



Review: Pinto, Ana. 2015. *John Brinsley, Ludus Literarius, La Grammar School o La Escuela*. Cáceres: Universidad de Extremadura. 269 pp. ISBN: 978-84-7723-977-2.

The present edition of *Ludus Literarius* provides a detailed insight not only into the work of John Brinsley, but also into the education systems of the seventeenth century. The translation of the book has been complemented by an extensive introduction written by the translator. This contributes to the understanding of both the contents of the book and the way the processes of teaching and learning were carried out in the Early Modern English period. It was a time in which the English language was undergoing some of the changes that would determine many of the characteristics that it ended up having in the standard English form until the present day.

Today, when the question of the revival of the so called “grammar schools” is controversial in Britain, a translation of this type could help educationalists from a country like Spain understand the reasons behind this particular school system. The book takes the reader back to a period in history where Spain also played an important role in education, as described in the introduction.

A translation of a book like this may not appear to be attractive *a priori* for a contemporary reader. In addition this work may have been neglected over the years in Spain due to its author being protestant. However, some Spanish universities already include it in their electronic databases (LVII).

The book is divided in two main clear sections. The first one is the introduction written by the translator, followed by a note on the edition; and the second part is the actual translation of Brinsley’s main work. The introduction is composed of two subsections, one is the biography of the author and the other one is about the book itself. In the translation, footnotes have also been added to the original text by the translator in order to clarify different aspects that might be difficult to understand for the Spanish reader or for a contemporary reader, both of whom may not be familiar with some aspects of the education system, the grammar books, and/or the language of the seventeenth century.

Unlike other books where the introduction consists of a brief description of the chapters of the book, the introduction in this translation of *Ludus Literarius* is very long and deserves special attention. It definitely proves the amount of work that Pinto has carried out in order to achieve an accurate and comprehensive translation. In the first subsection of “The author”, it is clearly observed that, unfortunately, not much is known about the author’s life. Despite this lack of definite information, Pinto provides a very well documented description of Brinsley and his life thanks to her thorough investigation. This section also

includes a list with the titles of the different books written by Brinsley, which contributes to the understanding of his position in the education picture of his time in Britain.

In the “Introduction to the work itself”, Pinto is aware of the fact that this text may be extraneous to a Spanish reader today and this justifies the extensive and detailed information that is included here. In addition to providing a clear explanation of the numerous chapters of the book at the beginning of this section, Brinsley’s work is analysed and put into the seventeenth century educational and historical European context. The works from other authors of the time, such as Erasmus and Luis Vives, who might have influenced the writer, are described. Also, some religious aspects have been emphasised. Brinsley himself was a protestant in a country where the Anglican Church was powerful; however, he also had to take into account the fact that some Catholic orders, such as the Jesuits, had a great impact on the education practices of the time.

Ludus Literarius is written in a dialogue way between two schoolmasters, who are carefully described in the introduction. The translator also explains the reasons why Brinsley may have opted for this style, following other books of the period which were also written in a dialogic way. Both men discuss different topics related to what education should be like in the grammar schools and they refer to a grammar book that Pinto successfully guesses is Lyly’s grammar (1542). She explains all the reasons why, despite not being mentioned in the book, this is the grammar book that the teachers make reference to. As Pinto acknowledges (LVI) there have been many occasions on which she had to “identify a lot of the names of authors and works referred to but not mentioned in the original editions”, which has enriched the quality of the present translation.

Despite being full of very accurate and detailed descriptions of many other books that might have influenced and help to understand the present original book, Pinto’s description also contains very long quotations, mainly extracted from her own translation, which might have been avoided by simply referring the reader to the corresponding pages, making the reading process slightly more fluid.

The subsection of “This edition”, immediately following the introduction, is essential to fully comprehend the translation of this work, particularly for readers who may not be familiar with the English language of the period when it was first written. It includes extremely clarifying information about the main features of the language of that time, which include spelling and grammatical characteristics that have been well exemplified.

