

Rodríguez González, Félix. 2011. *Diccionario del sexo y el erotismo*. Alianza Editorial: Madrid. 1150 pp.

Reviewed by Martín Jamieson
Buenos Aires

Criticism often levelled at dictionaries of many languages includes the fact that four-letter words and similar expressions referring to taboo items are kept off their pages. Due to this, specialized dictionaries focusing on such excluded material have been compiled, sometimes in school-boy fashion, as the dirty work of the smirking child who learns the power of prohibited words and scurrilously shares them, and other times as the scientific oeuvre of those who consider it necessary to register the full scope of language in society.

Félix Rodríguez González's new dictionary, *Diccionario del sexo y el erotismo*, is of the latter type. It follows in the path hewn out by Camilo José Cela's two-volume *Diccionario secreto* which appeared with Spain's return to democracy and its *destape* of the 70s. (During those years and shortly after, publishers in Spain rushed to circulate "forbidden" texts written by classical writers of previous centuries until then considered prudish and straitlaced). On going through the *Diccionario del sexo y el erotismo*, no one would think of claiming that Rodríguez González's dictionary is the result of wanting to ride a wave of anti-prudery or of aspiring to capitalize in wallowing in talk about "beastly acts" or perversions. (*Puto el que lee. Diccionario argentino de insultos, injurias e improperios*, Revista Barcelona, Buenos Aires, 2006, for instance, would seem to be in the latter league.) Rodríguez's is a scientific proposal that is of use to either the layman or the erudite observer. Whoever needs to be updated on contemporary Peninsular sexual beliefs, slang and practices can turn to this book and be rapidly appraised. (Dictionaries, it is needless to note, are not only linguistic items, but storehouses of social experience.)

Félix Rodríguez González is a Spanish professor who has taught and researched at the University of Alicante for more than three decades as well as a lexicographer of note who has been studiously compiling dictionaries with a sociolinguistic focus. His *Nuevo diccionario de anglicismos* (1997), co-authored with Antonio Lillo Buades, records the noticeable influx of English words present in 20th century Peninsular Spanish. His *Diccionario de terminología y argot militar: Vocabulario del soldado y la vida del cuartel* (2005), and his *Diccionario gay-lésbico. Vocabulario general y argot de la homosexualidad* (2008) are further proof of his interest in lexicography, and have made him hone his technique in compiling vocabularies and defining terms. He has also completed a *Diccionario de la droga: Vocabulario técnico y argot*, yet to be published. These books are only part of his work. Rodríguez González has also participated in international projects dealing with the influence of English on other languages, his contributions mainly related to Spanish, and he has also written or edited other papers.

This over thousand-page long *Diccionario del sexo y el erotismo* focuses primarily on items (the blurb tells of 6200 headings) of contemporary European Spanish although a few forms heard in other Spanish-speaking areas are included. A special effort seems

to have been made to include the non-hegemonic varieties of Spain, so studies of Canary Islands and Andalusian Spanish form part of its bibliography. (I've only been able to pinpoint one work on Spanish from America, a volume by Miguel Ángel Quesada, a Costa Rican who publishes on Central American Spanish and mentors works by others interested in the area.) Rodríguez explicitly declares that “[e]l diccionario se ha compilado teniendo en cuenta la terminología utilizada en España, y sólo por comparación o contraste aparece citado esporádicamente algún término de uso en Hispanoamérica” (p. 21). He further suggests that his dictionary may “ofrecer algunas pautas de interés para la redacción de diccionarios (o glosarios) semejantes en otras áreas o lenguajes de especialidad, o que se ocupen de la misma temática en otros países de habla española” (p. 24). This has already partially been done, though not as thoroughly as Rodríguez González has, by Manuel Criado de Val's *Diccionario de español equívoco* (Madrid, SGEL, 1981), for Spain, and by Sergio Bufano and Jorge Santiago Perednik's *Diccionario de la injuria* (Buenos Aires, Losada, 2005), that covers Spanish America, but that is more an insult dictionary than one focused on vocabulary referring to sex and erotism.

A lucid, well-written prologue by the author establishes the characteristics of this dictionary. Its traits can be synthesized as follows: 1. It is synchronic because it refers to contemporary Spanish, and the mentions of previous stages of the language are used only for clarification. 2. It is syntopic because its area of reference is one country, Spain. 3. It includes written texts of varying register, focusing specially on web-based material, which has powerfully drawn his attention. 4. Everyday language heard on radio, television, on the streets or culled from newspapers and magazines along with material from dictionaries of a similar nature is included; books and erudite research papers are scoured, therefore “el diccionario recoge tanto voces populares o callejeras como *puta* y *beso negro* como otras más técnicas, eufemísticas y asépticas, como *trabajadora del sexo* y *anilingus*. En ocasiones he incluido comentarios y datos de interés histórico-cultural y filológico que facilitarán su comprensión. Y en ciertos casos, también, otros de carácter enciclopédico, por lo que el diccionario es también, en parte, una enciclopedia del sexo y del erotismo” (p. 20).

Rodríguez González is not only scientific in establishing the origin of his corpus, but also explains how each entry is organized:

Cada entrada consta de una definición, información gramatical (marcas de género y, a veces, de número), y, en ciertos casos, la pronunciación (especialmente en palabras provenientes del inglés). Ocasionalmente, con algunas palabras y expresiones clave, se ofrecen también datos sobre su etimología, su uso estilístico, su frecuencia (o rareza) y su origen y evolución, que serán de interés para el filólogo.

Como novedad interesante, en la medida en que no es una práctica muy seguida en España en las recopilaciones de argot y estudios sobre léxicos especiales, en la mayoría de los casos he incorporado citas de textos que contienen la palabra en cuestión y la fuente documental (en abreviatura) donde se han encontrado. (p. 22)

Very little can be objected to this pioneering work, since Rodríguez has been meticulous in his declared methodology, research and demeanor, and his book has to be measured by the standards he has established. Delving into pages taken at random leads to saying the following: (1) Certain quotes seem too long, and others do not really seem to be adequately explanatory. (Check the quote for *cuarto sexo*, for example). (2) Some definitions might be considered a tad off-color. Definitions are expected to be in metalanguage, with slang forms absent. (I recall *follar* and *mariquita* among others used in them.) (3) A few may be slightly imprecise: under *túnel del amor* one finds a mention of “la época pre-gay”, which supposes that there is a pre-gay period, a gay one and maybe even a post-gay one, all of which are left without clarification. Also, despite his open-mindedness (without which this dictionary simply would not have existed), and his focus on changing mores in society and in dictionary writing, the author does not seem to be able to escape moralizing (“en este período tardomedieval se produce también *una relajación moral* “, p. 11, or “una etapa *dominada por la liberación de las costumbres* y la corrección política”, p. 24; emphasis mine in both cases).

In summing up, this new *Diccionario del sexo y del erotismo* is a multipurpose one, is a welcome addition to any library holding lexicographical works relating to Spanish and a useful item for those who would study contemporary Spanish society and mores.