



Lars T. Lih. *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? In Context.* Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2006, 867 p.

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Anderman et Margaret Rogers pour avoir choisi des auteurs doués et compétents. On doit également les remercier d'avoir conçu un ouvrage pertinent qui contribue de façon significative à l'avancement des connaissances en traductologie.

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Lars T. Lih. *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? In Context.* Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2006, 867 p.

The title of the book *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? In Context* suggests that the book is dedicated entirely to Vladimir Lenin and his book *What Is to Be Done?* written in 1901-1902. And it is partially true. But not entirely. In reality, this volume offers a complete picture of one of the most dramatic periods in the history of Russia and—broader—Europe—the years which led to the October Revolution that “shook the world,” according to John Reed.

What Is to Be Done? has been considered by numerous scholars and socialist ideologists as the founding document of the Russian Bolsheviks establishing the notion of the party of a new type. By examining and retranslating this book, Lars T. Lih confronts and clarifies persistent misunderstandings regarding Lenin's views and philosophy on the concept of “the party of a new type” and the place *What Is to Be Done?* occupies in the history of the Revolutionary Movement in Russia. If according to Antoine Berman every translation is—or should be—born out of the translator's project, this is Lars T. Lih's project, which he explains as follows:

The experts regarded WITBD as the founding document of Bolshevism, the book where Lenin first revealed the essence of his outlook. But even the experts worked without a proper knowledge of context—particularly the large context of international Social Democracy and the small context of the polemical in-fighting among Russian Social Democrats in late 1901. To speak plainly, they misread WITBD and therefore misunderstood Lenin, and then successfully raised up this image of Lenin to textbook status.

As a result, the textbook status of WITBD is the main barrier to a serious rethinking of Lenin, since everybody thinks they have a basic idea of what Lenin stood for. But this barrier can turn into a bridge if

we make the effort to put the book into context. The aim of this commentary and new translation is to provide the basic background information needed to do this. We will then literally rediscover a Lenin who is close to the complete opposite of the Lenin of the textbooks.

In this context the expression “Lenin Rediscovered” (my emphasis–T.S.) does not seem overly ambitious, because Lih really helps his readers to discover the Lenin they do not know.

Lenin’s works have been translated and retranslated, examined and re-examined, interpreted and re-interpreted numerous times over the last 100 years. However, this new translation offers an unprecedented amount of contextual research on the period, the history of the Russian and European socialist movements, and the development of Lenin’s beliefs. Socialist ideologists and even scholars have had a tendency to quote Lenin without presenting the immediate or indirect context of the given citation—and that often changed the whole meaning of Lenin’s postulates. Lih, on the contrary, insists on a meticulous examination of the contextual evidence and therefore dedicates a significantly larger part of his book to explaining the historical, social, and political context *What Is to Be Done?* was written in.

Antoine Berman argued that “traduire exige des lectures vastes et diversifiées. Un traducteur ignorant—qui ne lit pas de la sorte—est un traducteur déficient. On traduit avec des livres.”¹ Lars Lih is an excellent example of a knowledgeable translator whose expertise in the subject of his research and not only in the source and the target languages becomes obvious from the first pages of the book. The author uses a great variety of source material—archives, memoirs, pamphlets, both in Russian and German, in order to prepare his target reader for a better understanding of Lenin’s book. Now, we all know that Lenin wrote his works in Russian, so why do I mention German? Because one of the central ideas of this book is that Lenin was insisting on creating a party which would—to a certain extent—follow the model of the German Social Democratic Party, or as Lih calls it, “Erfurtian” Party after the program adopted by the German Social Democratic Party at a congress at Erfurt in 1891.

¹ Berman, Antoine (1995). *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*. Paris, Gallimard, p. 68.

Not accidentally, this historical analysis precedes the actual translation of *What Is to Be Done?* and is in fact four times longer than Lenin's text itself. Lih wants his target audience to be well-equipped for a complete comprehension of the message Lenin really intended to convey by his book. Lih is not only an interpreter, a mediator between Lenin and his epoch on the one side and the contemporary audience and our time on the other, he is also an educator who skillfully combines fluency text with one of the models of translation proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher, where the translator moves the reader toward the author. Lih does not try to domesticate the source and the target texts, he courageously leaves foreign elements (in this case Russian words and exclusively Russian notions of that particular epoch) untouched, but he does not leave his reader alone with them: he explains, contextualizes them and thus makes his reader familiar with the reality of the Russian historical, social, and political situation in the beginning of the 20th century. This model is more characteristic of the Russian and German schools of translation.