The present translation of *Ludus Literarius* took as its sources the two original English editions of 1621 and 1627 (LV). A full description of all the relevant details concerning both editions is given. Next, Pinto goes on to indicate that out of the five prefaces present in both editions, she has omitted the first two and altered the order of the other three. The two omitted prefaces were a dedication to James I’s children and a ‘laudatory’ preface written by Joseph Hall, the bishop of Norwich. An explanation of the reasons behind this decision is missing and even though it may be inferred by the reader, it would have been welcomed. Similarly, the alteration of the original order of the other three prefaces that in Brinsley’s book appeared as “The contents in general, To the loving Reader, and Of Grammatical Translations” to “To the reader, The general contents of the book”,

and “Of Grammatical Translations” has not been justified either. Pinto obviously thought it would be more appropriate to address the reader first, probably following the pattern of other Spanish and/or contemporary books, but this is only interpreted by the reader.

An extensive bibliography closes the first part of the book. It includes both the works that have been mentioned and those which the translator has made use of to complete her introduction. Some of these books had also been included in footnotes, which the translator could have simply omitted and referred the reader to the bibliography list.

The second part of the volume, the actual translation of *Ludus Literarius*, is appreciably longer than the rest of the book. As mentioned above, in addition to the translation of the original text, many footnotes have been added, which facilitate both the reading and the understanding. The Spanish language used shows some features that remind the reader of older periods of the Spanish language, as for example in the use of some subjunctive forms such as ‘si lo hiciera’ (3), although by and large the text is translated using contemporary Spanish language, which would make it more attractive for present day readers. Nevertheless, both schoolmasters address each other by using the Spanish formal *you* form,¹ that is ‘usted’, which again could be not only a sign of respect but also a way to try to take the text back to older periods of the language, since nowadays many school teachers in Spain would probably opt for using the informal *you* form, that is ‘tú’, instead. Also, some comments have not been translated and either the original Latin or English language has been preserved. Pinto’s justification to do so is clear and these non translated extracts actually contribute to a better understanding of the idea the writer wanted to transmit and do not impede the reading process.

Ludus Literarius consists of 35 chapters and many of them are entitled beginning with the words: “How to...”, which implies that Brinsley is giving instructions on the way to carry out the teaching task. Most of the other chapters are introduced by a title starting with the preposition ‘Of’ or ‘About’, which clearly indicates the topic of each specific chapter. In general, some of the chapters are very short, whereas others are much more extensive. Pinto has kept the distribution of all the chapters as in the original text and she has also been extremely faithful to the style, the contents and the titles of each chapter. For instance, the dialogic style has been maintained and the language has been translated literally. Similarly, a literal translation of the titles has been opted for, as clearly exemplified in the distinction of the two prepositions that have just been mentioned, ‘of’ and ‘about’, ‘de’ and ‘sobre’ correspondingly in Spanish. Apart from the aspects that have been mentioned before in relation to the Spanish language used, the inclusion of some figures (e.g. pp. 36, 38), as well as some tables (130), extracted from the original book take the reader back to the original edition. Finally, Pinto has adapted some

¹ In Spanish language the distinction between a formal and an informal *you* form, both in singular and in plural, has been kept in the language until the present time, whereas in English this distinction disappeared in the Early Modern English period, towards the end of the 17th century. Therefore, in any given translation the translator has to decide which of the two forms would be more appropriate to use, the formal ‘usted’ (or ‘ustedes’ if it is plural) or the informal ‘tú’ (or ‘vosotros’ in plural). In this case, as explained, Pinto has used ‘usted’ probably to keep the style that would have prevailed at the time in this particular context.

expressions that she probably considered would improve the text in its Spanish version, but without altering the meaning conveyed by the original text at all.

All in all this is an extremely thorough study, from which much information can be obtained. On the one hand, it shows the incredible difficulty that the task of translation entails, and above all when it comes to translating texts from older periods of the language, particularly when not much information is known about the author. It also proves that the translator must be well informed of many aspects concerning the context of the specific source text, and not only master both languages. On the other hand, this new edition suggests that there is an interest in texts written in older periods of the language and that they may be relevant in the present education scenario.

Anybody involved with teaching will find this an illuminating translation. Those who can understand English and those who cannot will equally gain from reading this edition, as the introduction and the footnotes both contribute to clarifying the original work and they offer new insights into a not very well-known piece of work from the past in a time when the education systems of both Spain and Britain are under discussion.

References

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