

FLORENTSEN, P.C. (1998): *Translation as Recontextualisation. Framing Hamlet by Means of Neo-Pragmatist Philosophy*, Ph.D. dissertation, Center for Translation Studies and Lexicography, Department of English, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 304 p.

Frank A. Runcie

Volume 49, numéro 2, juin 2004

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/009364ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/009364ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (imprimé)
1492-1421 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Runcie, F. A. (2004). Compte rendu de [FLORENTSEN, P.C. (1998): *Translation as Recontextualisation. Framing Hamlet by Means of Neo-Pragmatist Philosophy*, Ph.D. dissertation, Center for Translation Studies and Lexicography, Department of English, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 304 p.] *Meta*, 49(2), 397–399. <https://doi.org/10.7202/009364ar>

FLORENTSEN, P.C. (1998): *Translation as Recontextualisation. Framing Hamlet by Means of Neo-Pragmatist Philosophy*, Ph.D. dissertation, Center for Translation Studies and Lexicography, Department of English, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, 304 p.

Peter Christian Florentsen's investigation into three Danish translations of Hamlet is an important undertaking, both for a Danish audience, and for a wider community of translation scholars. As for the former, the Danish setting and source text "have contributed to the perception that [*Hamlet*] is, to all intents and purposes, a Danish play" (p. 184). Reviewing the translations of Lembcke (1864), Osterberg (1928), and Sløk (1971) allow the author to determine the changing aesthetics of the Danish target audience, in itself an ambitious task. It is, however, at the same time a discussion of neo-pragmatist philosophy applied to language, and a philosophical inquiry into whether language is a rational process. Indeed, the review of a number of theorists, among them Kant, Wittgenstein, Davidson, and Rorty, make up the bulk of Florentsen's dissertation. By the author's own admission, the greatest influence on his own conception of language is Richard Rorty, author of a number of works such as *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1980), *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* and *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth* (1991).

The study is organized in five parts, subdivided into a total of thirteen chapters. Despite its seemingly complex structure, concise summaries at the end of each chapter help the reader stay focused. The stated aims of the study are "to explore the consequences of neo-pragmatist language philosophy for the study of inquiry, language, communication, and translation" (p. 21). Key terms of this study include language-game, vocabulary, culture, metaphor, gestalt-switch, context/frame/recontextualisation/context reframing, norm, and purpose. As Florentsen explains, his approach displaces "the relation between source and target text from being an epistemological, ontological or metaphysical relation to a sociological relation between the norms, values, and interests of one context and those of another" (p. 22).

In the review of philosophy of language, the author begins with three metaphors of language, in which the views of Kant, Quine, Davidson and Wittgenstein are assessed. Florentsen opts for the paradigm of language as a game, a tool and coherent whole (Davidson and Wittgenstein) as opposed to a clearly defined structure. In Part II, "Theories of incommensurability and untranslatability," profound questioning of these concepts lead him to dismiss the distinction between the ideal and the metaphorical, a distinction he says is devoid of epistemological or ontological pretensions. Meaning, Florentsen argues, needs to be situationally or contextually determined (p. 114). In Part III Florentsen establishes what is meant by the key concepts context and frame, a dialogue with the communication theories of Bateson and Austin and Searle. In Part IV, "The translational Frame," the theories of Nida, Reiss and Vermeer, and Toury/Hermans are considered. It is here that Florentsen discusses norms in depth. The aim is a descriptive study of translation using "norms" and "skopos" as methodological tools. By combining the concepts and terminologies of Bateson and Toury, Florentsen presents a view of translation as "a peculiar kind of context reframing process which includes the more or less familiarising transformation of foreign source material according to cultural, political, and economical norms" (p. 178). Norms are to be understood as both complex and plural, and despite a number of limitations (such as not taking deviations from the norm into account), Florentsen proceeds to analyse the three translations of Hamlet as an activity guided and influenced by norms.