Right from the beginning of this volume, Lih challenges his reader with a glossary, which in fact is an explanatory translation of seemingly untranslatable or previously-wrongly-translated words and notions typical for the Russian context in Lenin's epoch. Being born in Russia, I have a direct access to the source text and can attest that Lars T. Lih grasps even the slightest subtleties in the meaning of Russian words as Lenin uses them. *Konspiratsiia*, for instance, means, according to Lih, "the techniques of illegal political work," not "conspiracy" in the sense of terrorism, as it had been previously translated. Lih's interpretation of this word commonly used by Lenin strips it of any negative connotations of revolution as a terrorist activity. Or in the case of the word *Narod* often used by Lenin, and usually translated as "people," Lih argues: "I have kept the Russian word when I thought it was important to keep the resonance of the common people, the Volk, as opposed to the elite." So, he translates the same word differently depending on the context, which illustrates yet another side of Lih's work: the translator's flexibility, flexibility which allows him—and us—to see the given word as a part of the immediate context. Another example would be the word "soznanie," normally translated as "consciousness." Lih translates as "awareness." "Awareness," I believe, in this text is more direct and straightforward, which better suits Lenin's polemical and sometimes even aggressive tone, rather than the Freudian-like "consciousness." These are just a few examples, but further in the book we see how they have changed the meaning of

Lenin's statements. In the most difficult cases, such as the Russian words *proval* or *intelligenty*, for instance, the author leaves them untouched justifying his decision at the beginning of the book or in the following chapters where he explains his choices as he describes the social and political context where each of these words and notions appeared and was mainly used.

By introducing different options of translation of the same words and explaining his choices, Lih engages his reader in an active intellectual participation in the process of discovering the real intentions of Lenin, and the social and political situation in Russia and Europe at the beginning of the last century. He also sets a somewhat polemical tone for the book. Polemics was one of the strongest tools Lenin used in his written works (including *What Is to Be Done?*) as well as in public speeches, and in this respect the author's technique ideally suits the source text, making the book sound more persuasive and giving the reader an impression that he (or she) is not a distant observer but an equal participant in the discussion.

The commentary to the translation is divided into three major parts. "Part I examines the outlook of Marx-based Social Democracy." Part II analyzes "the immediate polemical context" of *What Is to Be Done?* "by looking at Lenin's 'significant others,' that is, the Russian Social Democrats against whom he defined his own position." Part III is dedicated to the political and social atmosphere of the Russian society, which the author calls "the world" of *What Is to Be Done?*. Lih also includes a "Section Analysis" where he explains the passages which "might present difficulties" for the reader and situates each section of *What Is to Be Done?* within the overall argument of the book. In particular he meticulously analyses two passages which he calls "notorious" or "scandalous," and which, according to Lih, have been the main grounds for the "textbook interpretation" of *What Is to Be Done?*. He integrates detailed explanations of his translation choices in a subchapter which he calls "Word History." And only after all this explanatory material does Lars T. Lih leave us alone with Lenin's translated text, which, however, is not "foreign" or "disturbingly strange" to us anymore.

Usually, in discussing a translated text, scholars argue about how much has been "lost in translation." In the case of Lars T. Lih and V. Lenin, we can certainly talk about how much Lenin's work has gained after Lars T. Lih's "interference." As a native Russian speaker,

who grew up in Moscow forced to read and reread Lenin's works in Russian, I can say that in this book Lih has managed not only to rediscover but also to liven up Lenin's difficult-to-absorb *œuvre*. He makes Lenin sound not only polemical but also surprisingly absorbing. Lih's book draws a complete, comprehensive, and profound political overview of the Revolutionary Movement in Europe at the beginning of the last century. It combines meticulous scholarship, profound interest toward the subject of research, and outstanding linguistic skills.

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Martha Tennent (dir.). *Training for the New Millennium. Pedagogies for Translation and Interpreting.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing, coll. Benjamins Translation Library, vol. 60, 2005, 274 p.

La didactique de la traduction sous toutes ses déclinaisons n'est encore trop souvent qu'un sujet que les traductologues abordent au plan secondaire de leurs recherches. En effet, nombreux sont les résultats de recherche publiés chaque année dans lesquels on propose des applications didactiques, sans doute dans le but d'arrimer les fruits des recherches à quelque chose de tangible, de concret, principe sacro-saint en cette ère de pragmatisme où les théoriciens purs et durs ont peine à justifier la pertinence de toute réflexion sans retombées directes et mesurables. Cependant, les ouvrages consacrés exclusivement à la pédagogie et à la didactique de la traduction occupent une place relativement restreinte sur les tablettes des libraires en dépit de la place prépondérante que l'on consacre à l'enseignement et à l'apprentissage de la traduction dans nos établissements universitaires.

Le titre du collectif réuni par Tennent peut déjà paraître dépassé, issu d'une autre époque. En effet, à la fin des années 1990, en plus de toutes les calamités que les prophètes de malheur annonçaient pour l'arrivée du nouveau millénaire, on a assisté à la publication de plusieurs ouvrages¹ aux titres qui, sans doute bien involontairement,

¹ Mentionnons notamment les deux ouvrages suivants : ISRAËL, Fortunato (dir.) (1998). *Quelle formation pour le traducteur de l'an 2000 ?* Paris, Didier Érudition; GUÉVEL, Zélie et Isabelle CLERC (dir.) (1999). *Les professions langagières à l'aube de l'an 2000*, CIRAL, Québec.