

COLECCIONADORES DE MUNDOS:
TRADUTORES, HISTÓRIA E FICÇÃO

26
2022

Marta Pacheco Pinto
João Ferreira Duarte
Hélder Lopes
Nicola Reggiani
Alberto Gelmi
Marisa Mourinha
Adriana Costa
Marco Bucaioni
Besa Hashani
Manuel Azuaje-Alamo
Olivia Holloway
Denise Kripper
Caragh Barry

RECENSÕES

Elisa Rossi
Patrícia Passos de Sá
Seren Üstündağ
Ariadne Nunes

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DE LITERATURA COMPARADA

N.º 26 2022

Org. Marta Pacheco Pinto,
João Ferreira Duarte & Hélder Lopes

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COLLECTORS OF WORLDS:
Translators, History and Fiction

Org. Marta Pacheco Pinto, João Ferreira Duarte & Hélder Lopes

2022

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Nota Introdutória

Mais uma vez, o presente volume contou com a extraordinária colaboração do Centro de Estudos Comparatistas da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, razão pela qual enviamos uma palavra de saudação e de reconhecimento ao seu director, Professor Hélio Alves, na certeza de que as excelentes relações se manterão no futuro. Este número é o fruto do empenhamento e da dedicação dos Professores Marta Pacheco Pinto, João Ferreira Duarte e Hélder Lopes, investigadores do CEComp e organizadores do presente volume. Também a eles, que tão bom seguimento deram à revista *Dedalus*, uma palavra de merecido agradecimento.

À Associação Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada e à sua Presidente, Professora Odete Jubilado, manifestamos o nosso profundo apreço pelo apoio concedido sem o qual esta publicação não teria sido possível. Da nossa parte, manteremos não só toda a disponibilidade para servir a APLC, como nos esforçaremos por manter a qualidade da revista que o seu passado já consagrou.

Por último, uma palavra de saudação ao Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa (CEAUL) e ao Centro de Estudos Clássicos (CEC), com quem temos mantido próxima colaboração.

A Direcção

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Editors' Introduction

Collectors of Worlds: Translators, History and Fiction

What happens to translators when these agents of representation become themselves objects of representation? This is the question that underlies the present issue of *Dedalus* journal and to which our contributors attempt to respond based on case studies from different literary traditions and chronologies and through the lens of history or historiography. It has been prepared as an output of the *MOV. Moving Bodies: Circulations, Narratives, and Archives in Translation* research cluster hosted by the Centre for Comparative Studies of the University of Lisbon, whose ultimate mission is to give voice and visibility to translators from multiple epistemological and interdisciplinary approaches. Through this special issue of *Dedalus*, it is our purpose to explore the compelling connections between fiction, translators and translation, and history.

Dedicated to *Collectors of Worlds: Translators, History and Fiction*, the issue's title is culled from Iliya Troyanov's *The Collector of Worlds* (2008). The novel is based on the biography of Sir Richard Francis Burton and revolves around his adventures in British (West) India, Arabia, and East Africa. A British colonial officer and explorer, Burton (1821-1890) entered history not only as the first westerner to complete the hajj to Mecca and Medina under the name of Mirza Abdullah, but also as a writer (of his pilgrimage and travels) and a translator – most notably of *The Kama Sutra* (1883) and the *Arabian Nights* (1885), and even of Camões' epic *The Lusiads* (1880). Although the title of Troyanov's novel resonates immediately with the Burton explorer, it also says much about translators, particularly literary translators, who impersonate and collect the worlds contained in the texts they translate.

The novel dwells in Burton's love of languages, which is inextricable from the places where he was stationed. As a fictionalized biography of a colonial officer and translator, it gives visibility to his adventures through the languages that he learned and translated and, in this sense, it exemplifies a historical fiction of a translator.

As with any literary work, fictions of translation and translators – or transfictions¹ tout court – are culturally embedded and informed, since they are created within a sociocultural-historical frame, situated in a tradition or canon, and produced by a creative agency that is in turn shaped by personal experiences, readings, and memory (transtextual in particular). When studied these fictions will in the least be framed within their historical context of production; on this matter of historical framing, Teresa Seruya reminds us that

the historical viewpoint responds to readers' expectations: be it a case study or a theoretical discussion, some historical background is inevitably demanded by generally accepted academic standards. It is part of a required context. As a construction, a context always includes a factual and diachronic dimension in addition to evoking the synchronies deemed necessary.²

To some extent, since texts do not travel, and are not analysed, out of context, any study of a fiction of translation and translator will always engage with history at least through the expected exercise of contextualization of the fictional object of study. Pushing matters further, Seruya rightly notes that history, in the words of Portuguese historian José Mattoso, is “rather ‘a representation of representations’ as historical knowledge has at its base documents that in turn constitute representations.”³ As such, fictions *of* translation and translators are modes of representation of translation and translators, as much as they are statements *on* translation, itself a mode of representation – of a previous textual body and its foreignness.

¹ In Klaus Kaindl's words, a transfiction corresponds to “the introduction and (increased) use of translation-related phenomena in fiction” (Kaindl, “Going Fictional!”, 4).

² Seruya, “Doing Translation History”, 1.

³ Seruya, “Doing Translation History”, 9.

In his charting of the so-called field of translator studies, Andrew Chesterman divides the field into three strands of agent-oriented research – cultural, cognitive, and sociological. The last strand encompasses not only translators' networks but also public discourses by and on translators, these discourses including fictional representations of translators.⁴ A similar argument is made by Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman in "Fictional Representations of Multilingualism and Translation". Apropos a fictional turn in translation studies, the scholars highlight that

most of the texts sampled in these collections [anthologies and discussions of historical statements on translation] are non-fictional and non-narrative pieces (e.g. essays involving description, exposition, argumentation, instruction, philosophical speculation, etc.). The current trend of studying fictional representations of translation could be construed as a perfectly logical extension of this type of study. The underlying argument remains the same – in our study of historical concepts and practices of translation, statements about translation are no less valid documents worthy of research than the translations themselves – but it is simply spilling over from text-types that are not primarily narrative or not fictional, into those that are.⁵

Fiction as a mode of representation and meaning-making about translators and translation provides precisely the rationale for this issue. If translators' statements on their craft (usually contained in prefaces, interviews, letters, memoirs, or essays) have traditionally been used as valuable sources for translation theory and history, why not posit fictional translators' statements on a par with flesh-and-blood translators' statements? Our interest is not in drawing the boundaries between history and fiction, or fiction and historiography. Rather, our attention lies in the ways both discourses – historiographical and fictional

⁴ "The sociology of translators also covers the public discourse of translation, i.e. evidence of the public image of the translator's profession, as seen e.g. in the press, or in literary works in which one of the central characters is a translator or interpreter (see e.g. Maier 2006, Kurz/Kaindl 2005)" (Chesterman, "The Name and Nature", 16-17).

⁵ Delabastita and Grutman, "Introduction", 29.

– conflate or complement one another, and fictions of translation and translators humanize translators.⁶

Studied in the *longue durée* and encapsulating possible truths and meanings about the past, present and even future of translation, these fictionalized statements or discourses may reveal tendencies not only in social perceptions, thinking and even criticism about translation but also in the representation of translators, as well as commonly accepted views of what translation is or should be, of translators' status, agency and subjectivities, expected or dominant norms when reading translations or, on the contrary, possibilities for their subversion. Departing from Paul Ricoeur's theory of mimesis, Klaus Kaindl makes the point that "there is a constant exchange between the knowledge base about translation and the other cultural, political and social knowledge bases of a given society, which in turn leads to changes, reassessments and reinterpretations of the shared knowledge about translation."⁷ By dealing with "the conflicting forces of fact and fiction"⁸ and taken as empirical responses to sociocultural phenomena, especially "developments, changes and upheavals" in society,⁹ fictional representations of translation and translators can thus play a documentary role of a sociocultural imaginary and historical memory without, however, overriding texts' aesthetic appeal. Delabastita and Grutman rightly highlight that these fictions "also provid[e] a comment about our socio-cultural values and the state of the world we live in."¹⁰ In the world we live, the authors of these fictions are first and foremost readers of translations, who sometimes translate out of professional necessity, for pleasure or creative experimentation; and those whose works circulate in translation may even be familiar with the meanders of the professional field by negotiating the translation rights of their works or accompanying their translation into languages that they master.

⁶ Pym, "Humanizing Translation History".

⁷ Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality", 165.

⁸ Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality", 163.

⁹ Kaindl, "Going Fictional!", 4.

¹⁰ "Introduction", 14.

Since Else Vieira's equation of a fictional turn in translation studies¹¹ and Rosemary Arrojo's full embrace of it particularly with her *Fictional Translators* (2018), the field of translation studies has shown a growing interest in how fiction (literary, cinematic, theatrical, operatic, pictorial, etc.) depicts or reacts to translation and cultural mediation phenomena, such as migration or globalization.¹² This interest has been on a par with the plea for writing more micro-histories of translation and translators,¹³ which are themselves discursive formations put together through narrative writing (i.e. fictional) devices and which rely on biographical data collection as well as data obtained from accessing archives or from examining the traces left behind in the translated text by the underlying creative process.

It goes without saying that there can be no translation history without theory and vice-versa. Translation history can be most obviously inquired through the lens of fiction at least on four levels that are not always clear-cut and tend to overlap: *topoi*, use of historical data, metaphors, and characters' characterization.

In terms of *topoi*, translators' performance has been historically defined by their invisibility or liminal position. For some reason Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) is subtitled *A History of Translation*. Despite its focus on Anglo-American culture, it questions the marginal position traditionally played by translation, which entails the marginalization and neglect of the translator – that is, the translator's invisibility. Fictions of translation and translators help overcome that invisibility by empowering translators through the creation of a space where they become tangible and visible to readers. This *topos* is addressed in this issue in a set of articles¹⁴ from different angles (Pinto; Kripper; Holloway). Marta Pacheco Pinto examines the

¹¹ Vieira, "(In)visibilidades na tradução".

¹² See, for example, Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies*; Kaindl and Spitzl, *Transfiction*; Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*; Woodsworth, *The Fictions of Translation*.

¹³ See, for example, Adamo, "Microhistory of Translation"; Pym, "Humanizing Translation History"; Munday, "Using Primary Sources".

¹⁴ The editors thank the reviewers who kindly accepted to comment on the manuscripts submitted to this special issue.

causes and consequences of that invisibility, which pushes translators into finding rescue in the fluid matter of the sea or river in search of an ethical escape or (self-)reparation from a world that is perceived as hostile. Pinto combines the analysis of three literary works that foreground the double impossibility of being invisible and of dealing with visibility. Denise Kripper explores paratexts as loci for visibilizing (fictional and real) translators' praxis and simultaneously as metadiscourses that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction.

Translators' namelessness (Pinto) or presentation as absent characters (Holloway) are other symptomatic features of their invisibility. Olivia Holloway brings in a case study in which it is the real translation embedded in the fiction and the act of reading that translation that drive the plot forward; yet, the fictional translator is only cited when remembered from afar, and the real translator (the author) is narratively invisible. Whereas the former is an incorporeal figure that lives in characters' memory and imagination, the latter holds a paratextual existence that renders her, the author, into a prosthetic character of her own fictional work.

Along with invisibility, trust is also a defining *topos* in the history of translation. Trust in translation history ranges from trust in the mediator, and consequently in the translated message, trust in historians and their testimonies to trust in an interdisciplinary translation history.¹⁵ Breaches of trust specifically in the translator pervade some of the literature on translators and translation; this is here best exemplified in the case studies provided by Mourinha and Bucaioni, without the characters in need of translation apparently noticing them. If characters are not aware of the breach, is then there a real betrayal of trust? While the possibility of this breach unveils the mediator's privileged power position, it likewise empowers the translator, who is in control of the communication flow.

Some articles in this issue focus on fictions that use historical data (material) and thus openly dialogue with history by elevating translators as historical subjects, and vice-versa, or by illustrating discourses on history and historical conflicts (Reggiani; Gelmi;

¹⁵ Rizzi, Lang, and Pym, *What Is Translation History?*

Mourinha; Costa). James St. André makes this point in his entry on "History of Translation" for the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*: "While many would think of history as primarily the telling of a story situated in a particular time and space, and therefore concerning unique actions, translation scholars often use historical material as case studies in order to advance a general theoretical point."¹⁶ Nicola Reggiani looks accordingly into historical sources, Greek papyri from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, to investigate translation as a social practice of Graeco-Roman daily life. The activities embodied by the so-called ἑρμηνεῖς (translators/interpreters), who concentrated the roles of linguistic, cultural, and diplomatic mediation between Greeks and Egyptians, are put on a par with literary translators' self-presentation when claiming authorship over other forms of translation, namely the translation of religious texts from Egyptian to Greek. Following up on this interrogation of historiography through translation, Alberto Gelmi revisits the Bible with the Italian writer Erri De Luca's translation of *Jonah*. De Luca's translational agency is shown to profess a kind of activism, in that his experiments with interlinear translation demand the translator's peritextual intervention and, consequently, textual visibility. What Gelmi categorizes as hyperliteralism serves as an excuse for the emergence of the commentator figure which superimposes on that of the translator.

Marisa Mourinha brings in what she describes as tragicomic depictions of encounters with history as enabled through two translator-interpreters, both unskilled and damaged by history itself. Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) is embedded in the Holocaust narrative whereas Todd Hasak-Lowy's short story "The Task of This Translator" (2005) evokes the Balkans war conflict. Mourinha follows and construes the interpreters' mediation performance as a statement about language's inability/insufficiency to verbalize traumatic memory. Adriana Costa, in turn, explores language's ability to reconstruct national identity. Costa examines Annette Hug's *Wilhelm Tell in Manila* (2016) as a fictional representation of a real translation process whose translator is a historical figure, the Filipino national

¹⁶ St. André, "History of Translation", 245.

hero José Rizal. In delving into Rizal's cultural identity, the novel provides a metacommentary on his Tagalog translation of Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), *Guillermo Tell* (1907), in which Rizal's anticolonial ideology is inscribed. The translation is thus representative of the development of a national language in detriment to that of the Spanish colonizer. This metacommentary is additionally framed by the writer's own experience of back-translating Rizal's rendition into German, which is intended to bring her closer to the linguistic and identitarian appropriation exercise underlying Rizal's endeavour.

In keeping with translation and writing of the historical self, Manuel Azuaje-Alamo and Denise Kripper also dialogue with history through their choices of case studies. Azuaje-Alamo takes us back to seventeenth-century Japan by comparing Matsuo Bashō's poetic travelogue *Saga Nikki* with its Portuguese Brazilian translation as carried out by the writer of the novel in which it is inserted and as assumed by a fictional character. History comes in through the cultural and historical embeddedness of Bashō's (translated) autobiography. Kripper, on her part, discusses two distinct modes of biographical representation of the translator's task by two Latin American authors, namely a fictional biography of a translator that is discussed in terms of its paratextual framing devices vis-à-vis a historiographical biography of a (real) translator. Focus lies on the book covers and the use of photography as a fictional, metaliterary and historiographical device that adds consistency and credibility to these representations of translators.

Another piece of research engages with specific modes of world literature reception by dealing with a translation phenomenon that historically has had a bad reputation. Besa Hashani interrogates Albanian writer Ismael Kadare's naming of his translator David Bellos as co-recipient of the literary prize Man Booker International in 2005, since Bellos translates Kadare's work via the French language as against a handful of translators that have carried out the same task but directly from Albanian. Such interrogation is conducted through the examination of the writer's statements on translation and conceptualization of indirect translation in his own fictional work.

Theoretical debates and practitioners' conceptualizations of translation have tended to rely on metaphors to better grasp the

activity and illuminate the intricacies of a translation process. Some metaphors – carrying across, bridge-building, transformation, transfer – have seemingly been incorporated into the lexicon about translation. Gender-related metaphors are more visibly or consistently addressed in a couple of articles here gathered (Barry; Pinto). Taking issue with a long history of gendered tropes in translation, Caragh Barry examines how Argentine writer Andrés Neuman reverses gender expectations in his novel *El viajero del siglo* (2009) via the female character who sees herself empowered through translation. Set in Romantic Germany, hence dialoguing with German Romanticism and nation-building, the translator gains political, historical, and individual agency through translation, which allows for defying traditional gender hierarchies and associated sexual behaviours and power relations. Pinto does not centre her reflection around gender or sexual metaphors, but one of her case studies, Yōko Ogawa's novel *Hotel Iris* (1996), hinges on the close connection between translation and sexual violence, which is perpetrated by the translator figure.

The so-called collaborative turn in translation studies¹⁷ has created awareness of the fact that translators have been mostly portrayed as solitary figures, often suffering from sociability disorders and complaining about low-pay and unstable jobs (Costa; Pinto). Moreover, they have through the centuries accumulated accusations of being unfaithful and treacherous, traitors and manipulators (Bucaioni). To some extent, these personality traits reverberate or are instead deconstructed across the case studies addressed in the articles. Marco Bucaioni, in particular, selects a set of texts from Portuguese-language African literatures depicting mostly ad hoc translators who are assumed manipulators. Bucaioni discusses acts of intentional manipulation of the message communicated, which are often committed against foreigners coming from a stronger cultural context both to achieve some sort of personal advantage and to resist coloniality and modernity's imposed global languages/cultures. This coloniality/modernity axis leads

¹⁷ See, for example, Anthony Cordingley and Céline Frigau Manning (eds.). *Collaborative Translation: From the Renaissance to the Digital Age*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Bucaioni to provocatively label the translators as bad, but who are eventually good cultural interpreters in serving decolonial resistance. In this respect, Costa's and Bucaioni's articles dialogue with one another in terms of the epistemological framing of their reflections and the cultural significance of the translation events under scrutiny.

From the 11 articles gathered in this issue, Adriana Lisboa's novel *Rakushisha* (2007) is singled out as the object of study in two contributions that complement each other. Its Brazilian edition being now out of print, this novel originally consists of Lisboa's PhD thesis in Comparative Literature. Azuaje-Alamo examines three translation processes at play in the novel – intercultural, intersemiotic, and rewriting – as enacted by three different characters. On the one hand, he analyses the ways in which the character Celina voices Lisboa's own study of Japanese literature, thus impersonating the authorial voice, and the intertextuality that pervades Celina's own diary. On the other hand, Haruki's illustration of *Saga Nikki* is equated with another journey in time and space, that of his self-discovery of his own Japanese ancestry. As said, Holloway privileges a different analytical prism by focusing on the Yukiko (absent translator character) – Lisboa (author) duo. By exploring the metaphorical use of the translation of Bashō's diary as a roadmap to navigate the foreign and towards self-discovery, Holloway posits this translation as prosthetic memory and itself as a prosthetic character that acts upon the protagonists and breaks the translation pact of transparency and illusion, that is, of reading a translation as if it were an original.

All the articles in this issue are concerned with the translator figure through literature as a creative dialogue with sociocultural-historical settings and backgrounds. The absence of other fictional arts or intermedial dialogues – such as theatre (from Brian Friel's *Translations*, which is a well-known example, to Joseph Vitale's *The Interpreter*, recently performed by the New-Jersey based company The Theatre Project), cinema,¹⁸ and painting (most obvious examples include the iconic sixteenth-century Mexican figurations of La Malinche or Caravaggio's *St. Jerome Writing*) – flags up the fact that literature is a

¹⁸ Cronin, *Translation Goes to the Movies*.

good place to start relating fiction, translators/translation, and history. It is our conviction that fictions of translation and translators offer exciting prospects as a future direction in the study of translation history.

This issue closes with four timely reviews – by Elisa Rossi, Patrícia Sá, Seren Üstündağ, and Ariadne Nunes – of books all published in different languages that either deal directly with translation phenomena and theory or make use of translation to subvert relations of textual precedence, or present it as part of a writer's craft. We envision these reviews being useful to translation studies, comparative literature, and cultural studies scholars alike.

Back in 2006, in diagnosing the disciplinary development of the history of translation, Georges Bastin and Paul Bandia wrote that

While much of the earlier work was descriptive, recounting events and historical facts, there has been a shift in recent years to research based on the interpretation of these events and facts, with the development of a methodology grounded in historiography. Translation in history is now being linked to themes such as otherness, ideology, manipulation, and power. Clearly, progress has been made, and the history of translation has become a viable independent research area within translation studies.¹⁹

The progress meanwhile made has in fact led to the launching in 2022 of an open History and Translation research network. Its manifesto²⁰ sets out as one of its goals to “promote an approach in which translation is both a constitutive category of historical analysis and a historically specific practice”. We hope this issue of *Dedalus* journal can add the extra goal of promoting a broader approach in which fictions of translation and translators become legitimate objects for interpreting the history of translation, interrogating the future of translation on the basis of the represented past and of the diagnosed concerns and trends in representation, and building hypotheses about (in)visibility, otherness, ideology, trust, manipulation, and power

¹⁹ Bastin and Bandia, “Introduction”, 2.

²⁰ See <https://historyandtranslation.net/manifesto/>.

relations. Borrowing Christopher Rundle's words,²¹ we are interested in fiction as the lens through which we research our historical object.

Marta Pacheco Pinto
João Ferreira Duarte
Hélder Lopes

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²¹ Rundle, "Historiography", 235.

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Nicola Reggiani

Università di Parma

ORCID 0000-0001-9798-9887

nicola.reggiani@unipr.it

Fact and Fiction of “Translators” in the Greek Papyri: Question of Interpretations

The purpose of this article is to present and discuss the double status of translators-interpreters (ἐρμηνεῖς) in Graeco-Roman Egypt through the analysis of their attestations in the papyrological sources. The discussion will first take into consideration their historical role, which went beyond the purely linguistic field that nevertheless was a pivotal function in a multilingual and multicultural country such as Egypt under the Ptolemaic and Roman rule. Indeed, it has been ascertained that the skills of the people called “interpreters” encompassed a wider area of “mediations,” even including the conversion between measure units. The picture that emerges is that of what we may call “cultural mediators.” Then, the discussion will consider their fictional role, which reflected their real function and adapted it to literary translations that were cultural mediations as well.

Keywords: ancient translators; ancient interpreters; multilingualism in ancient Egypt; Greek papyri

The Greek papyri from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt form an invaluable corpus of ancient texts that allow for direct, unmediated glimpses on Graeco-Roman Antiquity from the privileged viewpoint of everyday life, society, and culture.¹ Translation is one of the countless aspects of the daily activities revealed by those sources.² During the centuries, in the history of ancient Egypt, the need for interacting – more

¹ Papyri are cited according to the *Checklist of Editions*, <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>.

² Reggiani, *Papirologia*, 352-368; Reggiani, *I papiri greco-egizi ed Erodoto*, 302-321.

or less peacefully – with neighbouring people favoured the development of the special linguistic skills of the interpreters. Since Egyptians felt their own language was “the” language *par excellence*, foreigners were forced to learn Egyptian and they became the “interpreters.”³ A relevant turnaround happened under the reign of Psammetichus I (664-610 BC), when Greek mercenaries were allowed to keep their linguistic independence as a reward for the crucial help provided in the process of unifying the country again. A special category of interpreters, which already Herodotus calls ἐρμηνεῖς, was then settled, and for the first time ever they were Egyptians who learnt the foreign language.⁴

There is no substantial reason to think that the situation was different after Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332/1 BC and the Ptolemaic dynasty was established, with Greek becoming the dominant and official language of public administration and culture in a country that, consequently, soon became bilingual. Then, it was the Egyptian people in need of learning the rulers’ tongue, not the other way around. The everyday witnesses of the Greek papyri mention plenty of ἐρμηνεῖς, though most of the attestations consist of individual entries of accounts or lists without further context. Where a context is preserved, scholars have reached the impression that such “translators,” central characters in the multilingual environment of ancient Egypt, may be better understood under the definition of “interpreters,” “mediators,” or even “regulators,” as long as their sphere of competence transcended the purely linguistic field.⁵

Enough, so far, has been written about the extra-linguistic tasks of the Egyptian ἐρμηνεῖς. The interpretations given by modern scholars are necessarily reconstructed presumptively, at least in part, based on the hints uneasily deducted from the fragmentary sources at our disposal. From this viewpoint, it could even be argued that the historical character of the ἐρμηνεῖς is deeply intertwined with a sometimes “fictional” interpretation of a role that was certainly complex and not

³ Reggiani, “Rovesciare la lingua”, 128-129.

⁴ Reggiani, “Rovesciare la lingua”, 129-131; Reggiani, “Multicultural Education”; Reggiani, “Diritti linguistici”; Bernini and Reggiani, “Multilinguismo”, 50-51.

⁵ Mairs, “Interpreters”; Reggiani, “Rovesciare la lingua”, 130-134; Mairs, “*Hermeneis*”; Reggiani, “Tradurre”; all with references to previous literature.

yet understood in its entirety: were they professional translators, public or private interpreters, commercial agents, brokers, official regulators of measures? All of such or something more?