Without a doubt, Part V of is the most original contribution of this dissertation. It is here that Florentsen reviews Lembcke, Østerberg, and Sløk's translations of Hamlet, combining literary history with philology, and prosody with theory. Among the strengths of this comparative analysis are the repeated use of the same passages for comparison, numerous examples, complete lists of archaisms and neologisms, and explanations of the translator's

translation ideologies. Particularly in the case of the Lembcke translation, the author also engages in a critical commentary of the reception. He shows that the discussion of “accuracy” should be offset by the successful lyrical domestication.

Florentsen places Lembcke firmly in the context of post-Romantic aesthetics. He also gives insight into Lembcke’s methodology, noting that because he worked with Danish, Swedish, and German translations, his is largely an indirect or mediated translation. Most notably, owing to its lyrical quality, Florentsen remarks “The Translation reads as an original” (p. 199). Yet his analysis shows that frequent use of certain vocabulary (Hjerte, Sorg, Nød) corresponds to a Romantic aesthetic and that the brutality and raw passion are glossed over (cf. p. 206). Florentsen regards this an example of fluent domestication.

The second translation reviewed is based on the Shakespearean scholar Østerberg. His “primary-source orientation” led to a text that reads like a translation, as well as to a translation largely reflective of realist and naturalist aesthetics. As Florentsen notes, [Østerberg] is concerned with naturalism exceeding realism, as in the way violent and horrific features are made salient in the play. The aspects are depicted in a frank, stark and unadorned way” (p. 213). These judgements are supported both by Østerberg’s commentary and his literal rendering of images of hell and death. Florentsen remarks that the passages in the Shakespearean text that are Senecan are those most successfully translated. He further claims that Østerberg naturalises the play to the extent that he renders it realistically and gives it its harshness and austerity. Yet, “in order to be natural, Østerberg is unnatural,” because his philological and linguistic accuracy ultimately foreignise it, producing clumsy and estranging literalism.

The third and final translation is Johannes Sløk’s, which Florentsen calls an “ideologically explicit” approach to translating *Hamlet*. Sløk is a theologian influenced by phenomenology, an interest expressed in his extensive commentary. Despite the fact that Sløk’s translation predates his book-length commentary (*Shakespeare: Renaissance som drama*, 1990) by some 19 years, Florentsen uses them together, arguing that they are ideologically consistent. The author explains that Sløk’s adherence to phenomenological worldview has a linguistic consequence, the belief that mythic language is ephiphanic, “an ultimate recourse presenting forms of recognition that by nature require no further description or explanation” (p. 226). Sløk follows a target-oriented norm, with a vocabulary that is more emotive than intellectual, and close to modern spoken Danish. Sløk first proceeded by trying to understand the play ideologically before translating it. He reads it as a restoration of natural (ethical) order. As a theologian, he is also concerned with the extent to which the play may be interpreted within a Christian framework. As a translator, however, Sløk demonstrates that his aesthetic is domestication, and his translation of “fishmonger” with *Kødgrosserer* [wholesale dealer of meat], the author argues, achieves functional equivalency or accuracy of ideological effect, because it preserves the allusion of procurer, and thus preserves Hamlet’s outrageous sexual insinuations (cf. p. 234). In addition to this, he discerns the literary quality of folktales in Sløk’s translation, which allows him to conclude that “in his philological accuracy, Sløk resembles Østerberg, whereas his prosody is closer to Lembcke,” although, “compared to both, the poetic qualities of his translation are more discrete” (p. 239). What he achieves is an interpretive and translational transformation of Shakespeare’s play in which the Renaissance amalgam of pagan philosophy and Christianity come to light in fluently demotic Danish.

