

Pedro J. Chamizo Domínguez (Anexos de «Analecta Malacitana», Vol. 16, Málaga, 1998), y de *A Semi-bilingual Dictionary of Euphemisms and Dysphemisms in English Erotica*, de Francisco Sánchez Benedito (Granada: Comares, 1998). Las tres obras constituyen una unidad. Y ello porque, en *Metáfora y conocimiento*, Pedro J. Chamizo había puesto las bases de una teoría cognitiva de la metáfora, mientras que el diccionario de Sánchez Benedito supuso una recopilación de términos acompañada de una explicación enciclopédica de cada uno de ellos, buscando, en este caso, “contextualizar” el uso del lenguaje erótico atendiendo a las distintas disciplinas lingüísticas implicadas (semántica, pragmática, historia de la lengua y lexicografía).

No nos resta más que felicitar a los autores e invitar al lector a adentrarse en lo “políticamente incorrecto” para comprender mejor una cultura, la inglesa, en aquellos aspectos que no se enseñan en clase. [Emilio ORTEGA ARJONILLA].

DELISLE, J. & WOODSWORTH, J., *Translators through history*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Company — UNESCO Publishing, 1995, 345 págs.

This volume was published under the auspices of the International Federation of Translators (FIT) and the authors who rendered their contributions are well known specialists in their respective countries. Having written the present review two years ago, I publish this today with an apology, bearing in mind that some publications stubbornly defy the passing of time thus making its review span considerably wider than would otherwise be thought advisable. In effect, the present book on the History of translation theory was invariably welcome by most translation scholars who have recently emerged in many European nations. It was a good idea of the FIT to have launched the editions of a series of publications where the reflections of outstanding scholars, translators or simply writers in the various central European languages have widely contributed to translation thought through history.

The editors are two Canadians who have devoted all their lives to translation teaching and writing. Jean Delisle is the author of well known titles on Translation theory in French and English, and Judith Woodsworth has published extensively on the history of translation and has worked actively for the Canadian Association for Translation Studies.

Thus from the outset the thorny problem to tackle in a project of this type is precisely that of the intercultural recognition or national representation, or said otherwise, the problem of how to establish a cannon that would strike a credible balance between the big names mentioned in capital letters and those who, having contributed widely to the topic, are nevertheless silenced.

This last seems to me an undeniable snag and a weakness therefore that defies any easy solution unless every nation has a fair share in the deal. Since the intercultural problem of translatability (see “On translatability: variables of interpretation” by W. Iser, *The European English Messenger*, IV/1, 1995) is at the root of all translation theory, one wonders whether the problem faced here has the necessary overtones of cultural influence or even cultural domination. Indeed our European culture is the final result of widely political (and therefore economic) forces that are heir to the emerging and shaping of mediaeval European nations. The book organization of the editors has leaned heavily on today’s nationalities, as major representatives of today’s dominating languages. This is a customary tendency today, although many readers are surely conscious that today’s map of the political and linguistic territory hardly corresponds to the one drawn for previous centuries where the political changes undergone by many nations would have surely tilted

the scales on one side or another. However, the editor assures in the introductory pages that they "have sought to move beyond a Eurocentric view of translation....(in spite of) preferential treatment" (p. 3).

Having made such preliminary reflection I pass on to comment the contents of the book which is divided into nine chapters following a brief preface by François Joly and an introduction by the editor Jean Delisle from the University of Ottawa. The former stresses the dignifying role played by translators as both linkers and levellers of different cultures and language barriers. The latter discusses the viewpoint followed when approaching the present edition. As a word of warning he states that "it is a selective and thematic overview.(...) The result is rather like a canvas drawn with a broad brush, and readers will undoubtedly discover significant omissions in the pages that follow. We are well aware of the lacunae, which inevitably derive from the approach we decided to adopt" (xv). I have given this quotation because it explains all the arguably relative value of the whole approach. Needless to say, all the nine main headings have been the result of a teamwork working under a supervisor. The impression of unity then is hardly found here, since the nine chapters, although having a general tie of union, the links between the writers is so scarce that often we read under the impression that they are, though appearing under the same heading, independent, detachable essays. Thus the first chapter bears the pretentious title, "Translators and the Inventions of Alphabets": there is an account of the three eastern old cultures, the Gothic, the Armenian and the Slavic, alphabets were set out from Greek sources and worked by individual translators in an exclusively religious context (Ulfila, Mesrop and Cyril were monks who had to solve questions of writing system in their spoken native languages). The various translations of the Bible, rather than being proper translational problems, they are significant cultural ones that are rarely studied (Dvornik 1970). At the same level is put James Evans, a 19th century evangelist of western Indian Canada who also invented an alphabet for spoken Cree.