One of the few staples of the modern interpretation of ancient ἑρμηνεῖς is that, even when they carried out a purely linguistic work, they were never involved in literal translations, but rather in conceptual adaptations from one language (Egyptian, later also Latin) to the other (Greek). The recurring formula κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν (“as best as possible”) is often attached to official translations of legal acts like contracts and trial proceedings, as a sort of “disclaimer” of professional accuracy.⁶ This formula is limited to Greek documents from Egypt over a long time span – from Ptolemaic to Roman age – and “shows that there was at least some awareness that translation was not an exact science, the simple rendering of information in one language into another, but had the potential to introduce errors or differences in emphasis.”⁷ Its Egyptian specificity⁸ is likely due to the rooted local feeling that Greek language (and perhaps even Greek script) was inadequate to render the original Egyptian concepts.⁹ On its turn, the Greek concept itself of ἑρμηνεία did not point to a literal translation aimed at rendering the original text word by word (conversely called μεταγραφή), but rather to a conceptual adaptation, a decoding process, which explicates and re-articulates the information contents of the source language through the passage to the target language¹⁰ – in the terms sometimes described as “belief ascription”,¹¹ that is what Paul Ricoeur used to call *hospitalité langagière*.¹²

⁶ Mairs, “κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν”.

⁷ Mairs, “κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν”, 216.

⁸ Mairs, “Interpreters”, 460 n. 8.

⁹ Assmann, “Sapienza”, 465-466; Torallas Tovar, “Linguistic Identity”, 22-23.

¹⁰ De Luna, *La comunicazione*, 166 ff.; Erto, “Il verbo μεταγράφω”, 76-78; Reggiani, “Rovesciare la lingua”, 134-141.

¹¹ Bettini, *Vertere*, 21r.

¹² “Il me semble, en effet, que la traduction ne pose pas seulement un travail intellectuel, théorique ou pratique, mais un problème éthique. Amener le lecteur à l’auteur, amener l’auteur au lecteur, au risque de servir et de trahir deux maîtres, c’est pratiquer ce que j’aime appeler l’hospitalité langagière” (Ricoeur, *Sur la traduction*, 32). In general, on translation as mediation and overcoming of

A wonderful example of this concept is offered by the multiple copies of a sale contract agreed upon by two Egyptian priests from the village of Soknopaiou Nesos in the Arsinoite district (modern Fayum oasis) on 21 November 11 AD.¹³ The original text (P.Dime III 5) was composed in Demotic Egyptian and followed by the customary Greek summary subscriptions, though the purchaser's one is written in Demotic, surely because he was an illiterate of Greek (see below). The seller, Chairemon son of Herodes, bears the titles of prophet and chief-stolist of the twice great crocodile-god Soknopaios, as the Greek προφήτης καὶ [ἀρχ] ιτολιςτῆς | Couχου θεοῦ μεγάλου μεγάλου (ll. 6-7 of the subscription) renders the original Demotic *hm-Ni.t rpꜥy (h)tpꜥy [hm-ntr] sz hm-ntr* “Servant of Neith, Chief, Prince, Prophet son of Prophet” (l. 1 of the text; the god is mentioned in the Demotic subscription: *hm-ntr Sbk*). Conversely, the Greek copies (CPR XV 2-5; SB I 5231 and 5275), introduced by the heading ἀντίγραφον [συ]γραφῆς Αἰγυπτίας πράξεως Ἑλληνιστὶ μεθιερμηνευμένης κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν (CPR XV 3, 1) “copy of an Egyptian contract of sale translated into Greek as best as possible,”¹⁴ record a phonetic transliteration of the Egyptian priestly titles except for *prophet*: ἐμνίθης ὀρπάις τοπαίς προφήτης | ἐκ προφήτου (CPR XV 3, 1-2). The same is done with the titles of the purchaser, Satabus son of Heriopsemis, in Egyptian *nb wꜥb hꜣry šꜣ [wꜣꜣd-]wr Nꜣ.w-nfr-š[ty.t]* “Lord of Purity, Head of the Lake ‘The Great Green One of Nephersatis’ (= Lake Moeris)” (l. 2 of the text), in Greek νοιβουάπει ρεϊσεεῖ ρεϊσιγέτου νεφερράτι (CPR XV 3, 2). This is a perfect example of a “translation” κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν!

As historical characters, the ἑρμενεῖς played a vital role in the multilingual society of Graeco-Roman Egypt, though remaining mostly “invisible,” i.e. implicit:¹⁵ several anonymous hundreds of bilingual documents and of Greek translations of lost originals give us a still partial and incomplete idea of how much pervasive were the linguistic

linguistic boundaries in the attempt of fixing the primeval fragmentation of human languages, see Astori, “Le lingue”.

¹³ Keenan, Manning, and Yiftach, *Law*, 111-115.

¹⁴ SB I 5275, 1 exhibits the variant ἀντίγραφον ἀπ’ ἀντιγράφου κτλ (“copy from a copy etc.”).

¹⁵ Mairs, “Interpreters”, 461.

issues in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt.¹⁶ We will never exactly know how many Greek documents, either private or public, were in fact composed by “interpreters” based on an Egyptian source. In their interpretive efforts, the position of the ἑρμηνεῖς was strong, and even dangerous. A letter from the famous early-Ptolemaic archive of Zenon from Philadelphia (Arsinoites) contains a striking reference to the legal potential of a “translator,” evoked to harm a bothersome petitioner (P.Ryl. IV 563, 23 May 250 BC):

[[Παταικίων]] Ζήνωνι χαίρειν. προσεβαλόμεθα εἰς τὸ Ἀριστοδήμου ὄνομα | οἰκίαν
Σοκέως τοῦ Νεχαίου μαχίμου ἐν Αὐήρει· ἀκηκόαμεν δὲ καταπεπλευκέναι ὅπως
ἐντευξιν ἐμβάλῃ[ι Ἀπ]ολλωνίῳ περὶ ἡμῶν, παραλιπὼν τὸν | τε ἀποδόμενον καὶ
τὸν ἀγοράσαντα, οἰόμενος ἡμᾶς διασεῖς(ε)ιν εἶναι | Ἀπολλωνίῳ ἐντύχηι. καλῶς
οὖν ποιήσεις, εἴ σοι εὐκαιρόν ἐστιν καὶ ἂν ἐν δυνατῶι ᾗι, μετελθεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον
ὅπως μὴ καταγινωσκώμεθα ὑπὸ | τῶν λοιπῶν. γεγράφαμεν δὲ καὶ Ἀπολλωνίῳ
τῷ ἑρμηνεῖ περὶ τούτων, | ὅπως ἂν καὶ ἐκεῖν(ος) κακώσῃ αὐτὸν καθὸ δύναται. |
ἔρρωο. (ἔτους) λς Φαρμουθι α.

[Pataikion to Zenon, greeting. I assigned to the possession of Aristodemos a house of Sokeus son of Nechais, a native soldier, in Aueris, and I have heard that he has sailed down to present a petition to Apollonios about me, ignoring both the seller and the buyer, with the idea that he will discomfit me if he appeals to Apollonios. If, therefore, you have an opportunity and if it be practicable, will you please take action against the fellow, in order that I might not be discredited by the rest of them. I have written also to Apollonios the interpreter requesting him also to do the man as much damage as he can. Farewell. Year 36, Pharmouthi 1.¹⁷]

An interpreter named Apollonios occurs elsewhere in the Zenon archive: if he is always the same individual, then we find him delivering fish to Apollonios the landowner on behalf of the sender of the letter P.Cair.Zen. I 59065 (ll. 1-2 ἀπεστά[λκαμεν |] Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ

¹⁶ On the issues of Egyptian bilingualism from a papyrological viewpoint, see the first two chapters of Vierros, *Bilingual Notaries*.

¹⁷ Translation adapted from Papyri.info.

ἐρμηνέως θρίcc[ac, 257/6 BC) and involved in sending calves to an Alexandrian festival (PSI IV 409a, 15 παρ' Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ ἐρμηνέως, ca. 250 BC). These may well have been occasional duties, but other interpreters mentioned in the Zenon archive clearly offer their linguistic competences to relevant commercial tasks. A certain Glaukias is paid 12 copper drachmas for generic market purchases in P.Col. IV 63, ii 7 (Γλαυκίαι ἐρμηνεῖ εἰς ἀγοράσματα χαλ(κοῦ) (δραχμὰς) ιβ, 257 BC); an unnamed interpreter is paid 3 obols for having guided a commercial expedition “towards the garlic” in PSI IV 332, 6 (ἐρμηνεῖ τῷ ὁδηγῆσαντι ἐπὶ τὰ κόρδα (τριώβολον), 257/6 BC). The latter document is historically important because it attests to the introduction of garlic cultivation in Ptolemaic Arsinoites (or, at least, in Apollonios' estate at Philadelphia).¹⁸ It is not clear whether such garlic was acquired at Alexandria (as κατὰ πόλιν at l. 11 could suggest) or from the Trogodytes, non-Egyptian inhabitants of the Eastern desert (as Τρωγοδύτηι at l. 14 might hint);¹⁹ in either case the ἐρμηνεύς could have deployed his expertise to conduct an economic negotiation, just as some much later colleagues of theirs equally attested in the papyri.²⁰

Later than the Zenon archive, an “interpreter of the Trogodytes” is recorded in UPZ II 227, an acknowledgment of payment from the royal bank of Thebes on 18 August 134 BC:

Ἀπολλώνιος ἐρμηνεύς | τῶν Τρωγοδυτ[ων] | Διογένη (= -ει) τραπεζίτη χαίρειν.
| ὁμολογῶ κεχρηματίσθαι | διὰ σοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν Διδὸς πόλει | τῇ Μεγάλῃ τραπέζῃς
| χαλκοῦ τάλαντα δύο (= δύο) | (γίνεται) (τάλαντα) β. | ἔγραψεν Πτολεμαῖος
Πτολεμα(ίου) | Πτολεμαῖος ἡγεμόνος ἔξω τάξεων | ἀξιωθείς ὑπ' αὐτοῦ διὰ τὸ
φάσκειν | αὐτὸν μὴ εἰδέναι γράμματα. | (ἔτους) λς Ἐπεῖφ κς.

¹⁸ Crawford, “Garlic”.

¹⁹ Crawford, “Garlic”, 352-353.

²⁰ Two ἐρμηνεῖς ἀγοράς who also sell dresses (BGU VII 1564, 1-2 + BL IX 29 + BL XI 28; Philadelphia, AD 138; P.Graux III 30, vii 3, 11, 12; Arsinoe, AD 155); two ἐρμηνεῖς through which cattle purchases are made (Stud.Pal. XXII 101, 11; Arsinoe, 2nd cent. AD; SB XVI 13701, 18, 20; Arsinoe, AD 223-235); a ἐρμηνεύς through which a tax-grain payment is transmitted (P.Würzb. 19, 12; Hermoupolis, AD 622).

[Apollonios, interpreter of the Trogodytes, to Diogenes, banker, greetings. I acknowledge to have been paid through you from the bank in Diospolis Magna two copper talents, being 2 talents. Ptolemaios son of Ptolemaios, commander of the external ranks, wrote it, having been asked by him, because he said not to know the letters. Year 36, Epeiph 27.]

What “external ranks (or troops)” (ἔξω τάξεις) exactly means is still a matter of discussion, though it seems to refer to some military staff with administrative (pecuniary?) duties,²¹ which may fit our context, provided that interpreters had some role in the army. That a Trogodyte interpreter could be employed by the Ptolemaic army is not surprising, since “smaller army camps were set up in the eastern desert and on the Red Sea, notably for elephant hunts and trade.”²² However, the most striking piece of information of this receipt is that an interpreter, who was supposed to translate the “barbarian” language into Greek, did not know the γράμματα, i.e. the Greek letters. There may be different explanations. Apollonios could have known Greek spoken language but not how to write it down: not really a convincing solution, since Greek was taught starting from the alphabet, but he could have learnt Greek outside of school. He could have translated Trogodyte into Egyptian instead of Greek. However, the possibility that ἐρμηνεύς could point to a different profession remains.

The papyri also show us seemingly improvised “translators,” non-professionals who nonetheless have certain competences and use them to facilitate cross-linguistic communication. A very interesting case, unusual in its singular attestation but perhaps not so uncommon in a largely bilingual society, is a private letter from the 2nd century BC, in which a mother cheers up because her son is studying Egyptian so to be able to teach to a physician’s Egyptian apprentices (UPZ I 148, unknown provenance):

πυνθανομένη μανθά|νειν σε Αιγύπτια | γράμματα συνεχάρην σοι | καὶ ἐμαυτῇ,
ὅτι | νῦν (= νῦν) γε παραγενόμενος | εἰς τὴν πόλιν διδάξεις | παρὰ Φαλου. ητι \
ιατροκλυστῇ/ τὰ | παιδάρια καὶ ἔξεις | ἐφόδιον εἰς τὸ γῆρας.

²¹ Cowey, “Der ἡγεμὼν”.

²² Fischer-Bovet, *Army*, 263.

[When I came to know that you're studying the Egyptian letters, I shared your joy, because now at least when you're back to the city you'll teach the apprentices at clyster-doctor Phalou?etes', and you'll have support for old age.]

This papyrus has a great sociolinguistic value, because it is one of the very few attestations of a Greek who studied Egyptian, admittedly with economic purposes.²³ The text, however, deserves further attention in order to understand the facts. On the one hand, the name Phalou?etes – though not completely readable – is certainly Egyptian, so we can exclude that the anonymous receiver of the letter intended to translate the physician's teachings. On the other hand, we may exclude that he wanted to teach Greek medicine to Egyptian apprentices, because in that case he should have been a physician himself, while from his mother's words it is clear that the prospected activity would be his only source of income. I believe that the only explanation possible is that he intended to teach Greek language to the young trainees, so that they would be able to interact also with Greek patients, and he needed sufficient bilingual competence to do so.

Some three centuries later, in another private letter (SB XVIII 13867, unknown provenance, ca. AD 150), the sender asks whoever will read it to please translate the content to the addressees:

τὸν Σάραπιν, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων τὸ ἐπιστόλιον, | τίς ἂν ἦς, κοπίασον μικρὸν
καὶ μετερμή|νευσεν ταῖς γυναιξὶ τὰ | γεγραμμένα | ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ ταύτῃ καὶ
μετάδος. (ll. 1-4)

[In the name of Sarapis, you reading this letter, whoever you are, please make a small effort and translate to the women what is written in this letter and transmit (it to them).]

The script is typical of a βραδέως γράφων ("slow writer")²⁴ of good level: the letters are well-formed, separated from each other, squared, almost completely lacking ligatures and cursive traits. This means that

²³ Mairs, "Aigyptia Grammata"; Reggiani, *I papiri greco-egizi ed Erodoto*, 162-163.

²⁴ The term "slow writers" identifies low- or medium-level non-Hellenes made literate of Greek: see Reggiani, *Papirologia*, 354, with earlier bibliography.

he had a medium level of knowledge of the Greek language, knowing how to trace the characters but not confidently enough to write in a fluently continuous and cursive script. Despite the Greek onomastics, it was surely a Hellenised Egyptian family, the women of which did not have knowledge of Greek, and did need any occasional translator to understand what had been written to them. Why he chose to write in Greek, however, is still obscure to me.

Except for the possible employment of ἑρμηνεῖς in somewhat public enterprises such as commercial or military expeditions, it does not seem that they reached a particular official position during the Ptolemaic period. On the contrary, a public role of the “interpreters” is widely and explicitly credited in some typologies of official documents during the Roman age. First of all, we find them acting a central part in the official trial proceedings, when some parties’ interventions needed an “interpreter” to support a non-Greek speaker.²⁵ Among scattered occurrences,²⁶ the most complete example is P.Col. VII 175 = SB XVI 12692, a report of a trial about the ownership of some property held at Karanis (Arsinoites) on 17 May 339 AD.²⁷ A certain Nilos testifies for two sisters, Herois and Taesis (represented by Theodoros), who took to flight because unable to pay taxes on some land. The land was then cultivated by some peasants (represented by Alexandros) who, when the sisters returned, turned it over to them with in addition a parcel that, according to the sisters, did not belong to them. At the end, the official known as *defensor civitatis* confirms that the sisters are liable for taxes on all the land. When Germanos, head of the farmers, and Nilos take the

²⁵ Keenan, Manning, and Yiftach, *Law*, 97.

²⁶ SB XVIII 13156, 7 εἰπόντος δι’ ἑρμηνέως (unknown provenance, early 2nd cent. AD); PSI XIII 1326, 4 δι’ ἑρμηνέως ἀπεκρίν[ατο] (unkn., AD 181-183); SB XIV 11391, 6 Ψενήσις δι’ ἑρμ[η]γέως ἀπεκρίν[ατο] (Arsinoites, 2nd-3rd cent. AD); P.Stras. I 41, 36 ὃν δ[ι’] ἑρμηνέως Ἀμ[μῶνιον κ]α[ὶ] Ἀντωνῖνον κα[ὶ] C[α]ραπίωνα καὶ Ὀριγένην (Hermopolis, ca. AD 250); P.Sakaon 32, ii 23-24 δι’ ἑρμηνέ[ως] | ἀπεκρίναν[το] and 33 δι’ ἑρμηνέως [ἀπε]κρίναντο (Arsinoites, AD 254-268); BGU VII 1567, 15]ατεῖλις δι’ ἑρμηνέως εἰ[πε]ν (Philadelphia, 3rd cent. AD); P.Ant. II 87, 12 δι’ ἑρμηνέως ἀπ[ε]κρίνατο (Antinoupolis?, late 3rd cent. AD); P.Vind.Tandem 8, passim δι’ ἐρ(μηνέως) ἀπεκρ(ίνατο) (unkn., 3rd-4th cent. AD).

²⁷ Kraemer and Lewis, “A Referee’s Hearing”; Kramer and Hagedorn, “Zum Verhandlungsprotokoll”.

floor, they speak through an “interpreter”, who seems to have been not a professional but an officer, a “chief assistant” named Anoubion, acting as a linguistic mediator:

ὁ κύνδικος Γερμανῶ εἶπ(εν)· τί λέγει ὁ παρὼν Γερμανός; κατὰ ποίαν πρόφασιν ταύτην τὴν γῆν ὑμεῖς κατεπ(ε)ίρατε; δι’ Ἀνουβίωνος | ἐρμηνεύοντος εἶπ(εν)· εὐλαβῶς ἔχοντες μὴ εἰς ἡμᾶς τὰ τελέσματα ἔλθῃ κατεπ(ε)ίραμεν ταύτας. / ὁ κύνδικος εἶπ(εν)· καὶ πόκος ἐστὶν χρόνος ἀφ’ οὗ αὐτὰς κατεπ(ε)ίραται; διὰ τοῦ αὐ[τ]οῦ ἐρμ(ηνέως) ἀπεκρ(ίνατο)· μίαν μόνην ἰνδικτίονα κατεπ(ε)ίραμεν αὐτά. / ὁ κύνδικος αὐτῷ εἶπ(εν)· καὶ πῶς σήμερον τοῖς περὶ Νεῖλον αὐτὰς παρεσχ[ήκ]ατε; διὰ τοῦ | αὐτοῦ ἐρμ(ηνέως) ἀπεκρ(ίνατο)· ὁμοῦ λέγοντες ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν. / ὁ κύνδικος αὐτῷ εἶπ(εν)· ὑπὸ σπορὰν αὐτοῖς παρεδόκατε (= -δῶκατε) τὴν γῆν; διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐρμηναῖος (= ἐρμηνέως) | ἀπεκρ(ίνατο)· αὐτὰ ἀλλὰ παρεσχ[ήκαμεν] ὑπὲρ ἐκάστης ἀρούρης κύτου ἀρτάβας τρ(ε)ῖς. Θεόδωρος ῥ(ήτωρ) εἶπ(εν)· ψευδεται· οὐδὲν εἴληφαν ἀλλὰ ἠναγκά[σ]θη || . μ[. . .] . . παραδέξασθαι . . . ε. . | τῶν αὐτῶν γηδίων. / ὁ κύνδικος εἶπ(εν)· καὶ ἔχρῃν σε πάραυτα ἀναγκασθέντα μέμψασθαι δι’ ἐγγράφων καὶ μηδὲ φόρον παραδέξασθαι. Νεῖλος δι’ ἐρμ(ηνέως) εἶπ(εν)· πάραυτα ἤλθον τῷ | πραιποσίτῳ καὶ εἶπέν μοι· ἀνένεγκον λιβέλλον ἐπὶ τὸν ἑπαρχον. Ἀλέξανδρος εἶπ(εν)· ἵνα τοίν[υ]ν ἐντελέστερον ἀναδιδᾷξω τὴν σὴν ἐμμέλ(ε)ϊαν, ἔστιν καὶ οἰκόπεδον τοῦ | αὐτοῦ ὀνόματος ἐπὶ τῇδε τῆς πόλεως διακατεχόμενον ὑπὸ τῶν ἀντιδίκων ἀπὸ πατρώας αὐτῶν διαδοχῆς. / ὁ κύνδικος Νεῖλῳ ἐντολικάριῳ εἶπ(εν)· ἀκήκρας αὐτοῦ (τοῦ) διαδικοῦντο[ρ] | μέρους φήσαντος διακατέχειν σε καὶ οἰκόπεδον τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὀνόματος τῶν γηδίων καὶ ὀφ(ε)ίλει καταθέσθαι εἰ ἐν νομῇ τυγχάν(ε)ις τοῦ οἰκοπέδ[ο]υ ἢ μέρου[ς] εἴ (= ἦ) μή. Νεῖλος δι(ὰ) Ἀνουβίωνος ἀρχιπλη(έτου) ἐρμ(ηνεύοντος) εἶπ(εν)· οὐκ οἶδα εἰ ἐν οἰκίᾳ. / ὁ κύνδικος αὐτῷ εἶπ(εν)· τίς τοίνυν τὰ στεγανόμια κομίζεται; διὰ τοῦ αὐτ[οῦ] ἐρμ(ηνέως) ἀπεκρ(ίνατο)· οὐδεὶς. κατέπεσεν γάρ. / ὁ κύ[ν]δικος \αὐτῷ/ εἶπ(εν)· | πῶς τοίνυν κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔξαρνος ἐγίνου μὴ εἶναι οἰκόπεδον τούτου ὀνόματος, νυνὶ δὲ ὁμολογεῖς εἶναι μέν, καταπεπρωκέναι δέ; Νεῖλος διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἐρμ(ηνέως) ἀπεκρ(ίνατο) ὅτι | οὐδὲν οἶδα οὐδὲ ἐνοικία εἴληφον (= εἴληφαν). (Il. iii 56 – iv 67)

[The *defensor* said to Germanos: “What does Germanos, here present, say? For what reason did you villagers sow this land?” Through Anoubion, interpreting for him, he said: “We sowed these fields as a precaution lest the taxes devolve upon us.” The *defensor* said: “And how long is it since you began sowing

them?” Through the same interpreter he answered: “We sowed them for one indiction only.” The *defensor* said to him: “And how is it that you have now handed them over to Nilos and the women?” Through the same interpreter he answered: “Because we agree that the fields are their property.” The *defensor* said to him: “Did you give them back the land under seed?” Through the same interpreter he answered: “No, but we gave them three artabas of wheat for each aroua.” Theodoros, advocate, said: “He lies. My clients received nothing, but were compelled ... to accept (?) ... the said plots.” The *defensor* said: “Then, if you were being compelled, you ought immediately to have complained through petitions and above all not have accepted rent.” Nilos said through the interpreter: “I did go immediately to the *praepositus*, and he said to me: ‘Bring a petition before the Prefect.’” Alexandros said: “Well, then, in order the more completely to convince your Grace, there is also a house in this city registered in the same name (i.e., Atisios) and held by our opponents from their father’s succession.” The *defensor* said to Nilos, appearing on behalf (of Herois and Taesis): “You have heard him, your opponent, say that you possess also a house registered in the same name as the plots, and you must depose whether or not you are in possession of a house or part thereof.” Nilos said through Anoubion, the Chief Assistant acting as interpreter: “I do not know if there is a house.” The *defensor* said to him: “Well, then, who pockets the rent?” Through the same interpreter, he answered: “Nobody. It has burned down.” The *defensor* said to him: “How is it, then, that at first you denied there was a house in this name, and now you admit that there was but that it has burned down?” Nilos replied through the same interpreter: “Because I do not know anything. And they have not received any rent.”^{28]}

Twice does Nilos seem to speak without the interpreter: he answers “The villagers” to the *defensor*’s question about who had gathered in the harvest the preceding year (iii 50 Νεῖλος ἐντολικάριος εἶπ(εν)· οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς κώμης) and he appeals in vain against the *defensor*’s final judgement (iv 74 Νεῖλος εἶπ(εν)· ἐκκαλοῦμαι). Either the copyist forgot to mention the interpreter or Nilos was able to utter simple Greek words, but not longer, though simpler, phrases.

