

PAJEVIĆ, Marko (2019): *The Henri Meschonnic Reader: A Poetics of Society*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 320 p.

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conscience et lutter contre le réductionnisme et les préjugés vis-à-vis des personnes trans. Certains aspects du livre restent tout de même fâcheux. Par exemple, il est gênant de jongler entre les pages pour lire les notes, d'autant plus que ces dernières sont pour la plupart très révélatrices. Cet essai gagnerait aussi énormément à être rédigé de façon plus accessible et accompagné d'un glossaire, car le lecteur peut facilement s'y perdre ou être amené à revenir parfois sur certaines sections à cause du jargon philosophique, des digressions et du style alambiqué. Puisqu'il s'agit de critiquer le binarisme, il est étonnant, enfin, de ne pas trouver de renvoi au féminisme intersectionnel et au privilège de classe notamment. Malgré ces faiblesses, *Transgender, translation, translingual address* reste un ouvrage nourrissant pour les traductologues et les chercheurs en études de genre et culturelles.

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PAJEVIĆ, Marko (2019): *The Henri Meschonnic Reader: A Poetics of Society*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 320 p.

When I first saw Marko Pajević's new edited volume, *The Henri Meschonnic Reader: A Poetics of Society*, I was at once thrilled and puzzled. Henri Meschonnic is a notoriously prolific writer. A French poet, linguist, and translator, he has authored over a dozen books on the theory of language and translation, including two notably extensive monographs: *Critique du rythme* (1982) and *Poétique du traduire* (1999). However, up until the publication of this anthology, only one of Meschonnic's works had been translated into English and was thus accessible to Anglophone readers: the comparatively short *Éthique et politique du traduire* (2008), translated by Pier-Pascale Boulanger and published by John Benjamins in 2011 (2008/2011). Holding *The Henri Meschonnic*

Reader in my hands felt exciting, for here was a publication aspiring to disseminate, in its intricacy, the thought of this relatively unknown thinker in the Anglophone world. At the same time, I wondered, how Meschonnic's titanic volume of work could be successfully condensed into around 300 pages? How could his wide-ranging approach be encapsulated in fifteen rather short excerpts? Did the anthology do justice to Meschonnic's complex thinking?

Marko Pajević's reader offers an excellent point of entry into Meschonnic's poetics. The volume is coherently organised into six chapters showcasing English translations from some of Meschonnic's major works (*Critique du rythme* [1982], *Célébration de la poésie* [2001], *La Rime et la vie* [1990], *Un coup de Bible dans la philosophie* [2004], *Poétique du traduire* [1999], *Modernité modernité* [1988] and *Langage, histoire, une même théorie* [2012]), with each chapter devoted to a specific aspect of his theory: "Critique of Rhythm," "Poetry and Poem," "Rhyme and Life," "Translating," "Modernity" and "Historicity and Society."

The book opens with four introductory sections, which give a comprehensive overview of Meschonnic's life and thought, covering all aspects of his work, from his early poetry and his translation of the Old Testament to his concepts of rhythm and poetics—both in the context of the French intellectual scene at the time (structuralism, Derridean deconstruction) and in light of his main influences (Émile Benveniste, Roman Jakobson, Mikhail Bakhtin and Wilhem von Humboldt).

The first pages of the introduction, written by John E. Joseph, focus on Meschonnic's biography and highlight some of the most controversial aspects of his academic life, which partly explain his position as a marginal figure among French intellectuals and his relative lack of recognition in the Anglophone world. In 1969, for example, he was among the initial faculty of an Experimental University Centre at Vincennes, which would later become the Université Paris 8. A couple of years later, in his essay *Le Signe et le poème* (1975), he would break any remaining links with structuralist linguistics and wrestle with some of the most influential French contemporary thinkers, including Jacques Derrida. On the publishing front, he refused to pare down the size of his 736-page *Critique du rythme* (1982) for prominent and well-established French publisher Gallimard, choosing to publish it with the smaller publisher Verdier instead.

The second section, written by Marko Pajević, explores Meschonnic's theory of rhythm and its key concepts, starting with an overview of his critique of the sign—which, according to Meschonnic, relies on a binarism signifier-signified, wherein

the signifier is perceived as secondary. This piece centres on the notion of rhythm and its distinct significance in Meschonnic's philosophy. Going one step further than Benveniste, Meschonnic suggests that rhythm is not about regularity or measure but about form without fixed consistency—it is the process of meaning-making itself. In Meschonnic's approach, as Marko Pajević points out, value (meaning in context) is more important than the signified (meaning itself). If language is discontinuous, since it relies on the sign (divided into signifier and signified), it is also continuous. Indeed, like discourse, language is embodied: it comes into being through a subjective, historical act of enunciation.

