history of translation in the discussed period, he or she will have no choice but to take these areas of Europe into consideration. In this respect, the history of translation faces problems similar to those discussed in the field of comparative literature. Despite these reservations, the reviewer has no doubt that this volume is another important contribution to the field of history of translation practices, with the studies collected by Le Blanc and Simonutti clearing the ways for further research on this topic. Those who seek thorough analyses of particular case studies reflecting on translation will find plenty of them here, and those interested in gaining a general overview of tendencies in early modern translation theory will benefit from the interplay and dialogue between studies gathered in this rich and well-prepared volume.

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