²⁸ Translation from *ed.pr.*

Another famous legal context where an interpreter is explicitly cited is P.Oxy. II 237, a lengthy petition issued after 27 June 186 AD by a woman, Dionysia, to the prefect of Egypt over a property dispute in the city of Oxyrhynchus. Among other references, the petition cites verbatim the minutes of an earlier trial, held on 14 October 133, as evidence in support of her claims. At a certain point, the minutes state that an interpreter was employed to communicate to the Egyptian woman involved in that lawsuit (vii 37-38 καὶ ἐκέλευ[σε]ν δι' [ἐρ]μηνέως αὐτὴν ἐνεχθῆν[αι] τί βούλεται “and he ordered that she should be asked through an interpreter what was her choice”).²⁹

We do not know whether the preceding ἐρμηνεῖς were officially established as such or they were just officers able to speak both languages. Nevertheless, the case of a census declaration of 27 May 161 AD “written through the interpreter of the village” of Theadelphia in the Arsinoites (P.Berl.Leihg. I 16a, 15-16 ἐρ(άφη?) δι' ἐρ(μηνέως) τῆς | [κ]ώ(μης)) introduces us to two further issues. The first is the existence of proper public interpreters, likely special officers in the employ of the Roman Greek-speaking administration to communicate with the Egyptians. We know of an “interpreter of the (or and) secretary of the tax collectors” (P.Cair.Mich. II 12a = P.Cair.Reggiani 5, 7 Εὐ]δαίμωνος ἐρμηνέως γρ(αμματέως) πρακ(τόρων), Karanis, ca. AD 148/9) and of an “interpreter of the strategus” (SB VI 9406, cii 308 ἐρμην(ε)ῖς στρατηγοῦ (δραχμαὶ) η, Euhemeria, AD 247), as well as of a series of geographically determined ἐρμηνεῖς (τῆς) κώμης “of the village” (sometimes made explicit: of Karanis, of Bakchias, in Talei) as the qualification of measure standards which seems typical of the Arsinoites in the first two centuries AD. Their actual capacity of regulators emerges from P.Monts.Roca IV 71, a receipt from Boubastos (Arsinoites) dated to AD 141 or 143, which certainly refers to an extra-linguistic meaning of ἐρμηνεία:³⁰

Διονύσιος Διονύσιος (= Διονυσίου) Στοτο[ρήτ]ι(ε)ν ἐλαιουργῷ χαίρειν. ἔχω
[π]αρὰ σου ὑπὲρ ἐρμην(ε)λίας μέτρου κώμης Βουβάστου τοῦ | ε (ἔτους)

²⁹ Keenan, Manning, and Yiftach, *Law*, 97-98.

³⁰ Reggiani, “Tradurre”.

Αντωνίνου Καίσαρος τοῦ | κυρίου τὰς συμφωνηθεί|ας δραχμὰς ὀκτώ. (ἔτους)
[.] | Ἀν[τ]ωνίνου Καίσαρος τ[οῦ] | κυρί[ο]υ Φάωφι .

[Dionysios son of Dionysios to Stotoetis, oil maker, greetings. I receive from you for the conversion of (or to) the measure of the village of Boubastos of the 5th year of Antoninus Caesar the lord the agreed eight drachmas. Year x of Antoninus Caesar the lord, Phaophi x.]

The second issue put forth by the cited declaration is that of the legal documents, such as contracts, declarations, or petitions, composed or signed by a third party on behalf of an illiterate subject (ἀγράμματος). This circumstance was widespread and is frequently attested in the papyri. It is usually considered from the viewpoint of ancient illiteracy, especially to stress the social incidence of non-Greek speaking Egyptians (note that ἀγράμματος usually did not define a total illiterate but referred to the knowledge of τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ γράμματα).³¹ However, it can be considered also as an aspect of the more or less silent work of the ἐρμηνεῖς as historical actors.

Further on, beside these real, historical characters, the papyri provide us with remarkable examples of literary, perhaps fictional translators as well. Indeed, there are comparatively few, but significant cases of self-presentations claiming to have translated important religious texts from Egyptian to Greek.

Religious translation in Graeco-Roman Egypt bears as many social and cultural loads as the lay cases discussed above. Hellenic religion was performed in Greek and Egyptian religion was performed in Egyptian language, and any mixture of the two components could be potentially dangerous. Ptolemaios son of Glaukias, Greek resident priest (κάτοχος) and prophet of Serapis at the Serapeum of Memphis around the second quarter of the 2nd century BC, learnt that at his own expense, when he was forced to move his brother Apollonios away of the temple because of the heavy enmity of the local clergy against their Hellenic presence.³² Ptolemaios himself was attacked by the Egyptian dwellers of the sacred

³¹ Reggiani, *Papirologia*, 352-355, with earlier bibliography.

³² Lewis, *Greeks*, 74-87.

precinct several times, as it emerges from some petitions written by him to the strategus (UPZ I 7, 8 and 15), where he reports the violence suffered *παρὰ τὸ Ἑλληνα εἶναι* “despite I am Greek.” In opposition to the foreign rule, with the Egyptians often considered inferiors (a local worker complained to Zenon that he had been mistreated *ὅτι οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι ἑλληνίζειν* “because I can’t behave the Greek way”: P.Col. IV 66, 20; Philadelphia, ca. 256/5 BC), the local language was the shrine of Egyptian pride and religious tradition. Ptolemaios son of Glaukias, who stemmed from a glorious kleruchic family of Macedonian ancestry, did certainly have to know Egyptian language and writing, as is shown by the Demotic texts found in his archive.³³ Accordingly, the reading ability of Hieratic and Demotic was the proof to ascertain the priestly rank of a young man in P.Tebt. II 291, an official letter from Tebtunis dated to AD 162.

It is against this backdrop that we must consider the phenomenon of the translations of religious texts from Egyptian to Greek, ranging from the Ptolemaic to the Roman period: well-known and well-studied cases but still lacking a general explanation. It is generally impossible not to notice that they mostly pertain to the ever-growing revanchist feeling of Egyptian population sectors against the ruling foreigners. Both the *Dream of Nectanebo* and the *Novel of Sesonchosis* focus on the future return of a legendary Pharaoh of the past, who would free Egypt from the foreign domination. The *Oracle of the Potter* stages a prophecy to Pharaoh Amenophis about natural, political and military catastrophes caused by the domination of the foreign worshippers of Seth, the god of chaos, until the arrival of a King coming from the Sun and appointed by the Egyptian goddess Isis. The Greek translation of the *Myth of the Sun’s Eye*, recounting Thot’s research for the sun-god Atum-Ra’s daughter Tefnut fled to Nubia, poses more complex issues, in being a simplified version of a relevant theological text.³⁴ Who were the translators, and why did they translate such texts, seemingly intended for a purely Egyptian audience?

³³ Del Corso, “I figli di Glaucia”.

³⁴ Signoretti, “A Tale of Two Tongues?”; Jay, *Orality*, 293-344; Bazzana, “The *Oracle of the Potter*”.

First of all, I believe that the exceptional occasions of such translations (they are few and limited) explain why at least some of their alleged authors felt obliged to reveal themselves and to justify their uneasy enterprise. The case of the hymn to god Imouthes (Imhotep) preserved on P.Oxy. XI 1381 (Oxyrhynchus, 2nd century AD) can be illuminating.³⁵ The long text, devoted to the divine character identified by the Greeks with Asclepius, the god of medicine, was transcribed on the verso of an analogous hymn to Isis. At the beginning, the copyist describes the circumstances of the discovery of the original papyrus roll in the temple of Imhotep at Memphis, in the time of Nectanebo. As the introduction goes, the worship of Imhotep had decayed in the troubled times preceding Nectanebo, and the temple was largely deserted when the king, with a view to restoring the worship on its former basis, ordered an examination of an ancient roll found there. In l. 32 the translator starts a rather long personal explanation of the reasons why he first undertook and then postponed the rendering of this ancient text in the Greek language (ll. 33-64), resuming the work after three years at the direct instigation of the god, who had miraculously appeared to him and his mother and cured him of a fever (ll. 64-167). After further explanations addressed to Asclepius concerning the nature of this composition in his honour (ll. 168-202), and an invocation of pious worshippers (ll. 203-218), the writer proceeds to paraphrase the very content of the original roll, but at l. 247 the text breaks off. A statement is particularly worth being quoted:

ἐγὼ δὲ πολλάκις τῆς | [α]ὐτῆς βίβλου τὴν ἐρμηνείαν | [ἀρ]ξάμενος Ἑλληνίδι
γλ[ώ]σσῃ | [όρμ]αθὸν ὄν (= ἐν) αἰῶνι κηρῶσαι, καὶ | ἐν μέσῃ ρεύων τῇ γραφῇ
| ἐπεσχέθην τὴν προθυμίαν | τῷ τῆς ἱστορίας [τω] μεγέθει, | δ[ι]ότι ἔξω ἐλεῖν
ἔμελλο[ν] ἀν[τι]ν· θε[οῖ]ς γὰρ μόνοι[ς] ἀλλ’ οὐ | [θν]ητοῖς ἐφ[φ]ικ[ε] . . .]τ[ὸ]ν τὰς
θε[ῶ]ν διηγεῖσθαι[ν] δυνάμει. (ll. ii 32-42)

[Having often begun the translation of the said book in the Greek tongue, I learnt at length how to proclaim it, but while I was in the full tide of composition, my ardour was restrained by the greatness of the story, because I was about to make

³⁵ Signoretti, “From Demotic to Greek”.

it public; for to gods alone, not to mortals, is it permitted to describe the mighty deeds of the gods.³⁶]

The translator comes on stage and nearly becomes himself a character of the legend, resuming old literary and religious schemes – the recovery of an ancient sacred manuscript, the god’s order after the man’s hesitation³⁷ – along with new reflections on the reasons for and the troubles of translating. The aim is to make the story public (ἐξω ἐλεῖν), which implies the passage from an elitist and divine language – namely, Egyptian (Demotic) as it was in the Roman period – to the more popular and international Greek. The trouble just arises from the divine character of the story as expressed in a divine tongue: its greatness, its godly nature in terms both of content and of form. It is not a matter of pure translation but of interpretation, of ἐρμηνεία indeed: the creation of a new narrative (διήγησις).

The divine intervention grants that the book was composed not according to the translator’s thought but according to the god’s grace (ix 182-84 κατὰ τὴν κτὴν εὐμ[ένει]αν | ἀλλ’ οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἐμ[ὴν φρ]όνησιν): one cannot but recall the traditional legend about the Greek translations of the Bible in Ptolemaic Alexandria, performed by seventy sages reportedly informed by the divine Spirit.³⁸ It is also important to stress that ἐρμηνεῖς were also called the priestly prophets charged of “interpreting” the gods’ will in human terms, and ἐρμηνεῖαι the symbolic interpretations of Christian texts.³⁹

The “poverty” (iii 48-49 τ[απει]νωμᾶ) of the new script (γραφὴ) is exactly what Greek was charged of and the basic origin of the κατὰ τὸ

³⁶ Translation from *ed.pr.*

³⁷ The recovery of an old holy text is a theme found both in Egyptian and in Greek traditions: e.g., in the Demotic novel of Setne, the protagonist searches for a magical book that belonged to deceased prince Naneferkaptah; Pausanias IV 27, 5 tells of Messenian priests transcribing recently recovered ancient and precious ritual texts. For the second topic, see P.Cair.Zen. I 59045 = PSI IV 435 (before 257 BC), where a certain Zoilus of Aspendus tells Zenon to have twice ignored the healing god Serapis’ will to have a temple built and to have been accordingly twice struck with an illness, until the god’s will was fulfilled.

³⁸ Reggiani, “Greco”.

³⁹ Reggiani, “Tradurre”.

δυνατόν legal formula in the documentary translations (see above). It will not surprise that a papyrus copy of the Greek version of the *Oracle of the Potter* bears the colophon ἀπολογία κεραμέως {μεθηρμενευμένη} | πρὸ[c] Ἀμενώπιν τὸν βασιλέα {μεθηρμενευμένη} κατὰ τὸ | δυν[α]τό[v] περὶ τῶν τῇ Αἰγύπτῳ [με]λλόν[των] “Apology of a Potter to the King Amenophis, translated as best as possible, about the future of Egypt” (P.Vindob. G 19813 verso, ii 54-57; Oxyrhynchus, second half of the 3rd century AD).

Scholars have recently underlined the likely fictional character of such translation stories.⁴⁰ The invention of an older Egyptian source to provide authority is common to other famous examples of so-called “religious pseudepigraphy” in Egypt, like the Shabaka stone, Horapollo’s *Hieroglyphika*, the *Sortes Astrampsychi*, the Hermetic treatises.⁴¹ The same device was deployed with the very same purpose in the magical handbooks on papyrus: PGM II 12, xii 400-401 ἐρμηνεύματα ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν μεθηρμενευμένα | οἷς ἐχῶντο οἱ ἱερογραμματεῖς “Interpretations translated from the holy writings, which the temple scribes employed”; Suppl.Mag. II 72, i 1-5 ἐξαγωγή ἐπωδῶν ἐκ τῆς εὐρεθείης | ἐν Ἡλίου {c} πόλει ἐν τῇ ἱερᾷ βύβλῳ τῇ καλουμένη Ἑρμοῦ ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ Αἰγυπτίους | γράμμασιν καὶ διερμηνευθέντων Ἑλληνικοῖς “Excerpt of enchantments from the holy book called of Hermes, found in Heliopolis in the innermost shrine of the temple, written in Egyptian letters and translated into Greek (letters)”.⁴²

Additionally, we must not forget that real translations from Demotic to Greek did exist (we have remains of the original Egyptian text of the *Myth of the Sun’s Eye*), and the possible fictionality of some of these declarations should not prevent us from a critical reflection on the phenomenon. Be they real or imaginary, indeed, those stories were created with a cultural purpose. The story of the Imouthes papyrus is the most complete so far and I believe that it tells a lot about the cultural mechanics of translation. Its apparent outline is the recovery

⁴⁰ Koenen, “Die Apologie des Töpfers”, 180-183; Naether and Thissen, “Genesis einer Aretalogie”.

⁴¹ Naether and Thissen, “Genesis einer Aretalogie”, 561, with further bibliography.

⁴² On the relationship between Demotic and Greek in the medical papyri see Dieleman, *Priests*.

of a powerful sacred tradition: the rediscovery of the holy papyrus at Nectanebo's times is re-enacted by the anonymous translator, the restoration of the worship of Imhotep is mirrored by the divine stimulus to the translating work aimed at spreading the god's cult. The presence of Nectanebo, the last of the indigenous Pharaohs, which was the subject of a number of legends in the popular literature of the Graeco-Roman period, such as the widespread story of his being the father of Alexander the Great, beside of course the abovementioned *Dream* with the messianic myth of his return, is significant: it seems to me evident that the meaning is the restoration of the Egyptian power, now as then. Accordingly, the explanation for the alleged translation offered in the Oxyrhynchus papyrus can easily be exported to the other – either true or fictional – cases of propagandistic literature: the reason for which texts rooted in the Egyptian tradition were translated into, or even originally composed in, Greek was their circulation among non-Egyptians.⁴³ It is perfectly understandable that such propagation was intended (also) to sensitize or even warn the non-Egyptian sectors of the population. From this perspective, it is no surprise at all that a copy of the *Dream of Nectanebo* has been found among the papers of Apollonios son of Glaukias, the very Greek *káτοχος* of the Serapeum (see above) – theoretically, among the least interested people in such apocalyptic literature – copied by his own hand (UPZ I 81).

Even though fictional, such translations are however important to understand the power of language and the power of its masters in the ancient times, who acted as a proper bridge between different cultural worlds.

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⁴³ On the meaningfulness of linguistic choices in the papyrological sources see Bagnall, *Reading Papyri*, 16-17.

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Alberto Gelmi

Vassar College

ORCID 0000-0001-8751-0609

agelmi@vassar.edu

The Prisoner and the Warden. Erri De Luca, Jonah, and the Hebrew Bible

Erri De Luca (1950-) is a prolific writer of contemporary Italian literature. Besides his fictional work, De Luca has authored a significant number of translations from the Hebrew Bible. This article focuses on his 1995 translation of *Jonah* where De Luca inserts two introductions, two translations, one rich apparatus of notes, and a brief theatrical adaptation of Jonah's story. The article highlights the gap between the strict hyperliteralism of the translation (which De Luca himself describes as "calque") and the copious commentary that accompanies it, which is characterized by a densely idiosyncratic voice. The difference between the two moments is indicative of De Luca's ambivalent approach to the Scriptures: secular and philological, but at the same time meditative and very personal. A final look at the author's later rewritings of Jonah proves that for De Luca translator and writer cannot be fully severed, as both are essential in the dialogue with the source text.

Keywords: translation studies; paratext: translator's notes; Erri De Luca; Bible translation

Ταῦτα δὲ ἐγένετο μὲν οὐδέποτε ἔστι δὲ αἰεὶ
These things never happened, but always are.

Erri De Luca is an erratic figure on the Italian literary scene. Born in Naples in 1950, De Luca has authored a vast body of work that includes novels, short stories, poetry, and theatre pieces, as well as a significant number of translations from Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian.¹ He is

¹ A complete list of his works is available on the website of his foundation, where De Luca pens his own biographical profile: <https://fondazionerrideluca.com/web/>.

also known as a long-time political activist: in the 1970s, he became a member of the Communist organization *Lotta Continua*; over the last decade, he was involved in the protests against the controversial Lyon-Turin high speed railway line. For his alleged role, De Luca went to trial in 2013 and was acquitted two years later.

Although a critical assessment of De Luca's work lies beyond the objectives of this essay, the author's tight bond with the Judeo-Christian tradition is a convenient point of entry into his world, as biblical stories and characters recursively appear in his books. This article focuses on Jonah, the reluctant prophet who tried to run away from God's call. An infamous sea monster would bring him back, ironically to prophesy the destruction of Nineveh which God would in the end abort, much to Jonah's frustration. De Luca's version of the biblical booklet (*Giona/Ionà*) consists of: a chart presenting the Hebrew alphabet and the numerical value of each letter; a first introduction to the text in general, where De Luca also reflects on his own strategy of translation; a second foreword providing a sketch of the history and the geography of Nineveh; a first running translation accompanied by a massive footnote apparatus; a second, interlinear translation alongside the Hebrew text; and finally, a dialogue in which Jonah becomes a fictional character of De Luca's own writing.² The story of Jonah is worth exploring in its inter- and intratextual entanglements, in translation as well as in creative writing. In fact, the two levels are hard to tell apart.³

² As we shall see in the last paragraph, Jonah also features in the collection of essays *Una nuvola come tappeto*, in the long poem *Opera sull'acqua*, and in the theater piece *L'ultimo viaggio di Sinbad*. In this article we will give only scant remarks on the two forewords that introduce the translation. Most of the information there is also presented in the commentary and in the final rewriting of Jonah. As we know, forewords, postfaces, and notes are part of what we call paratext. Although Gérard Genette's groundbreaking work yields interesting results for the study of these narrative thresholds, Elefante reminds us that pre- and post-faces did not feature in his analysis (*Traduzione e paratesto*, 88-91). More in general, Tahir Gürçaglar also points out that the French critic never tackled translation in his work. For a general introduction on the role of paratext in translation studies and the field of "paratranslation", see Elefante, *Traduzione e paratesto*, 19-21.

³ See also the title of Montel-Hurlin's excellent monograph: *Erri De Luca: lecteur, traducteur, auteur*, to which this article is indebted. Looking at a limited pool of

1. Translating the Bible

The sheer number of translations of the Bible is astronomical, with multiple versions available in the same language.⁴ That is also the case for the relatively small Italian market, where numerous editions are distinguished by their religious affiliation or lack thereof. If we factor in all the translations produced over the centuries, it soon becomes obvious that no one ever really translates the Bible *ex nihilo* or *ex novo*: the translator is only doomed to re-translate. The weight of the text and the reach of its presence is so vast that De Launay⁵ compares the prospect of biblical translation to the paralyzing gaze of a gorgon.

Historically, the main reason for translating the Bible has been proselytism. It seems therefore natural that an undeniable point of reference for biblical translation studies is to this day the work of Eugene Nida (1914-2011), an American linguist who collaborated with missionaries in Northern Mexico in the mid-20th century.⁶ De Luca is not interested in exporting religion. He identifies as agnostic (“I believe as someone who sees the footprints of a bear in other people’s and yet has not seen the bear”⁷) and worries in fact that his translations could hinder those who are on a sound spiritual journey.⁸ For De Luca the Bible is primarily a cultural artifact passed down through the centuries by a long chain of readers and exegetes. Thanks to them, he argues, “the inherent sacredness of the Bible has become a civilization.”⁹ His own translations are “just one more footnote at the bottom of a list of notes

Italian authors that does not include De Luca, Taverna (“Les préfaces des traducteurs comme discours sur la méthode et l’histoire”, 273) proposes a semiotic frame for the study of what she calls “translators-writers” (“traducteurs-écrivains”). In her view, translation is just another form of writing for this selected group of artists, “qui va se superposer à l’acte de parole initial déjà mis en œuvre par l’écrivain à traduire”.

⁴ For a survey of Italian Bibles and a preliminary orientation in the massive bibliography, see Gobetti, “Un cammello per la cruna di un ago”.

⁵ De Launay, “En quête de l’original”, 3.

⁶ On Nida’s legacy, see Porter and Hess, *Translating the Bible*, 18-20 and 50-55.

⁷ De Luca, *Una nuvola come tappeto*, 63. Here and throughout the article, translations are mine.

⁸ De Luca, *Libro di Rut*, 41.

⁹ De Luca, *Una nuvola come tappeto*, 10.

regarding how that specific word has been translated.”¹⁰ This civilization takes the shape of a literary masterpiece of Mediterranean literature that echoes the same characters and the same stories throughout time and that is our privilege to peruse. For De Luca, this is a personal matter. As a “citizen of the Mediterranean,” he wonders:

Chi dei miei può escludere il fenicio, l’arabo, il normanno, e soprattutto l’ebreo, dall’intrico degli antenati? Un giorno si troverà modo di risalire le generazioni e ricostruire il cespuglio degli incroci che ci hanno preceduti e, in buona parte, determinati. Scendere da molti innesti sarà allora un titolo e la nobiltà consisterà nell’aver trovato nel proprio catasto ancestrale più stirpi, più pelli, più religioni.¹¹

[Which one of my people can exclude the Phoenician, the Arab, the Norman, and especially the Jew, from the tangle of their ancestors? One day we will have a way to trace back generations and reconstruct the shrub of the intersections that have preceded us and, to a great extent, determined us. Descending from many grafts will then be a badge of honor, and having multiple lineages, multiple skins, multiple religions in one’s ancestral register will define what nobility is.]

In light of his secular and transcultural understanding of the Bible, one would expect a critical approach that favors history and material philology. Instead, De Luca surprises us, maintaining that the Bible is one whole book with a unitary structure rather than a collection of texts whose editorial misadventures have been puzzling scholars for ages. Even more dauntingly, De Luca calls the Bible “God’s autobiography,”¹² occasionally referring to it with the Hebrew name “mikrà” (lit. “reading”) or just “Bibbia,” without the definite article that normally accompanies it. This view would be germane to a person of faith: Levinas claimed that what is miraculous about the Bible is not the plurality of its authors, but rather the homogeneity of the final product.¹³ This take is more problematic in a person that presents himself as agnostic. One cannot miss the utter ambivalence in the translator-persona De Luca is creating

¹⁰ Montel-Hurlin, ““Entrare nella scrittura sacra””, 57.

¹¹ De Luca, *Una nuvola come tappeto*, 113.

¹² De Luca, *Una nuvola come tappeto*, 12.

¹³ De Launay, “En quête de l’original”, § 7.

for himself: a quasi-oxymoronic individual that bridges a proudly secular heritage with an intense spirituality he does not fully disclose or acknowledge yet. Arguably, this gives De Luca a certain degree of independence that shields him from critiques coming from both sides.¹⁴

The next two sections explore this constitutive ambiguity looking primarily at De Luca's language and style in the translation and in the commentary sections of *Giona/Ionà*; in the last part, we look at the creative and intertextual re-use of the story. Following an insight that De Luca himself shares in an interview,¹⁵ we adopt Jewish terminology to distinguish between three levels of interaction with the text (which operate in mutual reinforcement and that we here consider separately just for the sake of clarity). First comes translation as *targum*, i.e., translation *qua talis*; second comes translation as *midrash*, a generic term for interpretation, which we apply to the footnotes; finally, we have translation as *haggadah* (lit. "narration"), which we use to refer to De Luca's creative input. By surveying the three levels, we argue that for De Luca translation is a recursive practice that seamlessly engulfs the writer, the translator, and the activist. The rhetorical space that he reclaims for himself as a secular intellectual is instrumental in allowing him to become part of that Mediterranean civilization that he sees in the Bible.

2. Translation as *targum*

The most evident feature of De Luca's translations is a bare hyperliteralism that breaks the rules of the target language to model it after the Hebrew text, at times bringing the Italian to the brink of

¹⁴ Talking about Swedish literature, Ulf Norberg uses Bourdieu to read paratextual spaces as a lieu of cultural legitimation for the translated text (see Elefante, *Traduzione e paratesto*, 94-5). This interpretation seems applicable to De Luca as well: an agnostic leftist and public persona that is likely to renew and expand the readership of an ancient text beyond the circle of religious readers or those with a specific interest in biblical matters.

