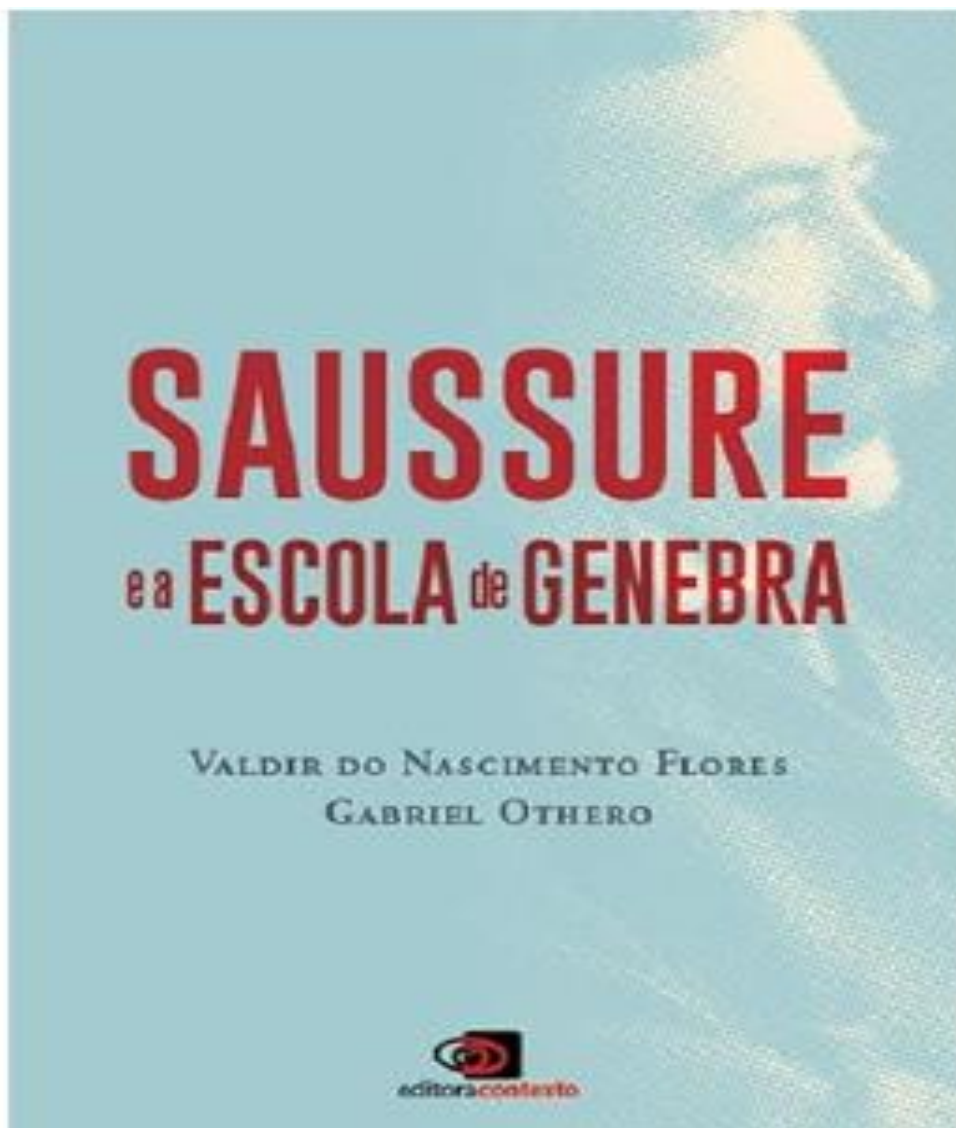


FLORES, Valdir do Nascimento; OTHERO, Gabriel (eds.). *Saussure e a Escola de Genebra* [Saussure and the Geneva School]. São Paulo: Contexto, 2023. 208p.

