



FREDERICK M. RENER

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The editors of *Acta Neophilologica* announce deeply grieved the demise of one of their major coworkers, Professor Frederick M. Rener. He was one of those intellectuals who after the Second World War emigrated from Slovenia to America where they made distinguished scholarly careers at the universities of Canada and United States.

Frederick M. Rener was born on 5. November 1919 at Štjak, a small village in the hilly region northeast of Sežana in Slovene Littoral. In the period between the two world wars this area was occupied by Italy. After the elementary education in his native village and the secondary school at Gorica / Gorizia he emigrated in 1949 to America where he stayed during the first year in Buffalo, N.Y. From 1950 to 1952 he studied German and English philology at the University of Toronto (BA 1952, MA 1954) where he obtained his PhD in 1957 with a dissertation on the prose work of the modern German author Elisabeth Langgässer (born in 1899). From 1959 to 1960 he taught German at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, 1960-1962 at Marietta College in Ohio and then for the rest of his university career, from 1962 till 1986, at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. In 1986 he retired and lived together with his family at Marburg / Lahn in Western Germany. Here he died on 27. January 1993.

At the beginning, his scholarly interest was concentrated primarily on German poetry in the period of baroque (Friedrich Spee, Martin Opitz). The importance of his studies is proved by the fact that they were all published in the leading American and European philological reviews (*PMLA*, *Comparative Literature*, *The German Quarterly*). In 1974, however, appeared in *Acta Neophilologica* a longer study by him on the theory of translation in the XVII. century. This study marks the beginning of F. Rener's new interest in the history of the theory of translation to which he paid his main attention for the rest of his life. As a result of these researches he published in 1989 in Amsterdam his book *Interpretatio: Language and Translation from Cicero to Tytler* in which he investigated the history of the theory of translation from the classical Antiquity till the end of the XVIII. century. This is the work on which Frederick Rener's fame as a scholar will primarily rest.

So far the scholarly world was convinced that the theory of translation was first formulated by the European Renaissance, and that before the Renaissance no such theories were known. In opposition to such views F. Rener proved that in reality the fundaments for the theory of translation were defined by the classical antiquity and

they remained basically unchanged till the end of the XVIII. century. Their foundations were laid by ancient grammarians and rhetoricians, and fully developed by the classical translators. They formulated strict rules both with regard to the selection of words (*verba singula*) as well as their connections (*verba coniuncta*, the syntax) taking into consideration also the style of the original. The ancient translator saw himself above all as an interpreter of the original, his task was primarily to make the original accessible and comprehensible to the reader. The ancient theoretical principles followed by the translators remained valid throughout the Middle Ages; and even the Renaissance, according to the findings of F. Renier, created no significant new principles in this field. New views on the role of translator emerged first at the beginning of the XIX century: crucial in this respect is the study by Wilhelm von Humboldt in the introduction to his translation of *Agamemnon* by Aeschylus (1813). These new views developed parallel to the development of linguistics which from its earlier ahistorical view of the language passed now to the historical views of the comparative philology. Instead of the ancient opinion that the word is simply a deliberate name of a thing (*signum rei*), with the romanticism the word becomes the bearer of thought.

This book by F. Renier was evaluated by the scholarly criticism with the most flattering words: "un grand livre" (*Palimpsestes*, 1993, p. 35), "a splendid empirical account" (*The Times Literary Supplement*, N.Y., Jan. 12-18, 1990), "une imposante étude" (*TTR - Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* IV, 1991, p. 220). It certainly opens completely new aspects of the history of translation.

The work of Frederick M. Renier is an expression of a deeply cultured person, grown up in the humanistic traditions of Slavic, Romance and Germanic nations. All his life he maintained close contacts with his native Gorica region, and for many years also with Ljubljana and its University to which he paid repeated visits.

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