¹⁵ In an interview with Montel-Hurlin ("Entrare nella scrittura sacra", 62), De Luca explicitly compares his notes to *midrashim* (the plural of *midrash*). The parallel between De Luca's translations and the Jewish practice of *targum* is presented in Zappella, "Scrivo della materia che mi ha scritto".

unintelligibility.¹⁶ As Henri Meschonnic reminds us,¹⁷ any solid theory of translation ought to consider the idea of language that informs it, so here is a sample from the first three verses of the *Book of Jonah*, followed by a translation into English.¹⁸

1 E fu la parola di Iod a Ionà figlio di Amittai per dire:

2 “Alzati, vai a Ninive la città grande e esclama contro di lei. Perché è salito il loro male al mio volto”.

3 E si alzò Ionà per fuggire a Tarshish via dal volto di Iod. E scese a Iafò e trovò un battello che va a Tarshish e dette il suo nolo e scese in esso per andare con loro a Tarshish via dal volto di Iod.¹⁹

[1 And was the word of Iod unto Ionà son of Amittai to say:

2 “Wake up, go to Ninive the big city and say against her. Because their evil has risen to my face”.

¹⁶ De Luca has been vehemently criticized for his translations and especially for his obscure style. In September of 1996 the Italian newspapers *La Stampa* and *Il Corriere della Sera* featured a feud between De Luca himself and Hebrew professor Carlo Zaccagnini (see Swennen Ruthenberg, “From Kohelet/Ecclesiastes to Mondedidio”). Although the accusations referred to De Luca’s *Qohelet*, the same stylistic features under criticism are also present in *Giona/Ionà*, as we are about to see.

¹⁷ See Kadiu, *Reflexive Translation Studies*, 71.

¹⁸ To give a sense of the language, I adopt De Luca’s own strategy of hyper-literal translation, which comes at the expense of fluidity. In her recent *Reflexive Translation Studies*, Silvia Kadiu presents four major theorists and practitioners of translation by translating parts of their seminal studies in ways that are consistent with the theoretical stands of each author. The outcome is as daring as it is idiosyncratic: for instance, Kadiu reproduces Susan Bassnett’s dialogic take with a translation into French of her famous article “Writing and Translating” in the form of an epistle that she writes back to Bassnett herself. Kadiu locates her practice of creative engagement between translator and translated author alongside Derrida’s translation of Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator”, which is a preface to the German philosopher’s own translation of Baudelaire. *Reflexive Translation Studies* is a work on the translation of translation theory – a much understudied subject, in Kadiu’s opinion – and employs reverse translation to discuss and showcase the positionality of the translator. Although this article wields the same method on two separate occasions, our aim is simply to provide a tool for readers that are not conversant in Italian or that wish to better grasp De Luca’s very personal work.

¹⁹ De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 23-24.

3 And Ionà woke up to flee to Tarshish away from the face of Iod and went down to Iafò and found a boat that goes to Tarshish and he gave his fare and descended on it to go with them to Tarshish away from the face of Iod.]

De Luca's style can be thus summarized:

a. spelling: an unconventional use of proper names: "Ionà," with a correct transliteration of the original Hebrew, instead of the more common "Giona";²⁰ the same happens with the city "Tarshish," typically spelt "Tarsis," or "Iafò," instead of "Giaffa"; most notably, the name of God is replaced by the first letter of the tetragrammaton "Iod," replicating the Jewish tradition of not pronouncing the unfathomable name;

b. vocabulary and idioms: a reproduction of constructs that, albeit standard in the source language, sound either wrong or clumsy in Italian. For instance, the opening clause [verb to be + infinitive], an ordinary phrasing in narrative texts, is translated literally, in lieu of a more intelligible "and x happened." The term "face" (which the Hebrew registers three times) would be omitted in standard Italian, especially in the idiom "salire/venire fino a qualcuno", which does exist in the same sense of reaching someone, but that has no mention of "face";

c. syntax: many structures of Hebrew are mimicked, irrespective of the fact that they might be downright wrong in Italian. For instance: the preservation of the so-called dative of possession: "the word was to Ionà," instead of "Ionà received the word." In the second verse there is a change in personal pronouns, from "her" (the city, feminine both in Italian and in Hebrew) to "them" with a *concordantia ad sensum*, referring to the entire population of Nineveh. A more patent transgression of Italian grammar is the relative clause "(barca) che va," with the verb in the present tense, irrespective of the fact that the syntactic context would demand a past tense: De Luca, however, wants to keep the present participle of the Hebrew.²¹

²⁰ Interestingly enough, the book cover uses both terms, probably to help readers (and buyers) figure out the content of the book.

²¹ One may wonder why De Luca did not opt for the Italian present participle, which would have the advantage of being perfectly literal and archaic at the same time in

As we can see, De Luca favors a foreignizing approach to translation, which he in fact describes as a calque.²² His admitted goal is to uphold as much as possible of the lexical and syntactic fabric of the original at the expense of the target language. As a consequence, the Italian is thoroughly bent or, if we prefer, Hebraicized: “[T]he translation of this little book is extremist out of obstinacy to be subservient to the Hebrew language, the mother tongue of our sacred history.”²³

Other editorial choices confirm that De Luca regards translation as an approximation to the original. The interlinear translation with the Hebrew text in bigger font size literally makes space on the page for the Otherness represented by the original language and its script.²⁴

contemporary language. The oddity of the relative clause is regrettably lost in the English gerund.

²² See Montel-Hurlin, “Entrare nella scrittura sacra”, 61. A preliminary comparison with other translators that like De Luca opt for a rigorous transposition of Hebrew structures and idioms yields interesting results. Especially at the syntactic level, De Luca is probably the most radical in twisting the target language. For instance, he translates literally the construct [infinitive absolute + conjugated form of the same verb] by simply repeating the verb twice, as opposed to the practice of adding adverbs such as “certainly” to signal a specificity that lacks an equivalent in many Indo-European languages. In French, Henri Meschonnic (*Les Cinq Rouleaux*) inserts the same awkward repetition; in German, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig (*Die Schrift*) find their way around by mimicking the false starts and repetitions common in spoken language. Things would be more straightforward with the so-called transferred/turned pronoun, i.e., a repetition of pronouns that, when subject to a calque, is downright incorrect in either French, German, or Italian (e.g., *the guy whom I love him is Indonesian). In this case only De Luca does not shy away from endorsing it in his translation. Meschonnic, Buber and Rosenzweig do not. These two examples are taken respectively from *Ruth* 2:8 and 2:2. In one instance *Giona/Ionà* gives up the practice of calquing (4:3): here De Luca intervenes on the comparative form of adjective to make it intelligible for his reader. In biblical Hebrew only the second term of comparison signals the comparison, with no adverb or modifier (e.g., *more* interesting). Dutifully, De Luca admits this breach in the note (*Giona/Ionà*, 39).

²³ De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 8.

²⁴ The two texts are practically identical, with minor differences in the use of definite articles. As is often the case with books that juxtapose languages with different conventions of writing (in our case, from left to right or from right to left), the page sequence becomes an issue. The *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, for instance,

On a very practical level, the addition of a second translation thickens the otherwise very flimsy booklet, approximately counting for one third of the ninety pages of *Giona/Ionà*. However, although printing necessities should not be dismissed, we can safely assume that only a very select number of readers can actually read the Hebrew text. This suggests that the choice is aesthetic more than linguistic, a transparent reminder that what we are reading is only a reflection of an unobtainable Urtext that can be summoned but not directly enjoyed.²⁵ And yet, the interlinear format is indicative of something else. Translations that visually juxtapose source text and translation are still popular in Italy for language instruction, especially for Latin and ancient Greek (or at least used to be before online tools began to offer alternatives). De Luca is trying to reproduce for his reader the stages and the methods of a learning experience, one that requires a recursive perusal of the original text. In doing so, De Luca is inserting both himself and his audience in the chain of transmission that stretches through centuries and that results in the establishment of the Bible as a form of civilization in textual shape.

In several interviews and statements on his work – the so-called epitexts of translation studies²⁶ – De Luca presents his *modus translandi*, which is as austere as the bare hyperliteralism he offers to his readers. Talking about the tools of his work, he claims to employ only the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), the monolingual edition of the Hebrew Bible that only registers variants in manuscript tradition.²⁷ Allegedly,

reads from right to left even in the introductory pages in English, German, French, Spanish, and Latin; instead, De Luca's *Giona/Ionà* preserves the left to right structure in the entire book.

²⁵ Looking at De Luca's overall production as a translator, Montel-Hurlin posits a "diffraction of readers" ("Entrare nella scrittura sacra", 62) that entails a specialist as well as a non-specialist reader. Montel-Hurlin aptly highlights the change in publishing houses: sometimes major ones (e.g., *Giona/Ionà*, with Feltrinelli), sometimes minor (e.g., Psalm 2, with Filema). As for his readers, De Luca acknowledges that he generally overestimates the acquaintance people have with biblical narratives (*Giona/Ionà*, 9).

²⁶ Toledano Buendía, "Listening to the Voice of the Translator", 149.

²⁷ The *Stuttgartensia* comes with a general introduction in multiple languages, but no companion nor commentary to the individual books. De Luca speaks of BHS

De Luca does not consult dictionaries, be they mono- or bilingual. Relying on the paucity of words registered in Biblical Hebrew, he only uses concordances because they “allow to take a tour around a specific word and reproduce its biography,”²⁸ a strategy that is fully consistent with an understanding of the Bible as a unitarian product.²⁹ The strict and unwelcoming hyperliteralism of De Luca’s translation is thus supported by a similar regimen of unmediated access to the original: the unannotated, unabridged *Stuttgartensia* and the impervious concordances of Biblical Hebrew, although previous critics and former translators are occasionally given credit for some of the interpretations provided.³⁰ De Luca poses as a practitioner for whom language is an organic literary and collective institution that becomes the repository of an entire culture. The keys to the micro-text are in the macro-text and in its language: if we really want to know about Jonah, we ought to look at the whole Bible and at the entire corpus of Hebrew language. The teeming footnote apparatus that we are about to consider feeds off of this connection and constitutes the firmest *trait d’union* between the linguistic and the exegetical moment which cannot in De Luca’s mind be severed.

in affectionate terms: “Its neatly-shaped characters are dear to me, and so is the reading direction that goes from right to left, or the way pages flip backwards, if we compare to our usage. Over the years, that book has become my intimacy” (*Una nuvola come tappeto*, 11).

²⁸ Montel-Hurlin, ““Entrare nella scrittura sacra””, 61.

²⁹ De Luca makes this point in Pier Paolo Giarolo’s documentary *Tradurre* (Jolefilm, 2008), where he is interviewed with other professional translators. The connection between the scarcity of vocabulary and the use of concordances is as fascinating as it is misleading. Like other Semitic languages, Hebrew is root-based, meaning that once we know the meaning of a root (e.g., k.t.v. for “write”), we can almost always infer the meaning of cognates (e.g., dictate, i.e., make someone write; correspond, i.e., to write to each other; and even desk, i.e., the place of writing). De Luca does not disclose this very intuitive (and fundamental) feature of the language, which is all the more surprising given that he does draw back from discussing very technical issues of the Hebrew language elsewhere in his notes.

³⁰ See De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 28.

3. Translation as midrash

Besides being constantly reminded that what we are reading is a translation, through the cracks of the fragmented Italian of *Giona/Ionà* we can sense the Semitic origin of the text. Although hyperliteralism might well be the most prominent feature of De Luca's translation, it is hardly the most visible. As we skim through the book, we constantly see one- to two thirds of the space taken up by a thick layer of ninety-one footnotes that interrupt the flow of the mere forty-eight lines that make up the brief book. We witness a visual dichotomy between the two levels: De Luca's commentary is subservient to the main text and consonantly comes in smaller font and at the bottom of the page; and yet, the commentary clearly outweighs the text commented upon.

Before mapping the typology of interventions, we need to register the steep stylistic gap between the translation and the commentary. The sort of interlingua that De Luca creates molding his Italian against the original Hebrew is substituted by a highly poetic and ornate language. Here is the apparatus that comments only the first line of *Jonah*:

[E¹ fu la parola di Iod² a Ionà³ figlio di Amittai per dire]

¹ E: la frase ebraica inizia volentieri con la congiunzione. Anche un libro può esordire così, come parte di un discorso che lo ha preceduto e che continuerà dopo la sua ultima frase. È il residuo commosso che una tradizione di racconto a voce lascia alla scrittura, sua nipotina.

² Iod è il mio modo di pronunciare la sigla di Dio detta tetragramma perché formata da quattro lettere. La prima di esse è appunto "iod", la più piccola delle lettere dell'alfabeto ebraico, appena un apostrofo. Secondo una tradizione kabbalistica essa entra nella costruzione di tutte le altre lettere.

³ Ionà figlio di Amittai è citato nel secondo libro dei re. (14, 25)³¹

[And¹ was the word of Iod² onto Ionà³ son of Amittai to say:

¹ And: the Hebrew sentence gladly starts with a conjunction. Even a book can inaugurate this way, as a part of a conversation that came before it and that will

³¹ De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 23.

continue after its last sentence. It is the emotional residue of a tradition of a story telling delivered by voice passed down to writing, its little grandchild.

² Iod is my way to utter God's acronym, called the etagrammaton because it is made of four letters. The first one is precisely "iod", the tiniest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, just an apostrophe. According to one Kabalistic tradition, it is part of the formation of all other letters.

³ Ionà son of Amittai is mentioned in the second book of Kings. (14, 25)]

The metamorphosis is radical and personal: Hebrew is a living being, with a parental lineage that links its oral and its written form; it is endowed with emotions ("residuo commosso") and intentions ("inizia volentieri"). The translator does not shy away even from abruptly breaking the fourth wall, by saying that "Iod" is his own way to pronounce the unfathomable name of God.

De Luca's notes fall into two major categories. The first one is broadly stylistic, encompassing issues of form, history of language, and vocabulary. We find observations on the sound patterns that in the original reproduce the drowning and the panting of Jonah once his fellow sailors throw him into the sea (30-31). We are also acquainted with problems of lexicography, such as the botanical *vexata quaestio* of the *kikaion*, the plant that in the last chapter provides some relief for Jonah in the sweltering heat of Nineveh but that wilts prematurely, leaving Jonah in an even darker despair;³² at times, De Luca solves a *crux desperationis* drawing from his own experience: as a man of the South, he feels entitled to settle the dispute over the qualification of the wind as *harashit*, a term that can both mean scorching or stilling/hushing (41).³³ The commentator gets even more technical, as he discusses issues of historical linguistics, hinting at the century-long stratification of the text: commenting on Jonah's cry against Adonai

³² *Kikaion* is a hapax legomenon in the Bible that leaves interpreters at a loss when it comes to the actual identification of the plant (see Alter, *Strong as Death Is Love*, 169; De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 39-40).

³³ De Luca endorses the latter solution, as did Rashi of Troyes (1040-1105), probably the most famous Jewish commentator that readers of the Bible to this day regularly consult. De Luca does not mention his name in the note (see also Montel-Hurlin, "Entre ré-écriture et re-présentation bibliques", § 4).

from within the sea monster – a poetic lament that is still part of the liturgy of Yom Kippur – De Luca highlights that the language of the section is significantly more archaic than the rest of the book into which it is grafted.³⁴ A specific sub-category of linguistic intervention indulges in a personification of the Hebrew language, as we could see right at the beginning, where the proclitic conjunction *vav* – again, a staple of narrative prose – is the “emotional remainder” of oral storytelling, whose “tiny grandchild” is writing. Above all, this kind of observation well captures the aestheticization of language that De Luca carries on.³⁵

The second category of intervention deals with intertextuality. At the end of chapter 2, we are reminded of an interesting coincidence: besides men and women, in the Hebrew Bible God speaks only to the snake of *Genesis* and to the whale of *Jonah* (which, in the original, is simply *dag gadol*, a big fish). Sometimes intertextuality is more disguised: for instance, the name “Jonah” literally translates as “dove.” For De Luca, this coincidence automatically puts Jonah in dialogue with Noah, the patriarch that thanks to that bird could find out that the world was safe after the deluge.³⁶ Interestingly enough, De Luca often yields to the Jewish practice of gematria, i.e., the numerical interpretation of scripture. The number corresponding to Jonah is seventy-one, which is the sum of the value of Nineveh and that of the sea (“yam”) or, alternatively, the big fish in the story. This arithmetical gymnastics typifies the clash between translation and commentary in De Luca: on the one hand, we have the quasi-scientific approach to the language (shaped by the use of the *Stuttgartensia* and biblical concordances) that resulted in a challenging hyperliteralism; on the other hand, in De

³⁴ De Luca anticipated this point earlier in the first introduction, where he very intuitively compared the stylistic hiatus of Jonah’s lament to a sudden juxtaposition of Dante Alighieri and Alessandro Manzoni, the 19th-century author of *The Betrothed*. *E contrario*, he reiterates the same point highlighting a grammatical form in Jonah 1:7 that belongs to late Biblical Hebrew. Unlike the Dante/Manzoni analogy, this remark is unexpectedly erudite. One may wonder whether De Luca is reaching out to a selected niche of his readership (e.g., advanced students of Hebrew) or instead he is trying to establish his authority as commentator.

³⁵ Here are other examples: the present participle is “the tense of compassion” (De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 24 and 27); the particle “na” mitigates the imperative” (38).

³⁶ De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 8 and 33; see also Alter, *Strong as Death Is Love*, 135-137.

Luca's hermeneutical toolbox we have a quintessential instrument of mystical exegesis: which is all the more surprising for someone who claimed to be a secular reader of Scripture.³⁷

The very different voices of the translator and the commentator leave us wondering about the relationship between the two. Sardin proposes that we go past the classification of notes based on their place on the page and the time of fruition on the part of readers; instead, she recommends a taxonomy that distinguishes between exegetical and meta-translational notes.³⁸ Exegetical notes comment and expand on the content and the cultural background; meta-translational notes bring language to the foreground and denounce the shortcomings or the *impossibilia* of translation (for instance explaining puns or, in our case, the phonic aspect of the original). Exegetical notes showcase a dialogue between translation and source text, thereby blurring the gap between the two, since we use the one to gain a better understanding of the other. Quite the opposite, meta-translational notes unveil linguistic frictions that the translator is not able to solve without the help of a footnote.

With a pun of her own making, Sardin concludes that this kind of intervention “dénote et détonne en même temps” the source text,³⁹ at the same time exposing and imploding the job of the translator. True to its Derridean inspiration, the opposition denote/detonate is illusory, as De Luca perfectly demonstrates. Once the translator has allotted the prime spot to the biblical text, the commentator can let loose and chime in profusely: in his targum of *Jonah*, De Luca keeps a low profile and hides behind his uncouth Italian calque of a Hebrew text; in his midrash of *Jonah*, he counteracts his own minimalism with a host of highly personal interventions. There is no sharp boundary between exegetical

³⁷ Gematria becomes an obsession in *Ruth*, where De Luca chases every possible instance to connect the main character of the book with her Davidic and therefore messianic lineage. This kind of numerical interpretation confirms the centrality of the original text for De Luca, since every letter, and not just every word, is conducive to a larger meaning. This is why *Ruth* (but also *Giona/Ionà*) opens with a conversion chart of letters to numbers, so that readers can see for themselves what gematria is about. For an introduction to the practice of gematria, its history and its use, see Karesh and Mitchell, *Encyclopedia of World Religions*, 169.

³⁸ Sardin, “De la note du traducteur comme commentaire”, §1-3.

³⁹ Sardin, “De la note du traducteur comme commentaire”, §17.

and meta-translational notes, just as there is no real divide between the bare translation and the overabundant commentary that goes with it: simply, one serves at the pleasure of the other; rather than a dystonic clash, what we see is a synergy between the two layers and the two personas.

Taking advantage of the phraseology of “tradurre,” De Luca crafts his own *jeu de mots* to capture the nature of his art. The Italian verb is the equivalent of “translate” but also holds the original nuance of physical movement in the expression “tradurre in carcere,” i.e., transfer someone to jail. The freedom of movement is thus collapsed onto the archetypal loss of freedom.⁴⁰ If we dwell on the legal image, we could say that the bare literalism of the translator is the alibi for the commentator and, most importantly, the suture between the austere interpreter and the ornate writer. As we know, after the first translation with its footnote apparatus comes the second, interlinear translation; after that, one of the many re-writings of the myth of Jonah, the first of several, possibly countless interactions with the Urtext. After the targum and the midrash comes the haggadah.

4. Translation as haggadah

The metaphor of incarceration resonates loud and clear in the final section of *Giona/Ionà*, which presents a dialogue between the main character and an unknown Aher, about whom nothing is said.⁴¹ Tellingly, the title reads “Indagine su un venditore di colombe. Dialogo tra Ionà e un inquisitore” [Investigation over a dove seller. Dialogue between Ionà and an inquisitor]. Aher acts as a police officer that asks pointed questions to assess the charges against Jonah and keeps the witness focused whenever he goes astray.⁴² The scene encapsulates much of

⁴⁰ That Jonah is the prisoner was already clear in *Una nuvola come tappeto*, where we read: “It is difficult to be a fugitive when one is chased by God. Jonah gives himself up to the elements that have come to put him under arrest, the waves, the sea giants. One of them takes him into custody inside his digestive tract” (104-105).

⁴¹ Swennen Ruthenberg rightly points at Leopardi’s *Operette morali* as a possible model (Swennen Ruthenberg, “Dal mare di Giona alle macerie di Babele”, 21).

⁴² The scene opens with a laconic “Let’s start with personal information: name, occupation, address” (De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 75). Aher warns Ionà not to beat

what De Luca told us in the translation (which he occasionally quotes verbatim), in the commentary, as well as the two introductions at the beginning of the book.

The main accusation against Jonah is his silence in the face of God's repeated question about his frustration over the thwarted destruction of Nineveh. Jonah cannot make peace with the fact that God upended his life to deliver a prophecy that would not be fulfilled. De Luca's fictional Jonah does not complain about the salvation of the city, he laments the useless upheaval of his quiet existence:

Sono uno che voleva essere nessuno nella storia del mondo, nessuno. Non è un'aspirazione di tutti, ma era la mia. Ho sempre avuto ripugnanza per la vanità delle ribalte, ogni notorietà che trascina un nome per le bocche era per me una diffamazione. [...] Volevo custodire la mia piccola reputazione, uno di cui dire con affetto che faceva pagare poco le colombe. Eccomi invece spedito a gridare il finimondo per il corpo di una città a forma di donna, bella da far perdere la testa, eccomi strillone di notizie false innanzi ai te, zimbello di una sentenza annullata, ecco finite in un libro le mie avventure involontarie e prescritte.⁴³

[I am someone who wanted to be nobody in the history of the world, just a nobody. It is not everyone's aspiration, but it was mine. I've always had a distaste for the vanity of the limelight, any form of fame that drags a name for mouth to mouth was a defamation to me. (...) I wanted to preserve my little reputation, one people could say with affection that made pay little for doves. Here I am, instead, sent to cry doomsday to the body of a city that has the shape of a woman, beautiful enough to make you lose your mind. Here I am, a banner of fake news before you, a laughingstock of a sentence that was cancelled. The adventures that were imposed on me and that I didn't want became a book.]

It is tempting to read these lines as a confession of De Luca himself: a self-described everyman that rose to fame on the Italian scene of letters and politics. For our purposes, though, it is another level of

around the bush (78) and when the witness does not comply, he yells: "[W]hat a daydreamer! Just tell me what happened" (81).

⁴³ De Luca, *Giona/Ionà*, 82-83.

identification that is worth considering. The fictional Jonah is a seller of birds (doves, as etymology mandates) that pilgrims sacrifice at the temple. During Aher's interrogation, the humble merchant that just wants to be left alone interjects his deposition with quotations from scriptures and the Talmud, teaching us (again) the virtues of numerical interpretation, among other things. The oddity of a manual worker that talks like a philologist makes the scene stylistically uneven, unless De Luca is intentionally staging a battle that has not seen (nor perhaps ever will) a clear winner. Aher's abrupt interruptions and harsh replies to Jonah's at times verbose statements all but reiterate the stylistic and philosophical clash between the textual agencies that they stand for.

In and of itself, *Indagine* is a statement on translation. The succinct Aher parallels the dry, factual, and hyperliteral targum; the fictional Jonah reproduces the effusive midrash of the footnote apparatus, both of which are extensively quoted. The choice of the theatrical over a narrative form hypostatizes the lack of mediation between the two interlocutors: the two approaches are in dialogue and either position stands strong and irreconcilable with the other. This is the original core of De Luca's own discomfort with his work: if translation is tantamount to incarceration, he is at the same time a warden and a prisoner. In his capacity as a guard, he has control over the inmate (the text); in turn, the convict holds him hostage by never letting him go, because translation never ends. There are two ways out of this sentence: first, an incessant revision of one's work, which results in multiple introductions, translations, and apparatuses. Second, a moral commitment to storytelling. In 612 BCE Nineveh would abruptly fall: telling her story becomes a soothing consolation, as Aher himself admits at the end of the dialogue (87).⁴⁴

⁴⁴ If Swennen Ruthenberg is right in maintaining a formal lineage that connects De Luca to Leopardi (see "Dal mare di Giona alle macerie di Babele", note 23), ultimately the spirit that animates De Luca's commitment to Jonah goes back to another prominent figure of Italian literature in the same period. In 1807 Ugo Foscolo wrote a long poem, solemnly entitled *Carne dei Sepolcri*. In the closing section, he imagines Greek poet Homer wandering around the ashes of Troy interrogating the urns of those who perished: "Il sacro vate,/placando quelle afflitte alme col canto,/i Prenci Argivi eternerà per quante/abbraccia terre il gran padre Oceàno" [the sacred bard, soothing those afflicted souls with his song/will make

Indeed, for De Luca the rewriting never stops: translation yields to commentary, and commentary to new narrative and poetic reconfigurations. In the theater piece *L'ultimo viaggio di Sinbad* the Jewish prophet is evoked and merged into the figure of the famous hero of the *Arabian Nights* and that of many other men and women of sea:

Ho scritto [...] di un Sinbad di Mediterraneo, un marinaio più insonne che immortale, coetaneo del mare di Giona, il profeta inghiottito vivo dalla balena, e dal mare degli emigranti italiani del millenovecento, inghiottiti vive dalle Americhe.⁴⁵

[I wrote (...) about a Sinbad of the Mediterranean, a sailor who is more sleepless than he is immortal, who has the same age as the sea of Jonah, the prophet was swallowed alive by the whale and by the same sea of Italian migrants in the twentieth century, they too swallowed alive by the Americas.]