It is in the conclusion that the largely theoretical Parts 1 through IV and the descriptive Part V are brought together. Florentsen recalls each of the key terms listed above and their implications for neo-pragmatist translation studies. This dissertation advocates a holistic approach to language. The author states, “The utility of translation is constrained by the rules, values and interests of the receiving and interpretive community” (p. 277). While I accept that he has chosen a very appropriate example to illustrate the theoretical apparatus with which he

engages, I wonder whether the undertaking could not have been more synthetic: as it is, the two parts of the dissertation almost read as distinct documents. This question of organization notwithstanding, it is an original and eloquent contribution to translation studies, and a profound inquiry into the philosophy of language. In this latter respect, the works of Richard Rorty, quoted extensively by Florentsen, are also able to reach a wider audience. Finally, and most importantly, given the canonical status of the play in Denmark, Part V should be recommended reading for all Danish students of Shakespeare's Hamlet.

FRANK A. RUNCIE

University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada

BERTAUD DU CHAZAUD, H. (2003) : *Dictionnaire de synonymes et mots de sens voisin*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. « Quarto », 1853 p.

On connaissait les excellents *Nouveau dictionnaire des synonymes* (1971, Hachette-Tchou), le *Dictionnaire des synonymes* (1978, les Usuels du Robert) et le *Dictionnaire de synonymes et contraires* (1992, les usuels). Voici une nouvelle œuvre du même auteur sur le même sujet, mais avec un ajout assez particulier, soit celui de **mots de sens voisin**. On peut se demander ce que l'auteur entend par ces mots, puisque l'on sait pertinemment que les « vrais synonymes » sont rares dans une langue et que tous les auteurs rappellent que c'est le contexte qui permet de découvrir l'existence de termes substituables (synonymie large) ou interchangeable (synonymie absolue). On sait que l'abbé R. Girard, premier synonymiste du français, voulait mettre surtout en relief la « finesse » des sens des mots, car l'existence de synonymes était très douteuse et on n'admettait que des mots à **sens semblable**. Son ouvrage, publié en 1718, porte d'ailleurs le titre « *La justesse de la langue française, ou les différentes significations des mots qui passent pour synonymes* ». Il est vrai qu'en 1736, il change de titre : « *Synonymes françois, leurs significations et le choix qu'il faut faire pour parler avec justesse* ». Ce fut le point de départ de la synonymie en français. L'ouvrage de l'abbé Girard connut de nombreuses réimpressions et a surtout de nombreux imitateurs au cours des siècles. De nos jours les dictionnaires de synonymes sont nombreux. En voici donc un tout nouveau.

Dans son *Avant-propos*, l'auteur livre sa définition de la synonymie, soit celle de synonymie absolue, c'est-à-dire que le synonyme est un « ... mot qui peut remplacer au même endroit de la phrase un autre mot de même nature et de mêmes fonctions grammaticales ». La définition est illustrée par « chanter » et « fredonner ». Ce sont des synonymes « parce qu'ils ont un sens voisin, mais surtout parce qu'ils appartiennent à la même classe grammaticale, celle du verbe ». L'auteur précise bien que, « Contrairement à l'idée reçue, le sens n'est donc pas le critère majeur pour définir la synonymie, il faut d'abord qu'intervienne le critère grammatical ». Il rappelle également que l'analogie qui détermine un rapport d'association d'idées s'appuie sur le sens et ignore le critère grammatical. L'auteur entend donc étendre le sens synonymique vers l'analogie pour des raisons pratiques et ainsi enrichir les données du dictionnaire par des « mots de sens voisin », soit des mots et des locutions qui partagent le même sens, mais aussi les mêmes fonctions grammaticales. Le dictionnaire doit ainsi apporter, à l'utilisateur, une information beaucoup plus riche. L'ouvrage permet alors de réunir autour d'environ soixante mille entrées « un choix de près d'un million de mots et locutions ». Le dictionnaire devient vraiment un outil d'une très grande richesse. C'est, en quelque sorte, un trésor de « mots de sens voisin » puisqu'il recense non seulement les mots de la langue actuelle, mais également un certain nombre de mots anciens, un peu sortis de l'usage – des mots de la seconde moitié du XIX^e et du début du XX^e siècle –, que l'on trouve soit dans des anthologies ou encore parce qu'ils ont servi à assurer un certain « effet ». En plus, les séries sont complétées par des mots d'argot « que l'on rencontre le plus fréquemment en