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Saussure and the Geneva School is a collective work organized and edited by Valdir do Nascimento Flores and Gabriel Othero, both from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Valdir do Nascimento Flores is a professor of Portuguese language at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, affiliate member of the CNPq (Brazilian National Research Center), one of the most important precursors of Saussurian and Benvenistian studies in Brazil and has dedicated himself to developing an anthropological perspective on enunciation. Gabriel Othero is a professor of linguistics at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He has focused his interest on syntax and its interfaces, Brazilian Portuguese grammar and the history of linguistics, and consistently contributes to publications in these areas, including works on Chomsky's thinking.

The editors have taken meticulous care not only to select the texts to compile the work, but also to assemble a team of translators to make these texts accessible in Portuguese. It is a collection of articles: one of them written by the editors themselves and the other eight translated from French into Portuguese.

Adding to the collection's important merit is the fact that you can see part of the life and work of some of the main linguists who succeeded the linguistic program started by Ferdinand de Saussure and who can be considered to belong to the “Geneva School.” Furthermore, a discussion is proposed on the Geneva School, on some of the main Saussurian linguistics concepts and on the edition of the *Course in General Linguistics*. This collection of texts also reveals, in Portuguese and to the Brazilian public, unpublished texts by Albert Sechehaye, Charles Bally and some of the most important Saussurian scholars and philologists. For all those reasons, the work is relevant to everyone interested in the topics. However, it is not just a “thematic” work: there is a common thread that leads to an unprecedented and extremely interesting approach to linguistic studies, as I will point out below.

In the introductory text, the editors, Valdir do Nascimento Flores and Gabriel Othero, inspired by Milner (2021), explain their proposal to begin a study of Saussure's theory from a “linguistic school” perspective. It could be said that, with this, they inaugurate, in Brazil, a very fertile path of study for general linguistics, for at least two main reasons. Firstly, this proposal provides a new way of (re)constructing Saussure's

ideas, not from a content which supposedly underlies all modern linguistic approaches, often even through outsourced or superficial readings, but from discussions which can be fueled from what Saussure himself proposed and, furthermore, from what his closest followers formulated and interpreted, in continuity with his reflection. Secondly, seen by the authors as a *sociological movement originated by a research program*, it is possible to question and understand the “Geneva School” as a “linguistic school,” which also leads to a profound and necessary epistemological discussion about general linguistics.

The perspective proposed by the editors although new in Brazil is in dialogue with the reflections of authors such as Amsterdamska (1987), Amacker (1976), Curea (2015) and Puech (2019), who are some of the authors cited by the editors, especially in the discussion about the configuration of a “Linguistic School.”

The book is divided into three parts. For the first part, entitled “Leituras de Saussure: a figura de Albert Sechehaye” [“Readings of Saussure: the figure of Albert Sechehaye”], three texts by Sechehaye himself were selected and one was written by the editors, Valdir do Nascimento Flores and Gabriel Othero.

The first text, “Os problemas da língua à luz de uma nova teoria” [The problems of language in the light of a new theory], according to the editors, contains one of the first reviews of the *Course in General Linguistics*. Apart from its historical value, from the third part onwards this text presents an interpretation in the form of a summary of Saussure's deductions on *langue* and *parole*, on the place of language in a semiology, on the theories of value, arbitrariness, mutability and immutability, synchronicity and diachrony, etc. Sechehaye presents these ideas not to develop them himself, as he states in this text, but to project a linguistic science that could be continued on the foundations laid by Saussure. But, above all, I would like to highlight the fact that Sechehaye presents, in the first two sections of this text, a good part of the context of studies and of Saussure's contemporaries, in which the *Course in General Linguistics* emerged and was opposed. In my opinion, this context, investigated more closely, could be decisive for a renewed and more precise interpretation of Saussurian ideas.