In this piece Sinbad/Jonah has now become – *mala tempora currunt* – a smuggler of migrants, that is nonetheless still capable of empathy. In it, the author recuperates the episode of a mother crying the death of her child at sea (41-2) that he had penned earlier in the collection of poems *Opera sull'acqua*.⁴⁶ Every story hides a crime and every character is a culprit. Just like Aher, we must interrogate them to get to the truth. *Nomen omen*, Aher is Hebrew for both “other” and “after”: a metonymy for us all, the diverse and posthumous tiles of a Mediterranean civilization.⁴⁷

the Greek princes eternal/over all the lands that Ocean, our great father, embraces] (Foscolo, *Opere. Tomo I*, 326-327).

⁴⁵ De Luca, *L'ultimo viaggio*, 3.

⁴⁶ De Luca, *Opera sull'acqua e altre poesie*, 71-75.

⁴⁷ For a different interpretation of the name Aher, see Swennen Ruthenberg, “From Kohelet/Ecclesiastes to Mondedidio”, 21.

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Marisa Mourinha

Universidade de Lisboa

ORCID 0000-0002-5484-268X

marisa.mourinha@campus.ul.pt

Tradutores acidentais, tradutores sobreviventes: dois percursos acidentados, em narrativas de Jonathan Safran Foer e Todd Hasak-Lowy

This article analyses two fictional representations of translators-interpreters in conflict situations: Todd Hasak-Lowy's short story "The Task of This Translator" (2005) and Jonathan Safran Foer's first novel, *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002). Very different, namely in their narrative form, these two works come together in the way they use irony to address dramatic subjects: in Safran Foer, young Alex is enrolled as an interpreter for an American who visits Ukraine in search for his roots; in Hasak-Lowy, a desperate Ben accepts a job he has no qualifications for. In both cases, the interpreter ends up playing a crucial role, enabling a mediation that goes far beyond a strictly linguistic framework. Resorting to theoretical works such as those of Delabastita and Grutman (2005), Kaindl and Spitzl (2014), or Arrojo (2018), on the fictional representation of translators, Baker (2006) on translation and conflict, and Boase-Beier *et al.* (2017), specifically on matters concerning translation and memory, we analyse comparatively these two portrayals, paying close attention to issues relating to the ethics of mediation.

Keywords: Safran Foer; Hasak-Lowy; translation and conflict; translation and memory; ethics of mediation

Este artigo analisa duas representações ficcionais de tradutores-intérpretes em situações de conflito: o conto de Todd Hasak-Lowy "The Task of This Translator" (2005) e o primeiro romance de Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002). Muito diferentes, desde logo na sua forma narrativa, estas duas obras convergem no modo como usam a ironia para abordar assuntos dramáticos: em Safran Foer, o jovem Alex é contratado como intérprete de um norte-americano que visita a Ucrânia à procura das suas raízes; em Hasak-Lowy, um desesperado

Ben aceita um trabalho para o qual não tem qualificações. Em ambos os casos, o intérprete acaba por desempenhar um papel crucial, possibilitando uma mediação que vai muito além do âmbito estritamente linguístico. Recorrendo a trabalhos teóricos como os de Delabastita e Grutman (2005), Kaindl e Spitzl (2014), ou Arrojo (2018), no que diz respeito à representação ficcional de tradutores, de Baker (2006) sobre tradução e conflito e de Boase-Beier *et al.* (2017) especificamente no que concerne tradução e memória, levamos a cabo uma análise comparativa destes dois retratos, dando particular atenção a questões relacionadas com a ética da mediação.

Palavras-chave: Safran Foer; Hasak-Lowy; tradução e conflito; tradução e memória; ética da mediação

Introdução

A propósito da aproximação entre os campos dos Estudos de Tradução e dos Estudos sobre o Holocausto, diziam os organizadores na Introdução do volume colectivo *Translating Holocaust Lives* que um dos momentos mais significativos na articulação entre as duas disciplinas se deu quando a discussão começou a deixar de se limitar aos “escândalos de tradução”, que eclodiram a partir de textos relevantes para os Estudos sobre o Holocausto, para passar a incluir reflexões derivadas de uma concepção de tradução como “an active process of co-creation and cultural mediation.”¹ Estas dimensões de mediação e co-criação, patentes em qualquer processo de tradução, são particularmente pregnantes nos casos de interpretação, pela rapidez que a actividade exige e, por maioria de razão, quando as circunstâncias envolvem conflito e/ou trauma.

Sobre o papel da mediação linguística em cenários de conflito, o trabalho de Mona Baker² foi pioneiro na sua análise da responsabilidade dos tradutores e intérpretes na gestão das narrativas em ambientes de tensão e assimetrias de poder. Até certo ponto sobreponível com o conceito de “discurso” em Foucault ou de “mito” em Barthes, a noção

¹ Boase-Beier *et al.*, *Translating Holocaust Lives*, 3.

² Baker, *Translation and Conflict*.

de “narrativa” usada por Baker abarca não só representações públicas ou colectivas, mas – nas suas palavras – “applies equally to individual stories”,³ e reveste-se de uma dimensão dinâmica que é fulcral para a sua aplicação aos casos que aqui abordamos.

Trata-se de duas ficções contemporâneas em que, por caminhos diversos, uma personagem se vê numa posição de intérprete linguístico para a qual não é formalmente qualificado. Tendo que gerir situações delicadas, envolvendo um conflito passado que se gere no presente, o tradutor tem de se improvisar mediador e se erguer à altura da situação em que inopinadamente se encontra. Ao fazê-lo, contribui decisivamente para o desenrolar da trama narrativa. De um ponto de vista diegético, evolui como personagem; a experiência de tradução funciona como um rito de passagem.

Algumas das recentes movimentações teóricas argumentam que a ficção se encontra numa posição privilegiada para interrogar os objectos de que se ocupa – neste caso, os fenómenos em torno da tradução. Como sugere Rosemary Arrojo, “fictional representations of the work of translators will shine a special, often unexpected light on the scene of translation as an asymmetrical encounter between different languages, interests, and perspectives.”⁴ Na sua opinião, este tipo de texto abre espaço para um questionamento de concepções existentes sobre os temas que usam como objecto, ao mesmo tempo que permite uma abordagem potencialmente mais matizada que outro tipo de registos:

In addition, and perhaps more importantly, these representations are likely to allow some glimpses into what might be lurking behind the prevailing clichés associated with such an encounter and, therefore, into what is often repressed, barely theorized, or even acknowledged by conventional narratives about translators and their practice [...]. In contrast to the usually sober discourse of scholarly studies, fictional texts focusing on issues of translation, authorship, and reading can provide a more nuanced frame of reference as they introduce us to translator characters that oftentimes reveal their inner struggles while facing the ethical conundrums associated with their work and the relationships they are

³ Baker, *Translation and Conflict*, 3.

⁴ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 1.

expected to establish with author and/or reader figures that also have a stake in the process.⁵

É precisamente o que encontramos nas obras que abordaremos: são dois casos em que a interação entre as personagens levanta questões sobre o lugar do tradutor-intérprete. Explorando mitos como o da não-interferência do tradutor, ou o da equação da tradução com *traição*, os autores destas histórias dedicaram-se a narrar de que forma o tradutor interfere, e como a sua intervenção contribui para determinar o curso dos acontecimentos.

As obras

O romance de estreia de Jonathan Safran Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), abre com uma narrativa, na primeira pessoa, de alguém que explica ao leitor como veio a tornar-se o intérprete daquele que diz ser “the hero of this story”,⁶ e que se chama, como o autor, Jonathan Safran Foer. O herói da história é um judeu de Nova Iorque que viaja até à Ucrânia em busca de pistas sobre os seus antepassados: vai especificamente em busca de uma mulher que, julga saber, salvou o seu avô de um *pogrom* pouco antes da guerra. Não dominando a língua, precisa de se servir de um intérprete. A obra de Foer começa, pois, com o relato de como Alex se encontrou na circunstância de desempenhar este papel, para o qual não tem as qualificações mínimas: o seu pai tinha necessidade de contratar um intérprete para a primeira semana de Julho, altura em que é quase impossível encontrar um ucraniano que não esteja de férias. Pensa, por isso, no filho, a quem pergunta que língua estudara naquele ano na escola. Quando Alex lhe explica que havia estudado inglês, o pai inquire sobre a sua competência. Com vista à recompensa que antecipava, Alex exagera a sua capacidade: “I am fluid.”⁷

Tudo isto nos é contado pelo intérprete Alex, no seu inglês risível. O romance de Foer é composto por dois narradores e três registos, se assim se pode dizer: por aquilo que se intui ser a mão de Jonathan, temos

⁵ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 1.

⁶ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 1.

⁷ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 4.

a história dos seus antepassados na aldeia de Trachimbrod; a par desta, e em capítulos que se vão intercalando quer com os da narrativa, quer entre si, encontramos cartas que Alex vai escrevendo a Jonathan, mas também o relato que o intérprete faz da viagem do “herói” à Ucrânia. A prosa do escritor que conta a história de Trachimbrod usa um registo literário; o seu inglês é rico e sofisticado, embora não evite o uso do vernáculo quando a estratégia narrativa o justifica, e exhibe marcas de um fantástico que empresta à narrativa uma dimensão onírica. O inglês do intérprete Alex, pelo contrário, é testemunha e prova da sua inadequação linguística: e isto fica patente desde a primeira página do romance, em que Alex se apresenta nas suas próprias palavras. O primeiro capítulo, que relata justamente o início da aventura, chama-se, sintomaticamente, “An Overture to the Commencement of a Very Rigid Journey”. O inglês de Alex oscila entre o errado, como quando responde ao pai que é “fluid” em vez de “fluent” a falar o idioma, e o deslocado, como o é quase sempre, ou em termos de registo ou de extensão semântica: “duro”, no sentido de “difícil” (“hard”), é quase sempre substituído por “rígido” (“rigid”); em vez de “gastar dinheiro”, Alex “dissemina divisa” (“disseminating currency”); e quando finge dormir, Alex escreve que está a “forjar que repousa” (“counterfeit that I am reposing”),⁸ assim como diz “forjar” ou “falsificar” (“counterfeit”) de cada vez que quer significar “fingir” ou “simular”. Ciente das suas limitações, Alex serve-se de um *thesaurus* que lhe foi oferecido por Jonathan; mas não tem nem conhecimentos nem sensibilidade para seleccionar as soluções mais adequadas.

O conto “The Task of This Translator”, de Todd Hasak-Lowy (2005), começa⁹ por explicar ao leitor como Ben se transforma no intérprete de Goran. Fá-lo, porém, de uma forma convoluta. A narrativa principia por anunciar a “causa subjacente”, sem dizer sequer de quê, dando pistas sobre o movimento perifrástico que ali se inicia: “The underlying cause was Ted’s odd but well-funded entrepreneurial ambition.”¹⁰ As primeiras páginas do conto são dedicadas a enquadrar – com detalhe – a parábola

⁸ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 145.

⁹ Ou começa, no título, por estabelecer uma intertextualidade com o texto quase homónimo de Walter Benjamin.

¹⁰ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 149.

que levou Ben a servir como tradutor de uma língua que mal conhece: é-nos apresentada a personagem de Ted, importante mas instrumental para a trama, de cuja ambição nasce a empresa que haveria de contratar Ben. Paralelamente, vai sendo traçado um retrato do tradutor, que se encontra num estado de desalento e falta de liquidez que justificará as suas acções. Com alguma ironia, o narrador conta na terceira pessoa como foi que Ben acabou a ter aulas de uma língua que o leitor nunca vem a saber qual é:

Ben, our hero, took, in order to fulfill the foreign language requirement, an obscure language. This language is a European language, but seriously Eastern European, entirely marginal in pretty much anyone's genealogy of languages, just barely getting invited to the Indo-European family table. Just barely. Balto maybe, Slavic probably.¹¹

Por uma série de circunstâncias “o nosso herói” vê-se nominalmente habilitado pelas cadeiras que frequentou (por razões primeiro de coração e depois de conveniência) para “traduzir” uma língua que mal entende. A peripécia surge quando um cliente solicita os serviços da agência de Ted para aquilo que deverá ser uma tentativa de reconciliação com os membros da sua família que vivem nos Estados Unidos e não dominam a língua “obscura” em torno da qual roda este conto. À resistência inicial de Ben, Ted contrapõe a compensação monetária. O dinheiro ganha. Ben acede: “This left Ben a bit over two months to (re-?)learn the obscure Language in question.”¹² Lança-se então à tarefa de se preparar para o trabalho de interpretação, de forma obsessiva e desastrada. Até que conhece o cliente, Goran, uma semana antes da data programada para o evento. E descobre que não compreende a maior parte do que ele diz: o seu discurso directo é reproduzido pelo narrador substituindo por “blah” os pontos em que Ben não compreende o que é dito. A mancha gráfica do conto vai apresentando excertos de monólogo (pois de monólogo se trata) cada vez mais longos – e em que a partícula “blah” aparece cada

¹¹ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 151-152.

¹² Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 155.

vez mais frequentemente. O discurso de Goran é fundamentalmente opaco para o seu intérprete, mas o cliente está de tal forma agitado com o drama familiar que acaba de expor que se vai embora sem sequer se aperceber disso.

O tradutor como herói pós-moderno

Servindo-se, em ambos os casos, da figura de um improvisado tradutor-intérprete, claramente sem preparação linguística compatível com a tarefa, estes dois autores apresentam-nos retratos tragicómicos de encontros com a História em que se tentam gerir memórias rasuradas, sentimentos de culpa e conflitos latentes que atravessam nações e gerações. Recuperando o título do ensaio de Jon Thiem, “The Translator as Hero in Postmodern Fiction”, pode dizer-se que o que fazem Hasak-Lowy e Safran Foer é convidar a pensar a gestão do conflito, usando para isso a figura do mediador linguístico – que é, num caso como no outro, o “herói” destas ficções. O facto de Alex se referir a Jonathan como “the hero” tem uma leitura irónica, pois o intérprete coloca-se constantemente como protagonista da sua narrativa: “Alex calls Jonathan the ‘hero’ of his novel. (This may be a trick, as Alex sees himself as a hero of sorts in his desire to achieve friendship with Jonathan by means of his writing).”¹³ Hasak-Lowy, por seu turno, refere-se repetidamente a Ben como “our hero”, numa manobra que, se não deixa de carregar a sua dose de ironia, também vai ao encontro daquilo que é a verdade narrativa do conto, de que Ben é protagonista.

No caso de *Everything Is Illuminated*, Alex tem a função não só de apoiar linguisticamente como de guiar, no terreno, a personagem de Jonathan, à procura das suas raízes numa terra hostil. As histórias do território onde hoje vive Alex e da família de Jonathan cruzam-se num delicado nó de factos que foram ora involuntariamente distorcidos pela memória de quem os viveu, ora deliberadamente escamoteados por quem foi escrevendo a história.

Em “The Task of This Translator”, o que é pedido a Ben é que sirva de tradutor num encontro de família, mas é-lhe dito, desde o início, que se trata de uma tentativa de reconciliação: “Much years ago a difficult

¹³ Feuer, “Almost Friends”, 26.

event happened and took place due to me that now I do not and did not am communicating with this extensive family. From this I suffer much”,¹⁴ escreve Goran na carta que envia à agência de tradução – ou escreve-o alguém por ele, visto que declara, no mesmo momento, não falar inglês (“English but however I speak not”).¹⁵

Estamos, portanto, perante duas narrativas em que duas pessoas, que não têm competência na língua do lugar que visitam, contratam os serviços de intérpretes para tentar, de uma forma ou de outra, reescrever a história familiar. Por razões diferentes, o fio da história de cada uma destas famílias tinha sofrido um corte abrupto. No caso de Jonathan, não só o romance nos dá mais elementos, como o leitor tem a possibilidade de enquadrar a narrativa ficcional que lhe é oferecida no seu próprio quadro de referências sobre acontecimentos históricos como as perseguições a judeus na Europa, a Segunda Guerra Mundial, ou as tentativas de fuga e exílio que daí decorreram, com diferentes graus de sucesso. Na obra de Foer, é-nos dito que a família de Jonathan, originária de Trachimbrod, se radicou nos Estados Unidos, e que a fuga de um seu avô do território ucraniano só foi possível graças à ajuda de uma mulher que aparece numa fotografia que Jonathan tem consigo. A sua viagem tem o objectivo de encontrar esta mulher, que não passa de um nome (Augustine) escrito nas costas de uma velha foto.

No caso do conto de Hasak-Lowy, tudo é bem mais elíptico, e deliberadamente omisso: o cliente Goran fala de um “acontecimento difícil”, mas não oferece mais detalhes, pelo menos quando se exprime em inglês, o que só acontece na sua carta de apresentação. A partir do momento em que Goran entra pessoalmente na história e começa a interagir com Ben, só fala a sua língua inominada – e Ben não compreende a maior parte do que ele diz. Deste modo, o leitor não tem acesso a um relato mais detalhado do acontecimento que motivou que a família se afastasse de Goran. O leitor assiste à reconstituição, por parte do protagonista, da história que provavelmente Goran lhe contou sem que ele a entendesse. Na recepção que Goran organiza para falar à sua família, Ben circula por entre os convidados, mas nada do que vê ou ouve

¹⁴ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 154.

¹⁵ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 154.

lhe dá pistas sólidas até ao momento em que efectivamente interpela uma das parentes do seu cliente: “What the hell is going on here? Who are you people?”.¹⁶ A resposta chega com sibilante acrimónia: “‘Uncle Goran’ she hisses with acidic mockery, ‘is a murderer’. Ben refocuses and does nothing. They stare at one another without understanding. ‘He killed our parents’, she blurts, with all the expression of the lady from 411.”¹⁷

Este curto diálogo tem lugar imediatamente antes de Goran se dispor a falar no púlpito predisposto para o efeito. Ele começa a abordar o assunto que ali os reúne. Embora Goran fale devagar e usando frases curtas, Ben tem dificuldade em traduzir logo à segunda frase. Nunca chegará a fazê-lo pois, enquanto tenta ganhar tempo levando à boca um copo vazio, dois dos parentes dirigem-se ao púlpito e atacam fisicamente Goran. O tradutor não se escusa, e acaba envolvido na luta: “The translator hurries toward his client, tackles the cowboy, who topples over and onto the other two.”¹⁸

Depois do confronto físico, tanto os agressores como os outros membros da família abandonam a sala onde se dava a recepção – com excepção de dois homens, que ficam sozinhos perante Goran e o seu intérprete, com a equipa de *catering* a guardar uma prudente distância. Ainda a sangrar, Goran retoma o discurso. E aqui sucede a viragem: ainda dorido por ter tomado parte na batalha, Ben não tem, agora, a menor dificuldade em traduzir para os sobrinhos de Goran: “‘You won’t tell your children he killed your parents. He did not’, Ben looks at Goran as he says this, his chest swelling as the words come and go effortlessly.”¹⁹

Mas cedo se torna patente que o problema não é linguístico. Ben sente-se agora em condições de verter um código linguístico no outro, mas os dois parentes que permaneceram na sala não estão dispostos a receber a mensagem de Goran. Perante o conflito que se reacende, agora em termos verbais, Ben resolve já não traduzir mas, enfim, mediar noutros termos. Começa por tomar a iniciativa de mandar calar toda a

¹⁶ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 168.

¹⁷ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 168.

¹⁸ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 170.

¹⁹ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 173.

gente, e acaba por conseguir fazer valer uma autoridade que não estava certo de possuir. Pouco depois, quando Goran puxa do livro de cheques para agilizar as negociações, Ben toma a dianteira e põe-se a negociar por ele com os seus sobrinhos. É o intérprete quem acaba por propor a solução que agrada às duas partes: que o pagamento seja feito por parcelas, uma no momento e a outra cinco anos mais tarde, na condição de o seu cliente verificar que os parentes fizeram o que ele pede, ou seja, não o acusarem junto dos seus filhos. A mediação foi tão bem-sucedida que Ben é recontratado, além de muito bem recompensado monetariamente.

Para voltar a Thiem,²⁰ o que o leva a falar do tradutor como herói não é tanto este sucesso no plano da acção que marca a actuação de Ben e, como veremos, também de Alex no romance de Foer, mas mais a forma como uma figura tradicionalmente secundária, pela natureza da sua função subsidiária, se ergue a protagonista na narrativa pós-moderna. Thiem considera que esta novidade se deve a mudanças sofridas no estatuto da tradução e das línguas estrangeiras no equilíbrio das relações culturais contemporâneas, mas também à disponibilidade da sensibilidade pós-moderna para nos interpretar, um pouco a todos, como epígonos:

The second major development that has made the translator such a representative personage is the spread of the feeling that as postmoderns we are epigones. Like the epigone, the translator is a kind of latecomer in the processes of intertextual transformation. The translator's secondary position with respect to the primary text makes him or her a personification of belatedness, and translation itself a model for all forms of belated cultural endeavour. Of course, the very term "postmodern" denotes posteriority.²¹

Thiem levanta uma questão pertinente para esta discussão, que é a da relação entre identidade pessoal e protagonismo: "But the fact remains that translation and heroic activity seem antithetical. The hero is easily

²⁰ Thiem, "The Translator as Hero".

²¹ Thiem, "The Translator as Hero", 209.

recognized as the one who exudes an over-abundance of self.”²² Jean Anderson²³ fala de uma instabilidade identitária; na sua leitura, esta prende-se com a necessidade que o tradutor tem, para o desempenho da sua função, de habitar espaços liminais e se mover constantemente entre dois campos; de ser, como diz Anderson seguindo Durastanti, “agentes duplos”. Tal interpretação da figura do tradutor enfatiza a sua função de mediador e, no mesmo movimento, afasta a tónica da dimensão estritamente linguística: “His task, then, to a certain extent, leads the prospective translator to an expansion beyond linguistic forms and into a deeper cultural and political understanding.”²⁴

É justamente o que se passa com os protagonistas destas ficções: de modo paródico, no conto de Hasak-Lowy, nomeadamente na relação obsessiva que Ben estabelece com o filme que alugou para aprender a língua que deve interpretar; e de forma bem mais dramática no romance de Jonathan Safran Foer, em que o trabalho de intérprete leva Alex e o seu avô, que o acompanha, a confrontarem-se com um contexto e uma história que é também a deles. Neste esforço, porém, que o tradutor faz para aceder ao mundo que é chamado a interpretar, frequentemente é posta em causa a sua própria posição de partida. Em ambas as narrativas, há uma procura da verdade que leva o tradutor a um abismo. Ben, na sua derradeira tentativa de penetrar a língua “obscura” através do filme que alugou, perde-se de si, despersonaliza-se, até deixar de reconhecer o seu próprio cheiro: “The odor is so powerful and foreign, he must look at his image once more in the mirror to verify that this is indeed him and not some rank imposter.”²⁵

Um efeito semelhante se opera no romance de Foer, com a adesão de Alex à busca de Augustine a tornar-se tão forte que a sua vontade se sobrepõe à de Jonathan, quando esta começa a esmorecer. Mas não é Augustine que encontram. E, ao seguir os vestígios que os levariam a desvelar a história da família de Jonathan, Alex acaba por descobrir o papel da sua própria família – do seu avô, ali presente – no massacre que ocorrera na aldeia de Trachimbrod. Esta revelação devastante, que

²² Thiem, “The Translator as Hero”, 207.

²³ Anderson, “The Double Agent”, 171.

²⁴ Apostolou, “Walter Benjamin Revisited”, 79.

²⁵ Hasak-Lowy, “The Task of This Translator”, 162.

Alex tenta digerir como pode, retrata, e aqui de uma forma radical, a alienação que a tradução implica. Como reflecte Carol Jacobs, “[f]or Benjamin, translation does not transform a foreign language into one we may call our own, but rather renders radically foreign that language we believe to be ours.”²⁶

Traduzir o silêncio

No seu ensaio sobre o romance de Foer, Francisco Collado-Rodriguez²⁷ argumenta que o uso que o autor faz das duas vozes narrativas e dos respectivos registos, contrastantes entre si, contribui para proporcionar a reflexão ética que, na sua opinião, esta obra favorece. Entre os dispositivos literários a que recorre o autor, destaca-se este, cujo efeito vai ampliando a sua dimensão à medida que a narrativa evolui.