Chapter two is devoted to the emergence of national languages spanning a period from dark medieval times to the Renaissance. Thus English, French and German historical data are faithfully accounted for while other relevant nations are left in the shade. It is beyond doubt that the promotion of languages through Bible reading in the 20th century, as is the case of Gbaya in Cameroon, must be rather intriguing. However, within the framework of a historical account the emergence of languages like Italian (Tuscany) and Spanish (treated under chapter 4 entitled "the dissemination of knowledge" where there is a brief summary about the School of Toledo (see G. Yebra's *En torno a la traducción*, Madrid: Gredos, 1983) is of paramount importance and merits some further discussion in depth of detail. Admittedly, it is in fact of some interest to read about the revival of Hebrew with the Zionist movement at the turn of the last century and the work of Ben-Jehuda.

Chapter three is given the title "Translators and the emergence of national literatures" covering not only too small ground but also a biased one. Here the authors variously focused on an ungraspable topic, firstly English and Shakespeare's reception in several languages, then a nationalistic view prevails where they concentrate on Irish and Scottish early literature. Eventually, they leave some additional brief space for Spanish Argentinian, where J.L. Borges has the lion's share (see A. Manguel, *Una Historia de la Lectura*, Madrid: Alianza, 2001). Under which criteria is this chapter judged relevant instead of other surely more outstanding for the history of translation in South America? The last few pages are devoted to African literary creation in the past few years. A most heterogeneous chapter altogether, variously written.

The next chapter seems to be wholly devoted to the spread of foreign scientific and religious knowledge. In fact more of the former kind than of the latter when China and India and Bagdad are involved, although a passing reference is made to Indian medical science through centuries. All in all, the facts and events describe seem to show almost no concern with linguistic relations but with widely cultural ones. Toledo is mention here as the hub of western culture in medieval times. Tarazona seems to have shared some of the Toledo's flourishing role but it deserves here no space at all. Lastly the Nordic countries have an unfair, too brief a treatment since those languages have seen the creation of a host of fine writers. In sum, a sketchy disappointing account of historical facts that can be read in a general encyclopaedia.

The attractive title of the next chapter is conceived of as the essay of a single writer, since the first part it is well structured and unfolded. It harks back again to medieval times when the Church wielded power and the writer had to struggle against censorship in many parts of the world. A few puzzling pages are written about Italians in connection with communism and the Soviet Union, and a badly needed chapter on women translators is quite sketchily dealt with here. The briefness of this is, needless to say, also disappointing since so much has been written lately about this particular topic.

Chapter six on "The spread of religions" strike a repetitive note since sacred texts have been already devoted so many pages through the volume, from early Christianity to Buddhism. St. Jerome has been profusely discussed while the Koran, like the Bible, is lurking behind almost every page of a history of translation viewed from the cultural perspective. A conventional account of translation through history must face quite straightforwardly the transmission of cultural values, since that willy-nilly is the primary purpose of translation. So some repetition of concepts is unavoidable here too, although the central idea in these pages is to establish a contrast with the previous chapter by singling out cultural phenomena that are of political nature rather than religious. To meet this purpose there is a highly interesting chapter at the end of the book, which is most recommendable for the students of translation and literature.

The next is based on linguistic facts, at last. "The writing of dictionaries" is a highly technical matter that has to be carefully explained to the students. However, this is perhaps the most disappointing section for me, since it can easily fall short of any attentive readers' expectations. In fact this is a fertile topic that deserves some deeper treatment by a team of lexicographers. Done by a single person, regrettably he has left out over ninety percent of the relevant data of current knowledge about that topic, an issue worthy at that stage to be actually pursued in a satisfactory manner.

Neither is the last chapter satisfactory on any counts, in spite of charming descriptions of events that have to do with interpretation. No doubt an actual, acceptable history of oral interpretation is yet to be written, rather than the usual, scattered, unsystematic data that look like mere anecdotes casually told by a grandfather beside the fireplace. More rigorous facts must be obtained from serious research on most topics touched by this interesting and yet superficial book on many counts. Our students of foreign languages should read it attentively, firstly because many of the historical events mentioned should sound already familiar to them and secondly because many cross references are worth going into with a broader, more critical view. [VICENTE LÓPEZ FOLGADO]

GARCÍA, E., *Escribir un poema*, Madrid: Ediciones y Talleres de Escritura Creativa Fuentetaja, 2000, 270 págs.