ALEJANDRO, RUFINO. 1980. Ang sining ng pagsasalin (The art of translation). Manila: Rex Book Store. Pp. 124.

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It seems almost ages ago, although it was really less than fifty years ago, when John Erskine — the teacher of Mortimer Adler and Mark Van Doren — had to argue at Columbia University that the classics should be taught in translation. Classicists at that time, of course, were insisting that what are now known as the Great Books should be read only in their original languages.

The need for translations has long been established. The twentieth century, in fact, has been called *'l'age de la traduction par excellence'*. Translation has brought the two fields of linguistics and literary scholarship so much together that Roman Jakobson — both a linguist and a literary scholar — could proclaim as a truism that 'a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and nonconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms'.

Nevertheless, the need for translations is sometimes still questioned. As late as 1973, for instance, then Columbia University Provost William de Bary, in a conference on the state of literary translation, had to champion the need for translations.

The theory of translations has not even kept up with the actual practice of translating. Despite the numerous books on translation now available (a relatively recent bibliography can be found in George Steiner's *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* [1973]), translation theory is still very much in the common sense stage, hardly comparable to the sophistication now existing in literary theory in general. Translation theory theorists, in fact, are still preoccupied with questions raised by the very first treatises on translation, namely, (a) should literary works be translated? (b) should translations be literal?, and (c) should translations be themselves literary works?

Rufino Alejandro's *Ang Sining ng Pagsasalin* is a Filipino's attempt to theorize about, and to teach, translation. It is a textbook cum treatise, a pioneering work that wants immediately to have its discoveries (or rediscoveries) applied. As in any other hyphenated work, this book suffers because of the hyphenation. It is not totally efficient as a textbook, because it spends too much time on theories. It is not totally convincing as a treatise, because it spends too much time teaching.

The way the book is organized points to the root of the problem. It has seven chapters: (1) Translation: Important and Necessary; (2) Translation and Language; (3) The Translator: Qualities Needed; (4) The Translation of Poetry and the Translation of Lyrics; (5) The Translation of the Bible; (6) The Teaching of Translation; and (7) Final Exercises. The first three chapters are theoretical, the next two half-theoretical and half-pedagogical, the sixth a kind of teacher's guide, and the last totally addressed to the student in a translation course. Clearly, the book tries to do everything. In doing that, it fails to do some things completely.

Take theory, for example. Alejandro's first chapter answers the question 'Should literary works be translated?' by simply enumerating works that have been translated. Surely, he implies, we must be grateful that such masterpieces as the Bible, the *Summa Theologiae,* the *Barlaan at Josaphat,* and works by Homer, Virgil, and Dante, are available to us in translation. This answer, while correct at face value, actually begs some theoretical questions, such as: Are these works masterpieces because they have been translated (we do not know other untranslated works)? Do the translations adequately represent what the original texts did? Is the reader giving up too much by relying on second-hand texts, rather than learning the original languages (as the Pre-Great Books classicists argued)?

Alejandro's answer to the second primal theoretical question (should translations be literal?) is unequivocal: Translations should not be literal. He insists on this particular point: 'Ang pagsasalin ay hindi ng salita sa salita kundi ng diwa sa diwa'. He even distinguishes 'translation' (the literal kind) from 'translation' (anything but literal). The arguments pro and con literalness are legion, but Alejandro's book, unfortunately, does not confront the arguments for literalness, advanced by such contemporary fringe persons as 'machine-translators, logicians, meta-linguists, and literal-minded scholars', as William Arrowsmith and Roger Shattuck describe them in *The Craft and Context of Translation*. Alejandro, in fact, merely endorses what Theodore Savory classifies in *The Act of Translation* as the four types of translations ('saling nagbibigay ng kabatiran', 'sapat na pagsasalin', 'iba't ibang pagsasalin, gaya ng tuluyan sa tula, tula sa tuluyan, at tula sa tula', 'pagsasalin ng mga akda tungkol sa mga bagay na siyentipiko at tekniko'). Even in the last category, Alejandro insists that no literal translation is advisable. In fact, rather than give a literal translation, he advocates using the original word in the source language (his example is 'love, fifteen, thirty, forty, game' from tennis).

The third theoretical question is also answered in no uncertain way by Alejandro. He insists that translations of literary works should themselves be literary works. He quotes with approval Savory's remark that 'none but a poet should undertake the translation of poetry'. In fact, Alejandro takes this (generally accepted) dictum even further. He thinks that all translations of good writing should be done by good writers. This leads us to his original contribution to the theory of translation. Alejandro thinks that 'ang matapat na pagsasalin ay magagawa lamang ng isang taong ang kabatiran sa wika ng orihinal ay parang sa isang katutubong nagsasalita niyon, at ang kabatiran sa wikang pagsasalinan ay parang sa isang datihang sumusulat sa wikang iyon. Anopa't ang isang tagapagsalin ay dapat na maging isang mahusay na manunulat'. Although the general idea is attributed to Jacques Barzun and Henry Graff, the insight is obviously Alejandro's.

The translator must be a native speaker of the source language, a native speaker of the target language, and an experienced writer in the target language. This formula calls for a true bilingual, who is a native speaker (or at least possesses native speaker competence) in the two pertinent languages. Immediately, from a linguistic point of view, Alejandro's insight is problematic, since there are very few known cases of true, i.e. balanced, bilingualism, and Filipinos knowing English are not, in general, true bilinguals. In his textbook portions, however, Alejandro assumes that his students reading the book are true bilinguals, because he asks them to do translations from English to Pilipino. While it may be granted fro the sake of argument that a few teachers of translation may be true bilinguals, it is not possible to maintain that numerous students of translators will have native speaker competence in two languages. (Of course, if the textbook portion had restricted itself to translations, say, from Cebuano to Tagalog by Cebuanos living in Manila, then there would be fewer objections from a theoretical point of view.)

Because of these theoretical objections, Alejandro's book is better viewed as a translation textbook, with the theoretical portions taken merely as introductory glosses. An excellent way to teach students how to translate, for example, is given by Alejandro in his description of the four stages of a translation process, namely, (1) close reading of the original; (2) rough translation from the original; (3) rough draft using the first draft but without referring at all to the original; and (4) final draft checked for accuracy with the original. This the same process that graduate students doing translation theses at De La Salle University have been using profitably and efficiently. It is a process that works, and it produces works approximating the 'ideal translation' — accurate, idiomatic, and creative.

One cannot end a review of Alejandro's work without mentioning that he includes his own translations (as well as those of others) as examples in the book. Since he has a