Como já vimos, o romance abre com a voz de Alex, que se apresenta ao leitor exibindo não só o seu inglês como a sua visão do mundo: ingénua, limitada e perpassada por preconceitos. O inglês de Alex (“not so premium”²⁸) provoca imediatamente no leitor um efeito cómico. Esse efeito, porém, não logrará manter-se ao longo de toda a sua intervenção no livro. À medida que a história avança, e que os relatos e cartas de Alex se vão intercalando com a narrativa mítico-mágica da fundação de Trachimbrod, vai ficando progressivamente mais visível a realidade de um e de outro, cliente e intérprete, norte-americano e ucraniano, judeu e gentio, e vai sendo posta a nu a fundamental assimetria entre eles.

Alex cresceu na Ucrânia com o mito do sonho americano (“that ennobled country America”²⁹), e um forte preconceito anti-semita: “I had the opinion that Jewish people were having shit between their brains. This is because all I knew of Jewish people was that they paid Father very much currency in order to make vacations from America to Ukraine.”³⁰ Tem, ou finge ter, uma alta opinião da sua pessoa: “I am a very premium person to be with. I am homely, and also severely funny,

²⁶ Jacobs, “The Monstrosity of Translation”, 756.

²⁷ Collado-Rodriguez, “Ethics in the Second Degree”.

²⁸ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 23.

²⁹ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 3.

³⁰ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 3.

and these are winning things.”³¹ No entanto, a sua viagem com Jonathan vem iluminar-lhe uma série de aspectos – em primeiro lugar, sobre o mundo de origem do “herói” americano; mas, num segundo momento, e é esse o nó dramático da obra, também sobre o seu próprio mundo.

Como diz Steven G. Kellman, “[e]very language is, according to Frederic Jameson’s metaphor, borrowed from Friedrich Nietzsche, a prison-house (Jameson), but the native language is probably the most constraining facility.”³² Nesse sentido, Alex, que começa o romance de Foer enclausurado nos limites da sua língua e, sobretudo, da narrativa que lhe foi proposta até então, acaba por, através deste exercício de bilinguismo e, naturalmente, dos contactos que ele proporciona, evadir-se da sua zona de conforto – para, porém, aceder ao conhecimento trágico sobre a participação da sua própria família nos massacres ocorridos na zona. Feuer refere que: “Broadly stated, Foer’s novel begins with a contemporary blend of the comic mode and one of its derivations, the quest Romance”,³³ mas não seria inexacto descrevê-lo como o *Bildungsroman* da personagem de Alex.

Delabastita e Grutman comentam, sobre a figura do tradutor, “the enormous power and responsibility they have in multilingual communication. The survival of a text, the success of a business deal, the future of a refugee, even human lives may depend on how translation is handled”,³⁴ comentário que se aplica com especial intensidade às situações retratadas nas duas ficções de que aqui nos ocupamos. E continuam: “We would venture the hypothesis that the translator’s power can be assessed in terms of two variables: the importance of the message that is to be communicated, and the distance between the cultures which enter into communication via the translator.”³⁵ Desse ponto de vista, pode dizer-se que o poder – e a responsabilidade – de Alex, enquanto tradutor de Jonathan, vai aumentando. Cresce a par da sua consciência, por um lado, do que está em causa na *demanda* que

³¹ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 2.

³² Kellman, *Nimble Tongues*, 145.

³³ Feuer, “Almost Friends”, 25.

³⁴ Delabastita e Grutman, “Introduction”, 19.

³⁵ “Introduction”, 19.

empreendem em conjunto (a importância da mensagem); e, por outro lado, também da distância que, afinal, separa os dois homens.

Na sua extensão, mais curta, o conto de Hasak-Lowy aborda aquilo que se adivinha ser um genocídio, num registo que nunca abandona a ironia, resvalando frequentemente para o grotesco. O romance de Foer, com outro ritmo, tem tempo de ir do cómico ao trágico. Os dois protagonistas são da mesma idade. Se Jonathan vai à procura das suas raízes e tenta reconstruir a história da sua família na Ucrânia, é Alex quem acaba por ter mais sucesso nessa busca, que não sabia sequer estar a empreender.

Alex é recrutado como tradutor, mas o seu avô era o motorista de serviço. Sem o fascínio da América, e sem a inocência que é ainda apanágio de Alex, o avô encarna o antagonista do nosso herói Jonathan. Contrariado desde o início, e sem o menor respeito pelo cliente ou pelas suas preocupações e necessidades, expressa-se sempre só na sua língua, e em termos tão inapropriados que o neto se vê obrigado, desde o primeiro momento, a servir de mediador entre motorista e cliente. O avô e o jovem americano encarnam, respectivamente, as figuras arquetípicas do colaboracionista e do descendente de sobreviventes, mas Alex não tem consciência disto. Limita-se a gerir, o melhor que pode, a agressividade do avô perante o cliente, mentindo sem hesitar, e com intenso efeito cómico, ao traduzir as suas intervenções.

Dá-se, porém, um volte-face, que levará Alex a escrever, mais tarde, numa carta a Jonathan, “Grandfather has not been healthful. [...] As you know, he was very defeated about Augustine, more than even you or I were defeated.”³⁶ Não é rigorosamente verdade. O que se passou com o avô não foi tanto que lhe pesou não terem encontrado a mulher da fotografia. A pessoa que encontraram acaba, com a sua intervenção, por levar o avô de Alex a confessar o seu próprio papel nos massacres; ao fazê-lo, foi obrigado a confrontar a sua própria consciência. É um confronto de que não sairá vivo: o avô suicida-se antes de o livro chegar ao fim.

Os três nunca encontram Augustine ou Trachimbrod, mas chegam a falar com uma sobrevivente. Depois de circularem por horas, e

³⁶ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 25.

inquirirem junto de quem encontram, sem nenhum resultado, é o avô quem aponta uma figura humana junto de uma casa. Jonathan, entretanto, adormecera no carro. Sem muita convicção, Alex aproxima-se da casa e aborda a velha senhora, que se mostra extremamente gentil mas diz nunca ter ouvido falar de Trachimbrod. Alex já se despedira, e preparava-se para partir quando se recorda que tinha consigo uma das muitas cópias que Jonathan fizera da fotografia em que o seu avô aparece com Augustine, entre outras pessoas: “Then I remembered that I had taken the photograph of Augustine, and although I do not know what it was that coerced me to feel that I should, I rotated back around and displayed the photograph to the woman.”³⁷ A pergunta que lhe dirige será repetida vezes sem conta: “Have you ever witnessed anyone in this photograph?”. A mulher responde que não. Mas o tradutor, sem saber porquê, sente que deve insistir. E de novo recebe a mesma resposta, “although this second no did not seem like a parrot, but like a different variety of no.”³⁸ Pelo que se segue a mesma pergunta, uma terceira vez. E a mesma resposta: ““No”, she said again, and this seemed like a third variety of no.”³⁹

Este momento tópico do livro e este diálogo hipnótico entre Jonathan e a mulher de cabelo branco continua por mais uma página inteira. Rigorosamente as mesmas palavras, mas, a cada “Não”, a sua interlocutora transmite a Alex qualquer coisa de novo. Alex coloca-lhe nas mãos a fotografia. Ao nono “Não”, Alex vê uma lágrima cair. E insiste:

“Have you ever witnessed anyone in the photograph?” I inquired, and I felt cruel, I felt like an awful person, but I was certain that I was performing the right thing.
“No,” she said, “I have not. They all look like strangers.”
I periled everything.
“Has anyone in this photograph ever witnessed you?”
Another tear descended.
“I have been waiting for you for so long.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 117.

³⁸ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 117.

³⁹ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 118.

⁴⁰ Foer, *Everything Is Illuminated*, 118.

Amy Hungerford⁴¹ comenta o papel, neste clímax da narrativa, do mecanismo do testemunho, crucial no contexto. Cedo se torna claro que esta mulher, que os convida a entrar e lhes prepara uma refeição, não é Augustine, embora reconheça o avô de Jonathan na fotografia. Possui uma caixa, marcada com a etiqueta “Remains”, onde guarda fotografias e objectos vários, que são tudo o que restou da aldeia agora extinta de Trachimbrod. Esses objectos desempenham a função de testemunho, e a mulher (a que todos chamarão sempre Augustine) entrega a Jonathan a caixa. Guardara-a por isso, para poder um dia passar o testemunho.

Philippe Codde, a propósito deste romance e da transmissão intergeracional do trauma, recupera o conceito de pós-memória, tal como o propõe Marianne Hirsch,⁴² “a term originally designed to describe the mnemonic activity of the second generation, but which is even more germane to the emotional and intellectual project of the third generation.”⁴³ Tanto Alex quanto Jonathan fazem parte desta terceira geração – mas Alex não o sabe.

A tarefa destes tradutores

O conto de Hasak-Lowy, assim como o livro em que está incluído, tem como título aquilo que é uma referência a um texto que se tornou fundamental para as teorias contemporâneas sobre tradução: “Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers”, de Walter Benjamin, que começou por ser publicado em 1923 como prefácio a uma tradução de Baudelaire, e teve uma notável *sobrevida* especialmente através da tradução para inglês de Harry Zohn de 1968.⁴⁴ O ensaio de Benjamin argumenta no sentido de aproximar o processo de tradução do esforço hermenêutico e, assim, de iluminar aspectos da obra que podem não ser visíveis no texto de partida.

⁴¹ Hungerford, “How Jonathan Safran Foer Made Love”, 614.

⁴² Pós-memória seria uma memória baseada não na experiência vivida na primeira pessoa, mas passada de geração em geração pelos sobreviventes de eventos traumáticos.

⁴³ Codde, “Transmitted Holocaust Trauma”, 64.

⁴⁴ Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”.

Ao escolher uma expressão que segue muito de perto o título de Benjamin, Hasak-Lowy está a dialogar com esta tradição. Apostolou⁴⁵ comenta como a proximidade entre os dois títulos fomenta a ambiguidade, de tal forma é imperceptível a diferença entre ambos.

As recepções contemporâneas do texto de Benjamin foram também muito moduladas pela leitura que dele fez Derrida.⁴⁶ No seu ensaio, Derrida glosa em torno das múltiplas dimensões lexicais do título de Benjamin, em que “Aufgabe”, habitualmente traduzido por “tarefa” (“task” em inglês, “tâche” em francês), remete para o sentido de “incumbência” (“Aufgabe, le devoir, la mission, la tâche, le problème, ce qui est assigné, donné à faire, donné à rendre”⁴⁷), mas evoca também o significado de “renúncia” ou “desistência”, conotado em particular através da forma verbal “aufgeben” (“Quant à aufgeben, c’est aussi donner, expédier [émission, mission] et abandonner”⁴⁸).

Para Derrida, Benjamin refere-se à figura do tradutor e não ao processo de tradução:

Benjamin ne dit pas la tâche ou le problème de la traduction. Il nomme le sujet de la traduction comme sujet endetté, obligé par un devoir, déjà en situation d’héritier, inscrit comme survivant dans une généalogie, comme survivant ou agent de survie. La survie des oeuvres, non pas des auteurs. Peut-être la survie des noms d’auteurs et des signatures, mais non des auteurs.⁴⁹

Este foco no sujeito que traduz vai muito ao encontro da narrativa de Hasak-Lowy, em que a tarefa que lhe é dada pesa sobre o intérprete com especial força. Mas há outras linhas de convergência, como a que Derrida esboça na citação acima, e que é um tema recorrente na sua leitura: a do tradutor como herdeiro, como sobrevivente – e como escritor da história. No texto de Benjamin, muito ancorado na tradução da obra literária, o tradutor aparece como criador, ou co-criador da vida da obra, da sua vida futura e/ou póstuma (em alemão, respectivamente

⁴⁵ Apostolou, “Walter Benjamin Revisited”, 70.

⁴⁶ Derrida, “Des tours de Babel”.

⁴⁷ Derrida, “Des tours de Babel”, 211-212.

⁴⁸ Derrida, “Des tours de Babel”, 212.

⁴⁹ Derrida, “Des tours de Babel”, 214.

“Fortleben” e “Überleben”; a tradução francesa usa “survie”). No conto que aqui analisamos, a *sobrevida* em questão liga-se menos com o âmbito textual e mais com outra dimensão também presente no ensaio de Benjamin: há uma metáfora seminal, que é muito explorada também por Derrida (o texto de Derrida começa aliás por evocar o mito e a linhagem de Babel), que faz sentido chamar aqui à colação. A tradução é apresentada por Benjamin como carregando em si o germe (“Keimen”) de uma linguagem pura, e a tarefa do tradutor seria justamente a de fazer germinar essas sementes (“den Samen reiner Sprache zur Reife zu bringen”, literalmente “fazer amadurecer a semente da linguagem pura”).

Neste conto, assim como no romance de Foer, a mediação que é pedida aos intérpretes não é entre a obra original e a linhagem engendrada pelas suas traduções, ou entre o autor de um texto escrito e o seu leitor. Ben e Alex são convocados não a transportar um texto, num movimento hermenêutico, mas a co-criar uma narrativa, no sentido em que a entende Baker,⁵⁰ e num movimento dialéctico. Mais do que *sobrevida*, no sentido hermenêutico que Benjamin lhe dá, estes intérpretes têm por tarefa reatar os laços de uma linhagem que, como a de Babel, havia sido interrompida. Goran precisa da ajuda de Ben para comunicar com a sua família, e Jonathan da de Alex para estabelecer contacto com quem quer que se vá encontrando no seu périplo pela Ucrânia em busca de Augustine. O papel dos intérpretes, nestas narrativas, consiste em proporcionar a ligação de uma geração com outra, por forma a reatar o fio da linhagem. A sua condição de estrangeiros não só não constitui obstáculo, como parece ser condição de possibilidade do papel que assumem.

Considerações finais

As paródias pós-modernas propostas por estes dois autores trazem para o território da interpretação e da mediação linguística as problemáticas em torno das questões de trauma, conflito, memória e pós-memória e, num dos casos, pelo menos, o Holocausto. Nestes projectos narrativos, o mediador linguístico vê-se obrigado a mediar

⁵⁰ Baker, *Translation and Conflict*.

conflitos latentes no presente, herdados de um passado de violência imperfeitamente resolvido.

Trata-se de dois casos em que a ficção constitui um veículo para abordar as questões da memória e do testemunho – de forma mais dramática no romance de Foer, em que se tenta reconstruir a história a partir do testemunho de uma mulher que, afinal, nunca se encontra; e num registo mais mordaz no conto de Hasak-Lowy, em que o cliente acaba por comprar o seu direito à “verdade” junto dos seus interlocutores.

A um outro nível, porém, poderá dizer-se também que se propõe uma reflexão sobre a indizibilidade ou, por outras palavras, a inadequação da linguagem – de qualquer linguagem verbal – à “tradução” de dramas humanos como o do genocídio insinuado em Hasak-Lowy ou o do Holocausto em Foer. Esta indizibilidade encontra-se materializada, no primeiro caso, na radical incompreensão do intérprete Ben, que resulta na quantidade de lacunas que o leitor encontra na sua tradução mental, como narrador, dos discursos do seu cliente; mas também, de forma menos paródica e mais firmemente alegórica, na mudez da irmã de Goran, única sobrevivente, e falante da língua “obscura” das suas origens comuns, mas silenciada por um acontecimento que Ben não consegue traduzir para o leitor. No caso do romance de Foer, a indizibilidade concretiza-se nos silêncios que se tornam cada vez mais frequentes nas interações do intérprete Alex com a sobrevivente que este entrevista e, mais dramaticamente, no momento em que Jonathan, horrorizado com o relato detalhado do dia do massacre em Trachimbrod, pede a Alex que pare de traduzir.

Nestes dois textos, mais que a competência linguística dos intérpretes (manifestamente inexistente), ganham peso e importância narrativa a relação que se estabelece entre o mediador e o mediado. Deste ponto de vista, a tarefa da tradução aparece como uma parte fundamental do processo de negociação da história e da construção de uma narrativa comum, a partir das vivências e histórias individuais, ao mesmo tempo que o tradutor-intérprete se constitui como agente, e agente privilegiado, desta mediação. A posição que este mediador ocupa na gestão das dissidências revela, por um lado, o poder que lhe advém desse papel que desempenha. Mas, por outro lado, desempenhá-lo é também *empoderador*: o caminho que ele percorre nestas narrativas,

apesar de doloroso, faz dele (como na leitura de Derrida) herdeiro, sobrevivente e escritor da história.

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Adriana Costa

Universidade do Minho
ORCID 0000-0002-1698-0862
adricosta24@gmail.com

É possível traduzir a liberdade? O processo de tradução e a questão da identidade anticolonial em *Wilhelm Tell in Manila* (2016), de Annette Hug

Wilhelm Tell in Manila by Annette Hug (2016) constitutes a fictional narrative about a process of literary translation (transfiction). The act of creative rewriting gives rise to the construction of a new text that emerges from the encounter between Schiller's German language in *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), the minority language (Tagalog) in *Guillermo Tell* (1907) by the Filipino translator José Rizal, and the Swiss author/translator's retroversion (2016). This configuration assumes the starting point of Hug's metafictional narrative. Its main thread is represented by the construction of the protagonist's cultural identity, fictionalizing the historical personality of José Rizal. His growing anti-colonialist thinking manifests itself in the combination of concepts such as freedom and independence identified by Hug as central to the *Skopos* of the translation. By using the fictional representation of a translation process, in this specific case based on the author's back-translation, it is possible to highlight the linguistic, identity, and cultural transformations that constitute the act of translation, which lead to the creation of a new text, offering us a new perspective on the function of literary translation and, consequently, on the translator as a mediating figure.

Keywords: anticolonialism; identity; freedom; translation; transfiction; transculturalism

Wilhelm Tell in Manila de Annette Hug (2016) constitui uma narrativa ficcional sobre um processo de tradução literária (tradu-ficção). O ato de reescrita criativa dá origem à construção de um novo texto que surge do encontro entre a língua alemã de Schiller em *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), o idioma minoritário tagalo do tradutor filipino José Rizal, em *Guillermo Tell* (1907), e a retroversão da

autora/tradutora suíça (2016). Esta configuração assume o ponto de partida da narrativa metaficcional de Hug, cujo fio condutor é representado pela construção da identidade cultural do protagonista, ficcionalizando a personalidade histórica de José Rizal. O seu crescente pensamento anticolonialista manifesta-se na articulação de conceitos como liberdade e independência, identificados por Hug como centrais no *skopos* da tradução. Com o recurso à representação ficcional de um processo de tradução, neste caso específico baseado na retroversão da autora, é possível colocar em evidência as transformações linguísticas, identitárias e culturais, constituintes do ato de tradução, que levam à criação de um novo texto, oferecendo-nos um renovado olhar sobre a função da tradução literária e, consequentemente, sobre o/a tradutor(a) como figura mediadora.

Palavras-chave: anticolonialismo; identidade; liberdade; tradução; tradu-ficção; transculturalidade

Introdução

Embora ainda jovem, a história dos estudos de tradução caracteriza-se por constantes momentos de inovação, transformação e adaptação, desde o seu surgimento em meados do século XX, altura em que se centrava em abordagens puramente linguísticas, até às mais recentes interpretações culturalmente orientadas. Por conseguinte, não é de estranhar que, nas duas últimas décadas, um novo fenómeno tenha conquistado uma crescente atenção no seio desta área disciplinar: o estudo sobre o recurso à representação ficcional de processos de tradução e/ou à figura do/a tradutor(a) (e, naturalmente, do/a intérprete) como motivo na literatura, na arte e no cinema. Com o seu romance *Wilhelm Tell in Manila* (2016), Annette Hug junta-se ao grupo de autores cujo recurso à “tradução narrada”¹ propicia um melhor entendimento sobre a função e o poder da tradução e do/a tradutor(a) na história da literatura e da cultura,² inserindo-se assim na nova corrente dos estudos de tradução cunhada por Else Vieira de *fictional turn*.³ Em Klaus Kaindl⁴

¹ Hagedorn, *La traducción narrada*.

² Neilly, “German Romanticism as Translational World Literature”.

³ Vieira, “(In)visibilidades na tradução”.

⁴ Kaindl, “Going Fictional!”.

encontramos o termo para este procedimento narratológico – *transfiction* –, designação que optamos por adaptar para a língua portuguesa através do termo *portmanteau* tradu-ficção, usando-o doravante.

Todavia, ao contrário de muitos outros autores de tradu-ficções,⁵ Hug não recorre a uma pseudotradução, isto é, não assenta a sua narrativa numa tradução apócrifa, ou manuscrito fictício, redigido noutra língua.⁶ A personagem histórica José Rizal procedeu, de facto, à tradução de *Wilhelm Tell* (1804), pelo que nos encontramos perante um caso muito específico de tradução narrada, centrada justamente na representação ficcional do processo da tradução factual, subjacente à origem do texto *Guillermo Tell* (1907). É neste sentido que Hug transforma Rizal numa personagem-tradutor⁷ do seu romance, ficcionalizando as suas vivências, experiências e reflexões durante a sua estadia na Alemanha em finais do século XIX. Esta especificidade é ainda reforçada pelo facto de a autora ter assumido o papel de tradutora ao proceder à retroversão de *Guillermo Tell* para melhor entender o processo de tradução levado a cabo por Rizal, criando assim uma “metaficção historiográfica”⁸ muito peculiar.

Partindo desta particularidade pouco encontrada no panorama literário, olhar-se-á para a tradução à luz da sua representação ficcional, tendo em conta que o *corpus* analisado é composto por um conjunto tripartido de intervenientes: (1) o texto de partida de Friedrich Schiller, produzido no rescaldo da Revolução Francesa, no seio de uma Alemanha em conflito político; (2) o texto de chegada, escrito pelo filipino Rizal no final do século XIX, com recurso a uma língua minoritária, sob as condições repressivas do colonialismo espanhol; e (3) a retroversão da autora suíça, produzida a partir da perspectiva do século XXI. Esta rede intertextual muito específica é referida por Hug numa entrevista concedida ao jornal suíço *Die Wochenzeitung*, para explicar como veio

⁵ Apenas a título de exemplo podemos referir obras como: Calvino, *Se numa noite de Inverno um viajante*; Couto, *O Último voo do flamingo*; Vargas Ilosa, *Travessuras da menina má*; Lessing, *O Verão antes da queda*; Neuman, *O Viajante do século*; Mercier, *O Comboio nocturno para Lisboa*.

⁶ Hagedorn, *La traducción narrada*, 148.

⁷ Delisle, “Les traducteurs de papier”.

⁸ Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*.

dar origem a várias questões tradutórias que a ajudaram a moldar o imaginário com que construiu a sua narrativa:

Rizal ist in einem Gespräch mit Schiller. Meine Idee war, dass ich in das Gespräch eintrete und mit Rizal über Schiller rede. So bleibt eine gewisse Distanz zwischen mir und Rizal. Meine Hauptarbeit war also, Rizals Übersetzungsarbeit nachzuvollziehen. Ich habe seine Übersetzung des “Wilhelm Tell” vom Tagalog ins Deutsche rückübersetzt. Das Ergebnis habe ich dann mit Schillers Original verglichen und geschaut, wo es Unterschiede gibt. Das war quasi meine Maschine, die mir Fragen generiert hat. [...] Und aus diesen Fragen ist mein Bild des Intellektuellen Rizal entstanden.⁹

No sentido de evidenciar o papel (trans)formador inerente ao ato de traduzir, pretende desconstruir-se a rede de interligações e diálogos, criada por Hug, em que se atravessam séculos e continentes e se cruzam línguas, culturas e ideologias, para refletir sobre o papel e a função do/a tradutor(a), o *corpus* e a sua respetiva receção.

Visibilidade

O pensamento liberal do protagonista Rizal transporta-o numa viagem para longe do arquipélago filipino até à Europa de final do século XIX – o contexto geográfico, político e histórico intencionalmente escolhido pela autora como pano de fundo para o seu relato biográfico sobre o processo de tradução da obra schilleriana:

Der Ausschnitt, den man wählt, um etwas anzuschauen, ist extrem wichtig. Es ist ein grosser Unterschied, ob ich die Geschichte des Schweizer Bundesstaats im

⁹ Hug, ““Es war euphorisierend...””. “Rizal encontra-se num diálogo com Schiller. A minha ideia era entrar nesse diálogo, para falar com Rizal sobre Schiller. Desta forma, mantém-se uma certa distância entre mim e Rizal. O meu trabalho principal consistiu em compreender o trabalho de tradução de Rizal para proceder à retroversão da sua tradução de *Wilhelm Tell* de tagalo para alemão. Depois, comparei o resultado com o original de Schiller para verificar as diferenças. Essa foi, para assim dizer, a minha máquina geradora de questões. [...] E com base nessas questões, surgiu a minha imagem do intelectual Rizal.” Todas as traduções de alemão para português são da nossa autoria.

