Leif Sletsjøe as translator

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Leif Sletsjøe (1921–82) is by far the person who did most for introducing Portuguese language, literature, and culture in Norway, and he deserves to be acknowledged as an untiring communicator and academic scholar promoting Romance languages, and especially Portuguese, in almost all conceivable forms: from newspaper articles and radio chats to textbooks and multiple essays and books – and of course translations, which is our concern here. In this paper we look at Leif Sletsjøe’s activity as a translator from Portuguese, discussing his choices and presenting and analysing the paratexts he produced.

Leif Sletsjøe chose to translate a wide variety of books and genres: prose, poetry, and drama, from widely different times and genres. Of his 17 translations in book form, 8 are from Portuguese: Late medieval and early 20th century drama, novels ranging from realism in Brazil to experimental literature and African revolutionary literature, as well as modern poetry.

Also, he used a variety of forms to present these works: from books on one author including translations, to parallel editions, or more standard translations sprayed with paratexts. It is obvious that he was taking seriously his role of professor of Romance Philology (and thus of Portuguese and other Romance languages), and that translation of literary works was one of the means he employed to increase knowledge on Portuguese language and culture in Norway.

We will discuss Sletsjøe’s choices of authors and works, and present the several prefaces and other texts written in connection with the publication of the translations, showing his protagonism as translator and how it interconnects with his other activities.