The discussion then moves on to Meschonnic's poetics of society, a question that has continuously preoccupied the thinker throughout his work. This third section, penned by Marko Pajević, scrutinises several of Meschonnic's writings, including his posthumous monograph *Langage, histoire, une même théorie* (2012), while underlining the linguist's constant effort to connect the theory of language to its practice and to reflect on its implications for society. Meschonnic's aim was to demonstrate the ethical dimension of language theory by showing the close interaction of language, ethics, and politics. For Meschonnic, understanding how meaning comes into being is essential to understanding political processes. The sign, which for him stands for the discontinuous signifier-signified, is an obstacle to thinking life and society, because life and society take place in the continuous, through subjects acting in language and history.

Pointing to one of the most compelling aspects of Meschonnic's work, this section brings together all the key concepts discussed so far in the volume (the sign, rhythm, poetics, ethics, politics) and draws attention to the importance of rhythm in Meschonnic's poetics of society. For Meschonnic, rhythm is what makes each enunciation unique, it is the way each concrete instance of speech makes sense, creates meaning. Rhythm is language in movement and, as such, it cannot be fixed: it remains open and finds its unity only momentarily in the act of enunciation. According to Meschonnic, it is poetry that reveals the failure of the sign because poetry, he explains, "does not refer to an *experience*. It creates it!" Poetry is not a mere sign representing something else, it transforms the world. Only a poetic approach based on rhythm can account for language in its continuous flow, in Meschonnic's view, and since society is necessarily rhythmic, a poetics of society aims to think the rhythms of society.

Meschonnic sees the reciprocal interaction of the political with the ethical, with language as

crucial to thinking human life and understanding the functioning of human relations. Marko Pajević's careful analysis of the ethical and political consequences of Meschonnic's conception of language, partly inspired by nominalist theory, makes clear that, for Meschonnic, the nominalist representation of humanity as an ensemble of individuals implies fighting realist abstraction, resisting the point of view that humans are mere fragments of humanity. For Meschonnic, Pajević stresses, "we must always consider the singular as the universal²" (p. 40) and recognise "the possibility of a universalism wherein every individual, no matter from which cultural background, has his or her say" (p. 41). To avoid linguistic manipulation, propaganda, and ideology, we must become aware of what language is and does, "how it operates as the activity of subjects" (p. 41).

The volume's comprehensive introductory remarks close with a few comments on the experience of translating Meschonnic, which include a brief overview of the context in which the project emerged and took place (namely a symposium and two translation workshops), as well as a discussion of the main challenges encountered during the process. This section gives great insight into the highly collaborative aspect of this ambitious translation endeavour and the various stages required to produce a consistent and palatable rendition of Meschonnic's thought. It also provides a compelling account of the main obstacles that the translators had to overcome in translating Meschonnic (notably his poetic and disruptive style, exemplified by his use of parataxis, parentheses, repetitions and verbless sentences) and presents the main translation strategy adopted (retaining Meschonnic's rhythmic, unconventional use of language so as to tie in with his own language theory).

The challenges and strategies discussed in these five pages provide fascinating examples of the main issues involved in translating linguistic and translation theory, such as the intricate interaction between form and content, the untranslatability of concepts as well as references to other theories. As a translation scholar, I was especially keen and pleased to read this section, even though I was hoping for a more detailed report of the obstacles encountered by each of the six translators taking part in the project (Pier-Pascale Boulanger, Andrew Eastman, John E. Joseph, David Nowell Smith, Marko Pajević and Chantal Wright). I would have liked to have known more, for instance, about the struggles and specific approaches of each individual translator, especially in relation to the various disciplines they work in (translation studies, English, language theory, comparative literature, German, and French). I would also have liked to have learnt more about the thorny debates

that such a rich array of translators must have had in rendering specific aspects of Meschonnic's oeuvre. However, I am also very much aware that providing such level of detail sits well beyond the scope and distinct objectives of the book.

The Henri Meschonnic Reader is the first volume to present a selection of Meschonnic's key texts in English. The choice of translations aims to be representative of Meschonnic's vast body of work (the first four translations, for example, are excerpts from *Critique du rythme* [1982] as an indication of the book's centrality in Meschonnic's oeuvre). The selection of texts was also established to cover crucial aspects of Meschonnic's philosophy of language, while making sure that the passages were both readable in translation and that references to French theoreticians unknown to an Anglophone readership were minimal—a great challenge considering Meschonnic's unconventional use of language and his propensity for commenting on other thinkers, a challenge that this anthology carries off brilliantly.

Organised into six sections, the translations follow a similar thematic path to the introductions, starting with the notions of rhythm, poetics, metrics, the sign, the poem, rhyme and life, and then gradually progressing towards the poetics of society with the concepts of subject, translation, modernity, historicity and society. Each section is foregrounded by a brief presentation, which clearly situates and contextualises the excerpts for the reader, making our journey into Meschonnic's unconventional approach even more straightforward and pleasurable.