Ausschnitt Zürich–Bern–Genf–Lugano–Urschweiz sehe oder in einem Netz aus Zürich, Leipzig, Manila, Madrid, Santo Domingo, Paris.¹⁰

Ao situar a sua narrativa nesta multiplicidade de espaços, Hug constrói uma rede de contactos e interseções oferecendo visibilidade à permanente influência de idiomas, pessoas e culturas sobre Rizal. A partir daqui Hug procede a uma leitura empática, embora distanciada da evolução da identidade cultural do seu protagonista, no sentido de um processo de produção de identidade como o define Stuart Hall.¹¹ Ao percecionar a sua própria *transculturalidade interior* através da *transculturalidade externa*¹² a que está exposto, Rizal situa-se num espaço de intersecção entre culturas cunhado por Homi Bhabha como *Third Space*:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory – where I have led you – may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is the “inter” – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.¹³

É neste espaço híbrido onde Rizal e, simultaneamente, Hug produzem as suas traduções: um lugar que permite uma reescrita à luz de um novo olhar para uma nova cultura de chegada, conforme

¹⁰ Hug, ““Es war euphorisierend...””. “O excerto que se escolhe para observar é de extrema importância. É muito diferente ver a história do estado suíço a partir do espaço Zurique-Berna-Genebra-Lugano-Suíça antiga, ou numa rede entre Zurique, Leipzig, Manila, Madrid, Santo Domingo, Paris.”

¹¹ “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’ which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, 222).

¹² Welsch, “Was ist eigentlich Transkulturalität?”.

¹³ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 38.

podemos ilustrar na imagem criada no seguinte excerto: “Beim Lesen schieben sich die Landschaften in einander und alles geschieht gleichzeitig. Zwei neue Handelsrouten werden erschlossen” (11).¹⁴ Esta sobreposição de paisagens representa metaforicamente as realidades nas quais o/a tradutor(a) se movimenta durante a tradução, criando uma intersecção onde reformula a sua identidade que resulta na criação de um texto novo, visível nas suas opções linguísticas. É assim que Hug expõe, de forma analógica, a luta pela independência suíça do poder de Habsburgo, projetada por Schiller na luta alemã contra as ocupações napoleónicas, e, por outro, a luta filipina pela independência do poder colonial espanhol. Seguindo este raciocínio, a tradução de Hug evidencia as realidades subjacentes à sua produção – se Rizal viajou pelas palavras de Schiller até à Europa do século XIV, ficando a conhecer o significado de uma luta revolucionária e antifeudal, narrada em território alemão, a autora imerge no texto em tagalo para entender a revolta anticolonial filipina de final do século XIX que o tradutor fez transparecer na sua tradução. Todavia, no caso de Hug, a perspectiva resulta de uma função dupla, nomeadamente do facto de Hug assumir o papel de tradutora-autora. Para além das opções tradutórias salientadas por Hug na sua narrativa sobre o texto produzido por Rizal, são igualmente importantes os diferentes interlúdios incorporados no texto, que servem para contextualizar ou relatar incidentes e circunstâncias que vêm complementar o poder informativo e documentador da sua tradução.¹⁵ Nestes breves intervalos desvenda-se uma parte essencial do trabalho de tradução, nomeadamente as pesquisas feitas a nível extratextual, mais especificamente, com base na correspondência e nos diários de Rizal. Assim sendo, são feitas referências, por exemplo, às obras de Adelbert von Chamisso ou Wilhelm von Humboldt (30) sobre

¹⁴ “Ao ler, as paisagens deslocam-se e fundem-se, e tudo acontece ao mesmo tempo. Abrem-se duas novas rotas comerciais.” Doravante todas as citações de Hug, *Wilhelm Tell in Manila*, são identificadas através da inclusão do número de página no corpo do texto.

¹⁵ Neste caso, é de referir a correspondência de Rizal, em particular, com o professor Ferdinand Blumentritt, assim como a dissertação *Translation and Revolution. A Study of José Rizal's Translation of Friedrich Schiller's Wilhelm Tell*, de Ramón Guillermo (2009).

o dialeto tagalo que Rizal consultou durante o seu processo de tradução. Com base nestas digressões Hug consegue ainda conferir outro aspeto fundamental à tradu-ficção, nomeadamente o seu potencial teórico-didático, um aspeto amplamente estudado por Rosemary Arrojo¹⁶ em relação à tradução ficcional.¹⁷ Assim, tal como no texto de partida, a liberdade e a independência formam o *Skopos*¹⁸ da tradução de Rizal; porém, a realidade ideológica de Schiller é naturalmente adaptada por Rizal ao contexto ideológico em que ele se encontra durante o processo de tradução. Ao salientar este aspeto na sua narrativa, Hug ilustra como cada tradutor(a) molda a sua tradução às especificidades que o/a caracterizam: a procura e a luta pela igualdade de direitos no contexto de uma Suíça feudal assumem uma nova forma, visíveis nas escolhas linguísticas de Rizal, e estas são novamente interpretadas através da lente de Hug.

Em Ying Xiao encontramos um caso semelhante, nomeadamente no que se refere à tradução da peça shakespeariana *Hamlet* para a língua chinesa numa adaptação fílmica baseada na versão norte-americana de Laurence Olivier:

In this perspective, the Chinese translation of Olivier's *Hamlet* is a vantage point from which one can shed light on the sociopolitical meanings and identity of the translators/actors. Sun Daolin becomes an important social agent in his interpretation and dubbing of *Hamlet*, informed at once by a fundamental parallel as well as a contradiction between manifold texts; between on-screen personality and off-screen lifestyle, individual and collective, private and public, and the self and the other.¹⁹

É neste sentido que procuramos entender o processo de tradução descrito por Hug, considerando a influência que uma tradução literária pode assumir na identidade do/a tradutor(a), e vice-versa, e ao mesmo tempo numa determinada cultura de chegada. O trabalho de tradução a que Rizal se propõe vem no seguimento da sugestão de seu irmão,

¹⁶ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*.

¹⁷ A este respeito veja-se: Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*.

¹⁸ Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action".

¹⁹ Xiao, "In Search of a Chinese Hamlet", 14.

Paciano, que curiosamente se encontra a traduzir uma outra obra dramática de Schiller – *Maria Stuart*. Hug revela como Paciano vai incentivando o trabalho do irmão, assumindo o papel de revisor, ponderando e prevendo o impacto da tradução na cultura de chegada. Esta interferência propositada leva-nos de volta ao *Skopos*²⁰ da tradução de Rizal, à inserção de uma mensagem anticolonial, contra o poder espanhol, no texto de chegada, por vezes expressa diretamente, quando fala claramente de insurreição, da união de um povo livre, ao recorrer a conceitos como “tráfico de escravos”:

Rizal legt ihm zweimal Worte in den Mund, die sich dem Sklavenhandel entlehnen. Guillermo habe sich freigekauft, als er den Apfel traf, sagt der Steinhäusler, er sei jetzt kein Sklave mehr, sondern ein Freigelassener, dem Sultan entkommen. (103)²¹

Outras vezes é expressa mais subtilmente, fazendo uma escolha de palavras cuja mensagem apenas será perceptível no seio da cultura de chegada: “Und lass mir die komplizierten Verben, bittet er den Bruder, sie seien mit Bedacht gewählt” (34).²² Estas escolhas de verbos intencionadas refletem uma clara e reconhecível intervenção do/a tradutor(a) no texto de partida tendo em conta que, “[b]ecause translation is a double writing, a rewriting of the foreign text according to domestic cultural values, any translation requires a double reading – as both communication and inscription”.²³ Desta forma, o processo de tradução de Rizal é acompanhado pela vontade crescente por justiça e liberdade na sua pátria, visível, por exemplo, na tradução da palavra *Wahrheit* [verdade] como *totoo*:

²⁰ Vermeer, “Skopos and Commission in Translational Action”.

²¹ “Por duas vezes Rizal fá-lo proferir palavras ligadas ao tráfico de escravos, pois, ao acertar na maçã, Guillermo comprara a sua liberdade, diz Steinhäusler, e agora já não seria mais um escravo, mas sim um liberto, que escapou ao sultão.”

²² “E mantém os verbos complicados, pedia ela ao irmão, pois foram escolhidos intencionalmente.”

²³ Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*, 312.

Wenn Tell in Kalamba auf die Bühne tritt, werden die Spanier in der ersten Reihe nicht verstehen, was mit dem *totoo* passiert, wo die Wahrheit herkommt, wie sie sich verbreitet und laut wird, [...] Tell kann dafür sorgen, dass die anderen die Wahrheit erkennen. (35)²⁴

A narrativa de Hug revela nesta passagem o poder inerente ao tradutor. Ao afirmar que Tell tem o poder de dar a conhecer a verdade, alude à referida existência do *terceiro espaço*²⁵ ou *terceira língua*,²⁶ o espaço por excelência do/a tradutor(a) que lhe confere a autonomia necessária para fundamentar identidade cultural e consagrar o seu cunho pessoal na ação tradutória.

(In)traduzibilidade

Para o seu texto de chegada Rizal escolhe deliberadamente a sua língua materna, tagalo, uma língua minoritária, em vez da língua oficial da sua terra natal, o espanhol, criando uma interação entre duas realidades, um entrelaçamento cultural²⁷ a que Hug dá vida, gerando imagens que ela própria certamente viu surgir ao proceder à retroversão: “Wenn Rizal übersetzt und der Wald zum *gubat* wird, der Himmel ein *langit*, dann wird der Makiling zum Vorposten eines felsigen Gebirges, tagalische Alpen erheben sich am Rand des Pazifiks” (11).²⁸ Esta justaposição de termos em tagalo e alemão reflete o trabalho de apropriação linguística e identitária que Hug procura narrar na sua obra. Assim, inicia a descrição deste processo de transferência e reescrita com a referência às dificuldades, isto é, às intraduzibilidades que, a seu ver, poderiam ter constituído obstáculos ao tradutor Rizal. Hug consegue precisamente

²⁴ “Quando Tell subir ao palco em Kalamba, os espanhóis na fila da frente não entenderão o que está a acontecer com *totoo*, de onde vem a verdade, e como ela se propaga e ganha voz [...]. Tell é capaz de fazer com que os outros reconheçam a verdade.”

²⁵ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

²⁶ Neilly, “German Romanticism as Translational World Literature”.

²⁷ Welsch, “Was ist eigentlich Transkulturalität?”.

²⁸ “Quando Rizal traduz e a floresta se transforma em *gubat* e o céu em *longit*, o Makiling transforma-se num contraforte de uma montanha rochosa, e os Alpes tagalianos erguem-se na margem do Pacífico.”

com este processo narrativo abrir uma porta para o espaço de trabalho do/a tradutor(a), no sentido de uma aproximação, um *insight*, sobre os meandros da tradução. Consequentemente, inicia o enquadramento do processo tradutório com a escolha do nome do protagonista, para quem Rizal elegeu o equivalente espanhol, *Guillermo*. À primeira vista uma escolha curiosa, sendo que não recai sobre um primeiro nome em tagalo. Hug considera esta opção um resultado da popularidade deste nome em Manila, pelo que o público em geral, ou os leitores da cultura de chegada, poderiam facilmente identificar-se com uma personagem vulgar, um compatriota, assim como o era *Wilhem Tell*. A transposição do termo *Landvogt*, sem equivalente na língua de chegada, é solucionada como recurso a uma adaptação, levando o tradutor a optar pelo termo *Sultan* (sultão), cuja aceção pretende garantir a compreensão na cultura de chegada. De igual modo, Annette Hug salienta a preocupação ideológica de Rizal encontrada ao traduzir o nome de Berta von Bruneck, uma personagem reprimida pelo governante Gessler:

Gloria wäre als spanisches Äquivalent von Anmut zu bedenken, aber das ist zu grob. Bertha soll nicht glorios sein, die Anmut der forschenden feinen Dame in Jägerkleidung sei *luwalhati* – ein Glorienschein [...]. (97)²⁹

Ao trazer à luz a prudência de Berta e realçando as suas qualidades de sensatez e dedicação ao seu povo, Hug enfatiza a sua própria leitura de Rizal, atribuindo-lhe uma inclinação para uma resistência intelectual, em detrimento de atitudes mais radicais.

Os termos *Schmerz* [dor] e *Armut* [pobreza], traduzidos por Rizal como *hirap* e *mahirap*, surgem numa descrição claramente associada ao trabalho árduo, doloroso e mal pago:

Aber der Alpenbaron zeigt auch im Sterben seine bäurische Seite. Sein Schmerz heißt *hirap* und ist mit Arbeit verbunden, wer *hirap* hat, *mahirap* wird, hat die

²⁹ “Glória seria o equivalente espanhol para *graça*, mas isso é muito rudimentar. Bertha não deveria ser gloriosa, a graça da refinada dama vestida de caçador é *luwalhati* – um halo glorioso [...]”

Armut von innen kennengelernt: er rackert sich ab für unsicheren Lohn und seine Glieder schmerzen. (133)³⁰

A leitura que Hug fez destas escolhas e o seu enquadramento narrativo (que serve simultaneamente como explicação ou definição terminológica) pretendem conferir ao texto de chegada a inconfundível associação à busca pela igualdade e liberdade de um povo a quem se dirige a tradução e que deve ser capaz de se reencontrar nas lutas de *Guilherme Tell*. A transposição do termo *Stier* [touro] retrata igualmente a necessidade e a possibilidade do tradutor(a) em intervir propositadamente no texto de partida. Neste caso, a sua tradução recai, surpreendentemente, ou não, sobre o termo espanhol *toro*:

Obwohl in Kalamba ein Wasserbüffel den Pflug zieht, ein friedlicher *kalabaw*, der nur angreift, wenn er hart bedrängt wird, wählt Rizal für einmal ein spanisches Fremdwort. Den Kampfstier nennt er *toro*. (67)³¹

A opção pela tradução em espanhol, em vez de uma adaptação para tagalo, alcança um impacto muito maior no texto de chegada, dado que o *kalabaw* [búfalo] pacífico, demasiado calmo, não se enquadra na finalidade prevista por Rizal. O *toro*, sinónimo de força e, naturalmente, de perigo e imprevisibilidade, carrega uma mensagem que reflete a intenção de Rizal em desafiar o poder colonial, uma opção tradutória reveladora da ideologia do tradutor e anuladora de qualquer neutralidade da sua parte.

Hug salienta estas intraduzibilidades linguísticas na sua narrativa para expor os limites da língua, sendo que para ultrapassar estes obstáculos tradutórios é dada visibilidade ao poder do tradutor, o que

³⁰ “Mesmo ao falecer o barão dos Alpes revela o seu lado camponês. A sua dor é *hirap* e está associada ao trabalho. Quem tem *hirap*, transforma-se em *mahirap*, pois conheceu a pobreza de perto: trabalhou arduamente por um salário incerto e sofre de dores no corpo.”

³¹ “Apesar de ser um búfalo a puxar o arado em Kalamba, um *kalabá* pacífico que só ataca quando é provocado, Rizal escolhe, excecionalmente, uma palavra estrangeira em espanhol. Ele chama ao touro de luta *toro*.”

implica uma mudança na perspectiva de tradução, a refração,³² aplicada para alcançar um resultado intencional na cultura de chegada. A este respeito, Hug refere claramente como usou esses obstáculos como fonte de inspiração:

Bei Schillers “Wilhelm Tell” gehe immer von Motiven aus, bei denen es eine semantische Verschiebung zwischen Schiller und Rizal gibt, also Stellen, wo ich bei der Rückübersetzung Fragen hatte. Diese Fragen, die beim Studium der Übersetzung auftauchten, waren mein Leitfaden.³³

A dificuldade enfrentada por Rizal em traduzir o termo *Freiheit* [liberdade] é intencionalmente descrita por Hug com particular pormenor. Inicialmente, é retratada a incerteza e a dificuldade do protagonista em escolher um termo adequado, deixando-o somente chegar a uma conclusão quando se aproxima do fim do processo de tradução. A sua escolha recai sobre um termo politicamente conotado: “[M]alaya sind Frau und Mann im Land der Freiheit, *upa ng kalayaan*” (191).³⁴ O tom anticolonial patente neste excerto ilustra a função específica desempenhada por uma tradução numa determinada cultura de chegada, especialmente numa época de transformações socioculturais, um momento em que a influência de tais tradutores/as é mais do que bem-vinda, um *timing* ideal, propício ao contacto com novas ideias e concepções, como defende Lefevere: “The degree to which the foreign writer is accepted into the native system will, on the other hand, be determined by the need that native system has of him in a certain phase of its evolution”³⁵. É precisamente neste sentido que Antoine Berman fala de *kairos*, ou seja, do momento oportuno de uma tradução:

³² Lefevere, “Mother Courage’s Cucumbers”.

³³ Hug, ““Es war euphorisierend...””. “No caso de *Wilhelm Tell* de Schiller parto sempre dos motivos que apresentam um desvio entre Schiller e Rizal, nomeadamente as partes onde me deparei com dúvidas durante a retroversão. Essas dúvidas que surgiam durante o estudo da tradução serviram como o meu fio condutor.”

³⁴ “[M]alaya são mulher e homem na terra da liberdade, *upa ng kalayaan*.”

³⁵ “Mother Courage’s Cucumbers”, 207.

Hay “momentos” en la historia de la lengua y de la literatura en que la traducción de una obra es imposible, prematura, y otros en los que se hace posible. Este “posible” está ligado – del lado de la lengua traductora – aun deseo. Cuando éste se manifiesta, todas las pretendidas imposibilidades objetivas, lingüísticas y otras, desaparecen. El *kairos* decide la traducibilidad. Llegado el momento, siempre hay un traductor para una obra.³⁶

A noção de oportunidade aplica-se tanto a Rizal como a Hug que assumem uma tarefa de considerável responsabilidade, tendo em conta o papel singular que assumem no ato de comunicação entre línguas e culturas. Para Dirk Delabastita e Rainier Grutman,³⁷ este poder central resulta da combinação de dois fatores: a importância da mensagem a transmitir e a distância entre a cultura de partida e a cultura de chegada. Como vimos anteriormente, Hug reflete este poder central na sua tradução, revelando a visibilidade de Rizal na sua tradução, resultado dos diversos momentos de intraduzibilidade, ou de “imperfeita capacidade comunicativa”,³⁸ com que se viu confrontada e que de acordo com Neilly assume elevada importância:

Significantly, “untranslatables” are not a barrier to translation, but an inspiration for ongoing translation, because their singularity prompts innovations and interpretations in the target language that force readers to rethink the relationship between concepts and their linguistic expression.³⁹

A receção

Tendo presente, *a priori*, a importância da disseminação de ideias, através da literatura, conforme define Lefevere – “[the] desire to know not as literature itself knows, but to know the ways in which literature offers its knowledge, which is so important that it should be shared to the greatest possible extent”⁴⁰ – somos levados, através da lente de

³⁶ *La era de la traducción*, 68.

³⁷ Delabastita e Grutman, “Fictional Representations of Multilingualism and Translation”.

³⁸ Grossegessse, “Identidades cruzadas”, 133.

³⁹ Neilly, “German Romanticism as Translational World Literature”, 2.

⁴⁰ “Mother Courage’s Cucumbers”, 218.

Annette Hug, a perceber como Rizal assume a responsabilidade pioneira de introduzir novas visões do mundo e modos de pensar no seu país de origem, um conceito que encontramos na teoria dos polissistemas de Even-Zohar:

Through the foreign works, features (both principles and elements) are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before. These include possibly not only new models of reality to replace the old and established ones that are no longer effective, but a whole range of other features as well, such as a new (poetic) language, or compositional patterns and techniques.⁴¹

Consequentemente, não é possível olhar uma tradução sem considerar o contexto histórico, social e político da época em que é produzida. Assim, refere Amparo Hurtado Albir:

En el caso de la traducción, la cuestión es más compleja, ya que el autor del texto original y el traductor se insertan en dos espacios semióticos diferentes; al estar inmersos en contextos distintos (sociales, políticos, históricos) pueden tener motivaciones ideológicas diferentes.⁴²

Uma ideia partilhada por André Lefevere e Susan Bassnett⁴³ quando referem que a tradução é sempre feita ao serviço de uma determinada ideologia que dita a forma como o/a tradutor(a) deve abordar a sua tradução. Hug leva-nos precisamente a fazer esta leitura da sua narrativa: ao traduzir Schiller, Rizal segue uma ideologia anticolonial cuja finalidade é colocar em questão estruturas de poder. A partir deste momento abrem-se novas portas e surgem novas questões: que impacto terá *Guillermo Tell* de Rizal na cultura de chegada? Será o público, ou o leitor, capaz de interpretar a revolta anticolonial de *Guillermo Tell* contra o poder espanhol simbolizado na figura do sultão? Terá Rizal conseguido despertar o desejo pela liberdade junto do seu povo?

⁴¹ “The Position of Translated Literature”, 193.

⁴² *Traducción y Traductología*, 616.

⁴³ Lefevere e Bassnett, “Where Are We in Translation Studies?”

Rizal é preso pouco depois de regressar às Filipinas no ano de 1892 e as suas obras, entre elas a tradução de Schiller, publicada postumamente em 1907, após a revisão por Mariano Ponce, acabam censuradas pelas autoridades espanholas. O pensador humanista pacificador, considerado inimigo público, é fuzilado em 1897 apenas um ano antes da revolução filipina, que curiosamente vem dar início a outro período de colonização, desta vez pelo Estado norte-americano. Assim, a sua tradução de *Wilhelm Tell* acabou por não ter um impacto direto na história da revolução filipina. Contudo, Annette Hug inclui no seu romance uma indicação clara sobre o efeito indireto da tradução de Rizal, um efeito imperecível e universal, posto em perspetiva no sentido de “History as a prophet”,⁴⁴ que as suas palavras transportarão para sempre, não sendo possível prever onde e como poderão originar a necessidade de novas leituras e interpretações:

Wenn nun Schiller meint, die Freiheit könne aus dem Haupt eines Bauernjungen im hintersten Gebirge wachsen, dann wird alles möglich. Dann sind die Wege, Kanäle, die Übertragungen und Entladungen der Universalgeschichte so verworren und unvorhersehbar wie die unterirdischen Schlüchte, auch die besten Seismographen wissen nicht mit Sicherheit, wo und wann die Erde das nächste Mal beben wird. Und niemand kann voraussagen, wo sich nächstens ein Volk erhebt. (136)⁴⁵

É neste sentido que Rodrigues refere que nenhum texto de partida contém em si um significado pleno de sentido.⁴⁶ Por conseguinte, o texto de partida, da autoria de Schiller, advém igualmente de uma reescrita anterior, portanto, é resultado provisório de uma semiose, ilimitada,

⁴⁴ Wesseling, *Writing History as a Prophet*.

⁴⁵ “Se Schiller acha que a liberdade pode surgir na cabeça de um menino do campo, nas montanhas mais distantes, então tudo é possível. Então os caminhos, os canais, as transmissões e divulgações da história universal são tão confusos e imprevisíveis quanto os abismos subterrâneos, e até mesmo os melhores sismógrafos não saberão com certeza onde e quando a terra tremerá da próxima vez. E ninguém será capaz de prever onde um povo se erguerá a seguir.”

⁴⁶ Rodrigues, *Tradução e diferença*, 202.

no sentido de *différance*.⁴⁷ Walkowitz cunha esta dissemelhança de sentidos e significados presente no texto de *born-translated*, isto é, o texto ficcional constitui por si só uma tradução, uma interpretação, pois surge de uma multitude de representações que não se acomoda à lógica de representações nacionais.⁴⁸ Um conceito explicitado por Grossegessse com base na análise da obra saramaguiana *Histórica do cerco de Lisboa* e a sua respetiva tradução para a língua alemã:

O romance *História do cerco de Lisboa* interrelaciona esta condição de cada texto ser texto de textos, transferidos/traduzidos de outros textos, em contextos históricos sempre diferentes, com a crítica da “origem” da identidade individual e coletiva no sentido de transculturalidade e da “culture’s hybridity” (Bhabha, 1989, 38), ambas com base explícita na *différance*.⁴⁹

Servindo-se da metáfora da morte, Neilly exemplifica a impossibilidade de fidelidade em tradução, apontando para uma nova perspetiva nos estudos de tradução em que devemos considerar a morte da fonte, em oposição à morte do autor,⁵⁰ no seguimento de uma impossibilidade de localizar qualquer fonte primária. Por conseguinte, a ideia de tradução como reescrita contempla a produção de um texto “original”, composto a partir do jogo entre novas interferências e ligações, como o encontramos na tradução do conceito de liberdade tão procurado por Rizal.

Desta forma, a tradução afasta-se do seu lugar secundário nos Estudos da Literatura, conforme nos explica Walkowitz: “Translation is the engine rather than the caboose of literary history”;⁵¹ por possibilitar a perpetuidade aos textos, manifestada na sua transformação em algo novo, uma reescrita original. Transformação esta que Berman⁵² descreve de metamorfose, a autotransformação da forma, baseando-se na afirmação de Walter Benjamin: “Übersetzen ist eine Form” [Traduzir

⁴⁷ Derrida, *L’Écriture et la différence*.

⁴⁸ *Born Translated*, 30.

⁴⁹ Grossegessse, “Identidades cruzadas”, 134.

⁵⁰ Neilly, “German Romanticism as Translational World Literature”, 16.

⁵¹ *Born Translated*, 5.

⁵² *La era de la traducción*, 66.

é uma forma], atribuindo à tradução a capacidade de criar novas formas (ou vidas) que transcendem a mera traduzibilidade linguística.

