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Delisle, Jean and Woodsworth, Judith (eds) 1995. *Translators through History*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

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In the preface of the book, Jean-François Joly, President of the International Federation of Trans-

lators (FIT), which published the book with the assistance of UNESCO, states that the aim of *Translators through History* is twofold: to bring translators from the ancient and recent past out of oblivion and to illustrate the roles they played in the evolution of human thought (p. xiv). This aim has been plainly achieved for the

book does take the reader to a journey in History through Europe, the Americas, Africa, India and China, always focusing, of course, on the work carried out by translators as a means for the development, enrichment and promotion of languages and literatures and, consequently, for the spread of education and knowledge.

*Translators through History* is divided into nine chapters, each one devoted to a specific topic which highlights the area in which translation work has been most outstanding: 1) Translators and the Invention of Alphabets; 2) Translators and the Development of National Languages; 3) Translators and the Emergence of National Literatures; 4) Translators and the Dissemination of Knowledge; 5) Translators and the Reins of Power; 6) Translators and the Spread of Religions; 7) Translators and the Transmission of Cultural Values; 8) Translators and the Writing of Dictionaries and 9) Interpreters and the Making of History. Each of the nine chapters/topics has been written by an international team of historians headed by a principal author. It should be pointed out here that the nine teams did a very good

job in associating the historical facts and personalities (Martin Luther and the Reformation in Germany, for example, broadly examined in Chapter 2) with principles and methods of translation (Martin Luther's target-culture approach advocating translation as interpretation, also examined in Chapter 2) in a concise and coherent way. In addition, many illustrations have been provided by means of practical examples of how languages and literatures evolved (for example, the original meaning of the verb "to fast", examined in Chapter 1, and how Chaucer founded an English poetic tradition on adaptations and translations, described in Chapter 3).

If, on the one hand, one should praise the effort of the FIT Committee for the History of Translation in covering such broad areas from the most remote times until the twentieth century in barely 300 pages, on the other hand, as translation is not an isolated phenomenon, too many historical events, periods, dates, institutions, wars, movements and personalities involved in the history of translation do make the reading somewhat confusing and monotonous some-

times. Inasmuch as the book does not necessarily follow a chronological order, the reader many times feels somewhat 'lost' in time and space. Also, in spite of being necessary and helpful, the too many explanations that have been added in most chapters "either in the text or in endnotes, to clarify allusions to specific historical events or cultural features that might not be familiar to every reader" (Introduction, p.3), break the fluency of the reading.

Nevertheless, as stated by the editors Jean Delisle and Judith Woodsworth in the Introduction, the book is an excellent guide to the field of translation history, also because it contains a "Further Readings" section at the end of each chapter so as to help readers find more information on that particular topic. In addition, a complete bibliography at the end of the book and an index of proper names are also provided, thus

facilitating its use.

*Translators through History* not only provides a broad overview of the work carried out by translators through the ages, but also contains important information of linguistic and professional value for those that are engaged in translation and/or translation studies. Furthermore, it discusses issues that are always updated such as how power can use translators and how translators are related to power (Chapter 5), and raises questions such as translators as prospectors, explorers of foreign values (Chapter 7). Therefore, it could, in my opinion, be adopted by Translation Courses of undergraduate level. It would certainly enrich the courses and the students would have a lot to gain through the reading of its pages.

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