At once concise and elaborate, *The Henri Meschonnic Reader* offers an invaluable companion for students, linguists and scholars interested in discovering the various facets of Meschonnic's theory of language. Its detailed introductions, article-length excerpts, and glossary of terms also provide great material for tutors who wish to introduce students to specific aspects of the thinker's complex and marginal theory. Ten years after Meschonnic's death, this much-needed reader confirms the growing global interest in Meschonnic's ideas, while contributing to further disseminating his thought in the Anglophone world where it had remained, up until now, virtually unexplored.

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NOTES

1. "La poésie ne renvoie pas à une expérience. Elle la fait" (Meschonnic 1982: 62).
2. In Meschonnic's own words: "Il n'y a plus à opposer le singulier à l'universalisme abstrait, [...] chaque fois c'est le singulier qui est

universel” (Meschonnic 2005: 717). (“One cannot oppose the singular to the abstract universalism anymore, [...] in each case it is the singular which is the universal.”)

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CALIENDO, Giuditta et OSTER, Corinne (2020): *Traduire la criminalité: Perspectives traductologiques et discursives*. Lille: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 260 p.

Depuis le début de la mondialisation, on observe la prolifération continue des points de contact entre la traductologie et le sujet de la criminalité. Malgré cela, les recherches vouées à leur compréhension restent peu nombreuses¹. Ne serait-ce que pour cette raison, l'ouvrage *Traduire la criminalité: Perspectives traductologiques et discursives*, dirigé par Giuditta Caliendo et Corinne Oster, devrait être salué comme une contribution remarquable au domaine. Au demeurant, ce recueil de huit chapitres doit aussi être salué pour la variété de sujets qu'on y aborde – comme la traduction littéraire, journalistique, audiovisuelle et juridique. Autrement dit, cet ouvrage s'aventure bien au-delà du sujet de prédilection des traductologues dans ce domaine, soit la traduction de la fiction sur la criminalité, notamment du roman policier.

Au chapitre des aspects positifs de ce recueil, on ne saurait passer sous silence le large éventail de cadres théoriques qui y sont mobilisés pour analyser les représentations discursives de la criminalité organisée. Divisé en quatre parties de deux chapitres chacun, le recueil inclut plusieurs approches:

les approches littéraires (Fiona McCann, Cathy Fourez); les approches linguistiques, discursives et multimodales (Inge Lanslots, Paul Sambre); les approches sémiotiques, audiovisuelles et cinématographiques (Giuseppe Balirano, Frédérique Brisset); et les approches traductologiques dans le contexte européen; sans compter une perspective jurilinguistique (Giuditta Caliendo et Giuseppina Scotto di Carlo; Hanaa Beldjerd et Armand Héroguel)².

En fait, l'éventail de cadres théoriques de cet ouvrage est si large qu'on pourrait même dire qu'il en menace la cohésion. Le but de l'introduction générale, intitulée «La traduction était presque parfaite: défis traductologiques autour de la criminalité», ainsi que des présentations spécifiques de chacune des quatre parties semble d'ailleurs être d'éviter un tel risque³. Le risque d'incohésion est écarté non seulement en raison du fil conducteur de l'ouvrage, la criminalité organisée dans un contexte de mondialisation, mais aussi parce que, dans les différentes approches traductologiques, on aborde toujours le sujet sous l'angle principal de la sociologie de la traduction.

Ce recueil a été précédé d'une journée d'étude tenue en 2016 sur le sujet «Traduction et criminalité – La représentation discursive du crime organisé»⁴. Lors de cette journée, les participants ont exploré le rôle de la traduction dans les représentations discursives de la criminalité organisée dans un contexte de mondialisation⁵. Dans le recueil, les directrices proposent d'approfondir l'analyse des effets de la mondialisation sur ce sujet de recherche, comme en témoigne leur usage fréquent, dans l'introduction générale autant que dans les présentations spécifiques, des expressions *représentations internationalisées* (p. 20), *imaginaire mondialisé* (p. 22), *imaginaire globalisé* (p. 23), *circulation transnationale* (p. 69) et *circulation du cinéma mondialisé* (p. 122). Le sens de ces adjectifs – *internationalisé*, *mondialisé*, *globalisé* et *transnationale* –, qui semblent être utilisés comme des synonymes interchangeables, n'y est néanmoins pas défini.

La traduction est le dénominateur commun de l'ensemble des sujets et des cadres théoriques abordés dans ce recueil. Aussi, dès l'introduction générale, les directrices adoptent une approche sociologique de la traduction, ce qui leur permet de mettre en évidence les points de chevauchement avec les tendances récentes de la discipline (Pym, Schlesinger et Jettmarová 2006; Wolf et Fukari 2007). Elles s'y réfèrent dans ces termes: «La sociologie de la traduction, domaine de recherche en plein essor (Wolf 2007), examine les implications de la traduction en tant que pratique sociale en y intégrant l'analyse textuelle et extratextuelle» (p. 17). Ce choix théorique n'est pas incohérent