In “A Escola de linguística geral de Genebra” [The general linguistics school of Geneva], Sechehaye not only attests to his affiliation with Saussure's ideas and expresses his point of view, consolidating the movement to create the School, but also reports on

some aspects of the development of the thinking of disciples of Saussure's doctrine, which led them eventually to develop ideas in various directions. Among these disciples, the works of Marguerite Lips and Serge Karcevski are mentioned, for example, but Sechehaye describes in more detail the thinking of Bally and himself, Sechehaye, who were, before editing the *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure's successors as teachers of general linguistics in Geneva. What is striking about this text is that, in explaining how the *Course* is presented in the eyes of Bally and Sechehaye, the first thing that is raised is the question of the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, converging towards a theorization that places grammar as a skeleton, as a dry and dead abstraction, alongside the complete and concrete linguistic reality, which would be the living part of language. Bally develops this and other questions, placing himself in the field of the *parole* and postulating on the mechanisms of linguistic expressiveness, which involve not only logical and grammatical factors, but also affective and imaginative ones. Sechehaye, on his part, places life and logic not as two opposing language poles, but seeks an explanation in which the logic of grammar organizes language and implies the use of a *langue*. Thus, one becomes unthinkable without the other for the mastery of language: life (of “spontaneous speech,” according to Sechehaye) is the source of logic, which, in turn, is the principle of its organization.

In the third text, entitled “As três linguísticas saussurianas” [The three Saussurian linguistics], Sechehaye begins by promoting a defense of Saussure - which can be described as fierce, due to the articulation and strength of his arguments - in the face of the various criticisms leveled at the Genevan precursor. Sechehaye concludes the first part of this text by stating that the type of criticism that Saussure's reflection involves is that of complementing, filling in gaps, showing “truths that he would have overlooked” or “showing how we can make better and fairer use of his own theses.” And so, in this spirit, Sechehaye proposes thinking about the relationship between diachrony and synchrony in the following sections of the text, arriving at a synchronic and static linguistics, alongside a diachronic and evolutionary linguistics. He also adds a third: the linguistics of organized discourse or of the functioning of language, which would have a very different object if compared to static linguistics. In static linguistics, the work is on generalities through

abstraction, whereas in discourse linguistics the work is on concrete phenomena, in which language is put at the service of thought.

The fourth and final text in part 1, written by the book's editors, is a continuation of the issue of criticism of Saussure, especially about the problem of the arbitrariness of the sign, in which the authors show how Sechehaye, Bally and Frei, in an article published in *Acta Linguistica*, defended the alleged contradictions in Saussure's theorizing on the subject. This text also highlights the importance of the debate on the arbitrariness of the sign, which still has a major impact on the understanding of Saussurian ideas.

This leads to the second part of the book, entitled as “A Escola linguística de Genebra em exame” [The Geneva School of linguistics under examination] and whose first text is “O arbitrário do signo como problemática na linguística de Genebra: Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye e Henri Frei” [The arbitrariness of the sign as a problematic in Geneva linguistics: Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye and Henri Frei], by Anamaria Curea. However, the author's focus is not on the arbitrary itself, but on how the arbitrary had repercussions on the work of the linguists of this first generation of the “Geneva School.”

The second article in part 2 is written by Pierre-Yves Testenoire and deals with “A Escola de Genebra vista pela Sociedade Linguística de Paris” [The Geneva School as seen by the Linguistic Society of Paris]. In this text, the author presents, for the first time in the book, an outsider's view of the “Geneva School,” in other words, by investigating the “School” from another point of view and not from a Saussure's successor. Before making a historical analysis of the comparison between the “Geneva School” and the “Linguistic Society of Paris,” which, according to the author, are closely intertwined, Testenoire conducts an interesting discussion on the concept of “School” and “Linguistic Society,” which takes up, in the context of the work, and once again problematizes the discussion proposed at the beginning by the editors. Another highlight is a schematic table in which Testenoire presents Geneva's linguistic production from 1908 to 1940, separating the productions of eccentric movement from those of concentric movement, and also the reviews published in the *Bulletin de la société de linguistique de Paris*.

