

otherwise?

3. Is there fair recognition of literary translators?

Perhaps the question should be: Do literary translators get the same recognition that authors enjoy? The answer to that is no, and though it can be irksome if one is the translator, there are logical reasons for this situation. The dynamic between an author and a translator is similar in some ways to the one between a composer and a musician. But music is a public affair, which can be enjoyed by large crowds, and the musician is usually the star of the event, or at least the co-star. Reading, on the other hand, is a private experience; the reader does not need the translator to "perform" the words. So the writer is the star, having produced a work that generated a certain level of acclaim in what we might call the source culture. The publishers of the translation promote the author in order to capitalize on that acclaim, and the translator tends to be a faceless facilitator in the process, an anonymous filter of some kind that makes it possible to sell the work in the target culture. It is also probably true that the reading public is not terribly aware of what the translator actually does, and therefore has no "language" with which to acknowledge the latter's contribution. I would say that literary translators get their true recognition from their peers.

4. How do you deal with a Spanish word that has several meanings?

Literary translators must understand exactly what the author is trying to say. Should there be any doubt, the author can be consulted if he or she is alive. If not, translators must work it out for themselves. To this end, they must have a broad and nuanced grasp of both languages, especially the target language, and be skilled at following threads in dictionaries and other resources. This will help them to understand every shade of a particular word's meanings and connotations. Armed with that palette, the translator must probe the context, which will usually provide the key.

5. Are all books translatable?

Yes, I think so. Some are harder than others, of course. Some can only be translated by very skilled literary translators. The same is probably true of music; all music can be played, but not by all musicians. There are levels of communication that can only be interpreted by those with finely tuned sensitivities.

6. What is the state of translation in the US?

The US is a large country, with only two neighbors (one of which speaks English), bordered on the other two sides by vast oceans. Compared to European countries, for example, it is virtually an island. As the dominant culture of our time, it inevitably suffers from the same self-absorption that has afflicted all great cultures in their own particular way. Statistics suggest that publication of works in translation in the US lags behind other countries. Perhaps globalization and the Internet will gradually have an impact on this situation. I hope so.

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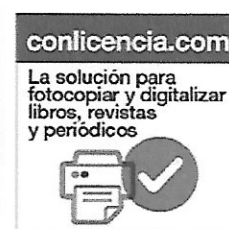
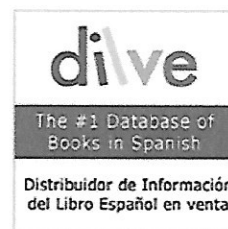

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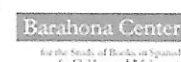
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