Part 3 of the book is dedicated to “Correspondência sobre a edição do CLG” [“Correspondence letters on the editing of the CLG”]. There are three articles by Estanislao Sofia, being the third co-authored with Anne-Marguerite Fryba. The first and

second articles deal with letters exchanged between Sechehaye and Bally regarding the editing and preparation of the *Course in General Linguistics*. The last article reveals aspects of Albert Riedlinger's collaboration in editing the *Course*, mainly from the study of correspondences between Sechehaye and Bally and between Sechehaye and Riedlinger. In addition to the content, which is of the utmost importance for the study of Saussure's thoughts and to what it flourishes in terms of ideas from the "Geneva School," there is the unprecedented translation of these letters. Among other benefits, the translation makes it possible to study the way in which thoughts are presented through personal correspondence, which in itself is also an innovative work in terms of the linguistic science we do in Brazil.

Finally, regarding the articles that transcribe the letters, I would like to highlight the care taken by the editors to comment on the editorial decisions made when translating these documents: the reader is thus much better prepared for the subtle reading and the different perspective that are required in these cases.

As it can be seen, there is much more to this book than the unveiling of unpublished texts, although this alone is an invaluable contribution, opening up new perspectives for reading and developing research into issues that are still problems for linguistics, such as the issues of *langue* and *parole* and/or text and discourse, using the terms that designate problematic concepts for the linguistics we do today. In this collection of texts, the editors also promote an in-depth, interesting, and necessary discussion on the concept of "linguistic school," which in turn also makes us think about the place of linguistics as a science. What the editors announce in the introductory text effectively runs through all the texts gathered in the book, in which neuralgic theoretical and epistemological points are touched upon and give us the unsettling and instigating feeling that there is still a lot to explore when it comes to research in linguistics, including and perhaps especially (re)starting from Saussure, and the legacy that this thinker left and can be attested to by the "Geneva School."

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Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [*Bakhtiniana*. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review 1

The text in question covers the works that compose the book by Flores and Othero. It is an elaborate and thoughtful presentation, which in its organization echoes a pack of information that is often new even to Saussure scholars. These include the attention paid to the fact that the editors - inspired by Milner - start from a “linguistic school” perspective. This point of departure is somewhat new in Saussurian studies in Brazil and was well explored by the review author, who adds another important aspect to the book:

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the editors have brought together a team of good translators to make little-known or unknown texts accessible in Portuguese. In addition to these introductory aspects, the review author continues step by step in the presentation of the chapters that follow.

At this point it is necessary to say that the text under evaluation has the structure of a very well-written and organized review, but a review to which valuable comments are added. We can appreciate, among many other points, the comments made in part 3 of the work dedicated to the “Correspondência sobre a edição do CLG” [“Correspondence letters on the edition of the CLG”]: the personal correspondence reveals itself as an innovative work “with regard to the linguistic science we do in Brazil”. In addition, the very concept of “linguistic school” is recognized by the review author as “a rich instrument for thinking about the place of linguistics as a science.”

To conclude, I would like to say once again that the text under review is a quality review and if this format is included in the list of works published by *Bakhtiniana*, I am completely in favor of its publication. APPROVED

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Review 2

The review of the book “Saussure e a Escola de Genebra” [Saussure and the Geneva School], in 6 pages, begins with a complete and precise presentation of its authors: Valdir Flores and Gabriel Othero. In addition to the biographical data provided in the final pages of the book (“Notas sobre os autores” [Notes on the Authors]), some other data on the authors has been added - which seems well suited to situating the importance of V. Flores and G. Othero, the editors of the book.

Composed of a collection of articles, eight (8) of them were translated from French into Portuguese and one (1) was written by the editors themselves. The editors' care in offering the reader a translation of the articles (originally in French) is highlighted in the second paragraph and could receive an additional mention in the following paragraph as an “important merit” of the work. As a suggestion, here's the idea of incorporating it into the page 1:

“An important merit of this collection of texts lies in offering, in Portuguese and to the Brazilian public, unpublished texts by A. Sechehaye, C. Bally and other Saussurian scholars and philologists.”

Still on page 1, the original aspect of the publication is highlighted: it is not a mere collection. In the organization of the book, there is a “common thread,” capable of nurturing a “fertile path of study in Brazil.” The review highlights this aspect: “a new way of (re)constructing Saussure's ideas,” based on “what can be deduced from what Saussure himself proposed theoretically and, furthermore, what his closest followers formulated and interpreted, in continuity with his reflection.”

Page 2: the perspective open to publications is well indicated, going through the years of 1987 (Amsterdamska), 1976 (Amacker), 2015 (Curea) and 2019 (Puech).

On the following pages, in an orderly and clear exposition, the review follows the book's

programmatic division of the book, which goes from the first part to the second part of the book; and from this, to the third part, dedicated to “correspondência sobre a edição do *CLG*” [correspondence letters on the edition of the *CGL*]. I won't dwell on each internal division, but I will point out that, in a way that is very faithful to the organization of the book, the review gives each article in this book an informative and well-finished presentation.

The review provides the reader with clarification of the content of the selected texts, without losing sight of an assessment of each contribution, in line with the proposal of the authors of the book. In the case of “Os problemas da língua à luz de uma nova teoria” [The problems of language in the light of the new theory], it recognizes its historical value, pointing out “a good part of the context of study and of the Saussure's contemporaries,” and its relevance “for a renewed and more precise interpretation of Saussurian ideas.” Another article by Secheyay: “A linguística geral da Escola de Genebra” [The general linguistics of the Geneva School] shows what draws attention to this text: “the first thing that is posed is the question of the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, converging towards a theorization that places grammar as a skeleton, a dry and dead abstraction, next to the complete and concrete linguistic reality, which would be the living part of language” (p. 3).

This is followed by the third text: “As três linguísticas saussurianas” [The three Saussurian linguistics], which is presented as an invitation to read on, as it discusses issues, one of which proposes to think of a “linguistics of organized speech or of the functioning of language, which would have a very different object from static linguistics” (p. 3).

Moving on to the fourth and final text in part 1, we have a bridge with the second part of the book. The review does not lose sight of the fact that it “highlights the importance of the debate on the arbitrariness of the sign” - a question which, as we know, still has “a major impact on the understanding of Saussurian ideas” (p. 3).

Between pages 4 and 5, the review turns its attention to parts 2 and 3 of the book.

In part 2, entitled “A Escola linguística de Genebra em exame” [The Geneva School of Linguistics under examination], after mentioning Anamaria Curea's article, the review focuses on Pierre-Yves Testenoire's contribution. As we read, this author “conducts an interesting discussion on the concept of 'School' and 'Linguistic Society’” (p. 4). Included in this part, as informed in the review, a table of Geneva's production from 1908 to 1940. The third and final part of the book, entitled “Correspondência sobre a edição do *CLG*” [“Correspondence letters on the editing of the *CGL*”], features Estanislao Sofia. Through what is said, the range of interests raised by the edition of the *Course* (or rather, still raises) is expanded for the reader. In the paragraph in which Riedlinger is mentioned, I make a remark about the spelling of the surname of this disciple of Saussure, which appears in two spellings (a minor slip in a perfectly well-written text). It should be standardized: the spelling is Riedlinger.

One correction that went unnoticed in the review is on p. 4 of the review. Instead of: “O segunda artigo” – “O segundo artigo.”

In conclusion:

The final page of the review is one of acute and well-deserved recognition of the scope of the work “Saussure e a Escola de Genebra” [Saussure and the Geneva School]. The review acknowledges that (p. 5) as follows, and I take the quote to end this review: “In this collection of texts, the editors promote (...) a profound, interesting and necessary

discussion on the concept of ‘linguistic school’, which, in turn, also makes us think about the place of linguistics as a science.” APPROVED.

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