Conclusão

Através da tradu-ficção vimos representado o meio de transferência para o/a tradutor(a), direta ou indiretamente, aproximar os seus leitores de uma determinada perspectiva, como nos faz entender Hug, ao centrar a sua narrativa no desejo de Rizal por igualdade e liberdade na sua terra natal, mostrando como procedeu à reescrita do texto de partida para dar entrada à sua versão de *Wilhelm Tell* em Manila, numa nova cultura, num contexto histórico-político distinto. Como referido anteriormente, Rizal escreve a sua tradução sob a influência de várias culturas e línguas, situado num espaço permeável, permanentemente aberto a transformações e influências exteriores, onde a leitura de *Wilhelm Tell* permitiu fazer uso de um *corpus* novo, repleto de referências culturais e simbólicas, reescritas sob uma nova luz, no sentido que nos revela Bhabha:

Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity and fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.⁵³

Neste sentido, a tradução de “liberdade” é claramente possível e contribui definitivamente para a sua disseminação e preservação, dado que o próprio ato de traduzir, ou seja, a mediação entre diferentes línguas e culturas, constitui, por si só, uma forma de liberdade. As referências e as escolhas tradutórias de Rizal e de Hug são as ferramentas com que lhes é permitido moldar livremente os seus textos de chegada, fazendo transparecer “the aesthetic and ontological outcomes of border crossing, whether the border is between languages, gender roles [...], literary categories or even historical periods”.⁵⁴

⁵³ *The Location of Culture*, 37.

⁵⁴ Neilly, “German Romanticism as Translational World Literature”, 18.

Deste modo, torna-se evidente como a tradução literária assume o seu papel incontestável nas relações de poder/influência; basta imaginar como seria feita a tradução de *Wilhelm Tell*, ou de *Wilhelm Tell in Manila*, num outro contexto ideológico – que aspetos assumiram relevância, em que língua minoritária, ou não, poderiam ser traduzidos, em que contextos seria levada a cabo a tradução, que intraduzibilidades seria necessário contornar, que paisagens iriam fundir-se dando lugar a novas paisagens linguísticas e literárias? Embora a tradução de Rizal não tenha tido historicamente um impacto direto na revolução filipina, é, no entanto, de referir ainda a importância que os seus romances *Noli me tangere* (1887) e *El Filibusterismo* (1891) acabaram por assumir. Assim, no seu estudo comparativo entre Schiller e Rizal, Frey conclui que:

In Rizals Romanen geht es um nichts Geringeres als um die Frage, die heute noch hochaktuell ist: soll man durch eine Revolution ein Regime beseitigen, das sich längst überholt hat, oder soll man auf eine allmähliche Verbesserung durch friedliche Evolution setzen?⁵⁵

Hug perspectivou precisamente esta questão em *Wilhelm Tell in Manila* que assume o pano de fundo na sua obra, nomeadamente a transversalidade dos direitos humanos e a sua expressão em diferentes idiomas e contextos culturais bem como o reconhecimento do papel crucial da tradução para todos os processos a que se referem a identidade linguística, cultural e literária,⁵⁶ especificamente no contexto colonial.

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⁵⁵ Frey, “Gewalt oder Gewaltlosigkeit bei Konfliktlösungen”, 337. “Os romances de Rizal abordam nada menos do que a questão que ainda hoje assume grande atualidade: deve-se eliminar um regime que há muito se tornou obsoleto por meio de uma revolução, ou deve-se confiar numa melhoria gradual através de uma evolução pacífica?”

⁵⁶ Walkowitz, *Born Translated*.

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Marco Bucaioni

Universidade de Lisboa

ORCID 0000-0002-4646-683X

mbucaioni@letras.ulisboa.pt

Maus tradutores e bons intérpretes: ficcionalizações da manipulação da tradução nas literaturas africanas de língua portuguesa

This article presents some exemplary cases of fictional translators and translation situations in Portuguese-Language African Literatures, drawn from José Eduardo Agualusa, João Melo, Mia Couto and João Paulo Borges Coelho's works. Given the scarcity of representations regarding the literary translator, we resorted to situations of interlingual interpretation involving two unevenly positioned linguistic codes. As we found out, every case contained a deliberate manipulation of the translated message, in order for the translator to gain some personal/community advantage. The victims of this manipulation are mostly foreigners endowed with a high cultural/linguistic status. We aim to show that these conscious manipulations can be seen as an attitude of decolonial resistance against the Modernity/Coloniality nexus, represented by global foreigners: the subaltern (the African) empowers themselves as translators, as arbiters between two linguistic codes, and in so doing subvert the order of things.

Keywords: translation manipulation; decoloniality; epistemic resistance; African literatures

Este artigo apresenta alguns casos de traduções ficcionais e de situações de tradução nas literaturas africanas de língua portuguesa, retirados da obra de José Eduardo Agualusa, João Melo, Mia Couto e João Paulo Borges Coelho. Considerada a escassez de representações do tradutor literário nestas literaturas, decidimos utilizar situações de interpretação interlinguística que envolvem dois códigos posicionados de forma desigual. Descobrimos que cada caso contém uma manipulação intencional da mensagem traduzida, de forma a o tradutor ganhar alguma vantagem pessoal ou para a sua comunidade linguística. Na maioria dos

casos, as vítimas dessa manipulação são estrangeiros dotados de um estatuto linguístico-cultural alto. Essa manipulação consciente pode ser vista como uma atitude de resistência decolonial contra o nexos modernidade/colonialidade, representado pelos estrangeiros globalizados: o subalterno (o africano) ganha poder como tradutor, sendo o único árbitro entre dois códigos linguísticos, e desta forma subverte a ordem das coisas.

Palavras-chave: manipulação da tradução; decolonialidade; resistência epistémica; literaturas africanas

1. A ficcionalização do tradutor nas literaturas africanas

Nas literaturas africanas em língua portuguesa é infrequente encontrar casos de ficcionalização de um tradutor literário ou editorial. A razão prende-se com toda a probabilidade com o facto de os agentes e as instituições que presidiram à emergência e à consolidação dessas literaturas – e à sua eventual tradução para outras línguas – terem quase sempre a sua sede fora do continente africano – o que vale também para obras produzidas noutras áreas do continente e em outras línguas.¹ Os escritores muitas vezes só podem contar, em África, com projectos efémeros e de curto alcance. Os apelos e as discussões desencadeadas, entre outros, por Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o a partir dos anos 80² sobre o papel das línguas africanas como códigos literários, acompanhadas de exemplo prático (Ngũgĩ abandonou o inglês para escrever em quicuio) e de apelos à construção de projectos editoriais e iniciativas de tradução inter-africanas sem passar pela mediação das línguas ex-imperiais, em geral, não deram lugar senão a esporádicas tentativas, tanto que, passadas quase quatro décadas, temos de reconhecer que os objectivos fixados por Ngũgĩ não foram minimamente alcançados.

Todavia, e enquadrando as literaturas africanas em línguas ex-imperiais (“euro-africanas”, na terminologia do próprio Ngũgĩ), encontram-se frequentes referências a questões linguísticas e

¹ Ducournau, “How African Literature Is Made” e *La Fabrique des classiques africains*; para o caso das literaturas africanas em português também Bucaioni, “Quem constrói o cânone internacional das literaturas africanas em português?”.

² Wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind*.

linguístico-culturais, como não podia deixar de ser, sendo que a pós-colónia é um lugar onde se continuam a confrontar várias línguas com estatuto diferente entre si, numa negociação constante. Algumas vozes relevantes no cruzamento entre os estudos de tradução e os pós-coloniais abordaram o nexa língua/literatura em *corpora* literários pós-coloniais, tanto do ponto de vista teórico como do prático, como é o caso no volume organizado por Susan Bassnett e Harish Trivedi³ e nos trabalhos de Paul Bandia,⁴ aproveitando também discursos e conceitos que vinham já de reflexões anteriores sobre literaturas pós-coloniais.⁵ Estas surgem conceptualmente, nesta linha de pensamento, como operações de “tradução” de uma realidade exógena para um código linguístico hibridizado, mas de raiz europeia e ainda, à partida, identificado com a língua da ex-metrópole. Neste quadro, o autor pós-colonial acabaria por ser ele próprio um “homem traduzido”⁶ ou um tradutor da sua própria cultura para outra língua, a trabalhar num espaço “híbrido” e “intersticial”⁷ para um público mundial.

Sobre o paralelismo, ou metáfora – que teve enorme impacto académico – entre tradução interlinguística e escrita pós-colonial, veja-se Maria Tymoczko:

Translation as metaphor for post-colonial writing [...] invokes the sort of activity associated with the etymological meaning of the word: translation as the activity of carrying across [...]. In this sense post-colonial writing might be imaged as a form of translation.⁸

E ainda, mais à frente:

Interlingual literary translation provides an analogue for post-colonial writing. The two types of intercultural writing are essentially distinct, but they have

³ Bassnett e Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*.

⁴ Bandia, *Translation as Reparation* e “African European-Language Literature and Writing as Translation”, entre outros.

⁵ Como Ashcroft *et al.*, *The Empire Writes Back*.

⁶ Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*.

⁷ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.

⁸ Tymoczko in Bassnett e Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*, 19.

enough points of contact that exploration of the two in tandem and comparison of the two [...] results in new insights about both.⁹

Bandia, por sua vez, formula a relação entre a escrita pós-colonial e a tradução da seguinte forma:

Postcolonial writing has been likened to the art of translation for a variety of reasons, including the fact that postcoloniality often evokes contexts of multilingualism or linguistic and cultural heterogeneity [...]. Translation is understood here in a metaphorical sense, as postcolonial writing often involves a carrying across linguistic and cultural boundaries, a transportation or relocation of marginalized language cultures, onto a more central and powerful domain. The writing practice of postcolonial authors, and novelists from other subaltern cultures for that matter, evoke in many ways the practice of interlingual translation. The postcolonial writer is, by virtue of the very nature of his life-world, a bicultural or bilingual subject with the uncanny ability to negotiate the boundaries between a minor and a major language culture.¹⁰

Por fascinante e útil que seja, esta perspectiva implica, todavia, um axioma necessário à partida: a convicção de que a língua em que o escritor pós-colonial se expressa (*tem* de se expressar?) é no fundo alheia à realidade que ele tenciona veicular e incompatível com ela. Pontos de vista afins afloram em outros sectores dos estudos literários; há, por exemplo, quem aborde a escrita modernista de uma forma muito semelhante: subversiva do padrão para redundar numa língua híbrida, estrangeirante, como claramente afirmado por John Marx no seu trabalho sobre o romance modernista de língua inglesa: “*Mrs Dalloway, Ulysses, and Lord Jim* portrayed languages that were neither fully English nor fully foreign.”¹¹

A esta forma essencialista (e, no fundo, nacionalista) de ver uma língua no seu uso literário, da qual em última instância e em negativo participa o próprio Ngũgĩ na sua recusa do inglês, e na consequente proposta de um quicuí visto como único instrumento possível na

⁹ Tymoczko in Bassnett e Trivedi, *Post-colonial Translation*, 20.

¹⁰ Bandia, *Translation as Reparation*, 31.

¹¹ Marx, *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire*, 2.

sua pureza e inteireza cultural, opõem-se outros pontos de vista mais flexíveis: os de quem admite ou até encoraja uma contaminação profunda, uma maleabilidade que permita de facto ao escritor extra-europeu usar línguas originariamente (mas já não só) europeias para se expressar de forma estética e socialmente legítima. Ainda mais radical seria partir do princípio de que estes escritores estão simplesmente a usar uma língua que lhes pertence integralmente, sem ulteriores problematizações, tendo o percurso de “apropriação” e “abrogação” resultado numa identificação plena.

Neste quadro, as literaturas africanas em língua portuguesa têm um estatuto que em parte foge ao quadro teórico acima esboçado, *in primis* porque esse surgiu no âmbito da escrita literária em língua inglesa. Se todos os sistemas coloniais têm traços comuns entre eles, é também verdade que os produtos históricos dos vários sistemas diferem entre si. No caso da África que escreve em português, é de ressaltar que a quase totalidade dos autores que escrevem, e que são publicados e depois traduzidos para outras línguas (o *corpus* visível, portanto, ou o *cânone* dessas literaturas), escreve e fala só em português ou, no limite, alterna-o com um crioulo de base portuguesa. Raros são os autores que receberam visibilidade e que possuem um conhecimento proficiente de alguma outra língua africana, sendo que, limitando-nos aos mais publicados, neste sentido um lugar de destaque é ocupado por Paulina Chiziane, que, ao lado do português, fala proficientemente também línguas bantas.

Esta circunstância faz com que a base do raciocínio sobre a literatura pós-colonial como tradução possa fazer sentido, neste caso, a nível de transposição cultural, ou seja, de formas, moldes, ritmos e técnicas, mas faça muito menos sentido no plano estritamente linguístico, sendo que a língua portuguesa parece suficientemente apropriada pela comunidade de escritores e totalmente abrogada dos seus privilégios por esses autores na sua prática literária, como também na sua vida quotidiana. É difícil argumentar que um escritor pós-colonial angolano, por exemplo, está a “traduzir” (no sentido acima referido) a sua realidade para português, sentindo este código como alheio, quando o mesmo é o veículo linguístico do seu dia-a-dia.

Todavia, há que ressaltar que também nessas áreas se confrontam códigos linguísticos estatutários e prestigiados com outros códigos e

saberes locais, localizados e marginalizados relativamente ao discurso da modernidade. Nomeadamente, a presença – com vários graus de penetração – da língua portuguesa nestas áreas é acompanhada pela simultânea presença de comunidades e saberes que se processam em outras línguas africanas (bantas, niger-congo ou crioulos de base portuguesa), mas há também a *supra*-presença das línguas globais da própria modernidade, como o inglês e o francês (que são línguas também muito presentes no continente), a qual adquire particular relevância em contextos urbanos. A adopção de códigos linguístico-culturais dominantes (e, em última análise, exógenos, do ponto de vista do Sul Global) continua a ser conveniente em termos de promoção social e ascensão à modernidade prometida, com a implícita “salvação” que implica prosperidade, opulência e progresso, e que se pode enquadrar no mais amplo nexos modernidade/colonialidade tal como pensado por Walter Mignolo e Catherine Walsh. A centralidade da dimensão epistémica na visão que estes estudiosos têm da decolonialidade e das suas práticas é evidente aqui: “Western expansion was not only economic and political but fundamentally epistemic”,¹² conceito variamente repetido e modulado nesse livro: “The task of decoloniality after decolonization is redefined and focused on epistemology and knowledge rather than the state”.¹³ A dimensão estética, que nos importa porque envolve a literatura, é também contemplada: “Eurocentrism is not a geographical issue, but an epistemic and aesthetical one.”¹⁴ À linha do pensamento decolonial devemos também a noção de que o que está por trás dessa confrontação linguístico-cultural é um choque entre um paradigma epistémico que se acha universal e várias cosmogonias

¹² Mignolo e Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 137. Em português, não é consensual a tradução dos termos “decolonial” e “decoloniality”: enquanto “descolonização” é termo universalmente usado, há quem prefira “descolonial” e “descolonialidade”, enquanto outros propõem “decolonial” e “decolonialidade”. Esta última escolha, porquanto possa remeter para um anglicismo, afigura-se-nos como mais convincente, por assinalar um corte com o momento da descolonização, nisto sublinhando a especificidade do discurso decolonial. Em espanhol, a escolha da própria Catherine Walsh espelha igual posicionamento, cf. Walsh, *Interculturalidad, Estado, Sociedad*, 14-15.

¹³ Mignolo e Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 121.

¹⁴ Mignolo e Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 125.

concorrentes que são marginalizadas por esse paradigma – e que são vistas como locais e antiquadas. Ecoando Spivak,¹⁵ há uma “violência epistémica” de fundo a que pode (tem de?) corresponder uma resistência igualmente epistémica – com um sentido claramente decolonial – cujas manifestações podem ser linguísticas e envolver operações de manipulação da tradução ou negação da mesma.

Fenómenos de contacto desigual entre línguas e culturas e a tradução dos indivíduos e dos grupos para sistemas linguístico-epistémicos diferentes emergem de forma gritante nas literaturas africanas em português com casos de ficcionalização da interpretação interlinguística, de que fizemos uma lista de ocorrências para este artigo, que compreende uma crónica e um conto de José Eduardo Agualusa (“Traidor simultâneo” e “Os pretos não sabem comer lagosta”, ambos publicados em 1999), um conto de João Melo, “A beleza americana” (2006), e o romance de Mia Couto *O Outro pé da sereia* (2006). Mencionaremos também a “novela burlesca” *Hinyambaan* (2007), de João Paulo Borges Coelho. Não sendo os únicos exemplos de emergência da tradução simultânea e nessas literaturas, acreditamos que podem constituir um conjunto relevante para apontarmos uma(s) tendência(s) topológica(s) e alguns caminhos críticos.

Como se pode ver, os textos escolhidos são representativos também de um período e de uma geração de autores africanos que escrevem em português: quisemos fotografar as questões relativas à interpretação e ao contacto entre línguas num momento em que, já longe das primeiras formulações literárias anticoloniais, as literaturas africanas de língua portuguesa estavam a beneficiar de um movimento de internacionalização através de uma maior disposição à sua tradução para outras línguas. Isto, talvez, possa interferir no próprio processo de escrita, sendo que o autor já não se dirige só ao público nacional, ou de língua portuguesa, e sim tem alguma consciência de se dirigir, ao menos em potência, ao público internacional. Por outro lado, a relação que, como veremos, se instaura nestes textos com línguas que não o português pode também servir como ponto de referência para um público do Norte Global que, naqueles anos, estava em plena vaga do

¹⁵ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”.

que foi conhecido como “exótico pós-colonial”, a partir do trabalho seminal de Gragam Huggan.¹⁶

Demo-nos conta, além do mais, de que sempre que surge uma situação de interpretação interlinguística, ela é gerida pelo autor de forma a haver alguma manipulação dolosa por parte do interveniente no processo, que pode chegar à total recusa a traduzir(-se). Tentaremos demonstrar como essas manipulações vão sempre no sentido de uma resistência a um elemento exterior, sentido como prevaricador, que podemos identificar como emissário do nexo modernidade/colonialidade, correspondendo essa postura a situações de resistência epistémica, quando não abertamente de subversão contra uma ordem superior, em que o subalterno tenta reajustar o equilíbrio de poder a seu favor, partindo de uma posição mais fraca que desta forma se torna mais forte. Neste sentido, essas situações ficcionalizadas são parábolas exemplares de resistência decolonial.

2. Maus tradutores/bons intérpretes?

Uma ficcionalização explícita do tradutor simultâneo encontra-se na quase homónima crónica “Traidor simultâneo”, de José Eduardo Agualusa, publicada no jornal *Público* em 1999¹⁷ e depois incluída no livro *A Substância de amor e outras crónicas*. Conta a história do Tradutor do Presidente de um Estado não identificado, que percebe o grande poder que tem nas mãos: ele começa lentamente a modificar o que traduz nas duas direcções, com o intuito de controlar as negociações que é chamado a acompanhar. Consegue fazer isso sem que ninguém se dê conta, e consegue-o tão bem que acaba por, finalmente, substituir-se ao Presidente.

Note-se que o autor desta crónica destaca claramente que o Presidente falava um português “perfeito”:

O Presidente [...] estudara engenharia em Moscovo, na Universidade Patrice Lumumba, mas falava um português perfeito, tão claro, tão suave, que toda a

¹⁶ Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*.

¹⁷ <https://www.publico.pt/1999/12/13/jornal/traidor-simultaneo-127794>.

gente acreditava na biografia divulgada pelo Palácio depois da queda do Muro de Berlim, segundo a qual ele completara o doutoramento em Coimbra.¹⁸

A certa altura, o tradutor torna-se, de facto, traidor:

Nas reuniões com os generais, ministros, chefes de Estado de outros países, ou com os directores das grandes empresas petrolíferas, o Presidente dispensava todos os conselheiros. O Tradutor percebeu então que podia, sem risco algum, dizer o que quisesse. A acreditar nos murmúrios que correm à boca pequena, começou por corromper, usando de excepcional subtilidade e *de acordo com os seus próprios interesses*, as palavras do Presidente. Mais tarde, fortalecido pela certeza da impunidade, passou a ignorar o outro, negociando directamente com os dirigentes estrangeiros.¹⁹ (Itálicos nossos)

Nesta pequena parábola brilha todo o poder do Tradutor: única ponte entre dois mundos, entre dois códigos estranhos e impenetráveis entre si, ele detém uma posição invejável. O Tradutor faz a única coisa que não poderia fazer por deontologia e contrato: decide cientemente traduzir “mal”, traindo a confiança das partes que lhe encomendaram o serviço e modificando a seu favor as mensagens quando, em princípio, deveria limitar-se a transferir à letra. Neste caso pode invocar-se literalmente o famoso trocadilho italiano *traduttore-traditore*.

No conto “Os pretos não sabem comer lagosta”, publicado no volume *Fronteiras perdidas*, o mesmo autor apresenta-nos outra cena de tradução simultânea: mais uma vez trata-se de uma situação de manipulação consciente do processo tradutório. Desta vez não são altos dignitários do Estado a serem traduzidos: a necessidade surge no momento em que Café, um angolano abastado, convida para jantar Jimmy Waters, um negro americano acabado de chegar a Luanda para “encontrar as suas raízes”, mas também para fechar negócios, investindo no país. Jimmy representa o que acaba por ser um *topos* recorrente nestas literaturas: o do negro americano, geralmente dos EUA, mas por vezes também de outros países, que “regressa” a África em busca de raízes, guiado pela

¹⁸ Agualusa, *A Substância do amor*, 43.

¹⁹ Agualusa, *A Substância do amor*, 44.

vulgata de ideologias pan-negritudinistas e por visões de reivindicação rática. Geralmente, essas personagens acabam por ser troçadas, e/ou enganadas por personagens africanas, que têm tendência para não ser adeptos dessa suposta “unidade” planetária da comunidade negra. Neste caso, como Jimmy não fala português, um tradutor (Aldemiro) encarrega-se de traduzir as trocas dele com o dono da casa. Café, todavia, comporta-se de uma forma inesperada: às entusiastas notas de Jimmy sobre as suas deslumbrantes descobertas de uma familiaridade – quase parentesco – com as pessoas que vê na rua, Café opõe uma visão escravagista nada complacente, nem educada. Mesmo antes que Jimmy entre em casa, o leitor é confrontado com a categoria de “preto”: “Nesse momento, o guarda bateu à porta: estava um preto lá fora, a falar estrangeiro, e a perguntar pelo senhor Café.//– Preto é você! – Corrigiu Café. – Esse senhor é americano!”²⁰

E assim descobrimos que, na opinião de Café, a palavra “preto” corresponde a uma categoria social subalterna, e não a uma categoria que tenha que ver com o aspecto ou a ancestralidade de uma pessoa. Na opinião dele, claramente, nenhum americano, por definição, pode ser apelidado de “preto”: os americanos são os “donos do mundo”, independentemente da sua cor.

Jimmy é acolhido à mesa e logo começa a falar na sua viagem de “regresso”, chegando a declarar-se provável descendente nada menos do que da Rainha Ginga, numa hipérbole entusiasta em que, segundo parece, quer sublinhar uma ligação profunda – que ele sente ser de sangue, no sentido de parentesco, de *gens* –, mas a reacção de Café é de ordem contrária, e obriga Aldemiro a pôr em prática a sua estratégia de manipulação, isto é, a tornar-se um mau tradutor no plano literal para tentar ser um bom intérprete a nível cultural: “Café perguntou, em português, se na América todos os negros eram descendentes de reis. Aldemiro traduziu a pergunta://– O Carlinhos quer saber se nos Estados Unidos ainda existe muito racismo.”²¹

Aldemiro rasura desta forma a má-vontade e o escárnio de Café, para proteger o mesmo, o hóspede Jimmy e, sobretudo, os futuros

²⁰ Agualusa, *Fronteiras perdidas*, 91.

²¹ Agualusa, *Fronteiras perdidas*, 92.

investimentos deste, de que se supõe que os intervenientes irão beneficiar. Rasurando isto tudo – escondendo, portanto, as fracturas entre negros – ele continua com uma pergunta que faz todo o sentido no imaginário do americano, que está deslumbrado por estar entre negros em África, porque nos Estados Unidos sente que os negros são marginalizados pela maioria não-negra. Esta manipulação tem efeitos positivos: Jimmy lança-se numa lamentação da situação racista dos EUA. Chega-se à questão fundamental da escravatura, que será, porém, ocasião para outro *faux pas*, porque Jimmy regressa de novo à questão do parentesco possível:

– A escravatura separou as famílias – disse Jimmy gravemente –, nós podemos até ser primos, talvez tenhamos um avô em comum.

Café começava a perder a paciência:

– Tretas! Na minha família calçamos sapatos há mais de duzentos anos. Foi o meu avô quem mandou o avô deste gajo cortar cana do outro lado do mar.

Aldemiro traduziu rapidamente, receoso de que Café, irritado, decidisse explicar melhor a sua posição:

– O Carlinhos acha que você tem um tipo bem luandense. O Jimmy podia ser angolano.

Embora não gostasse de falar inglês, Café compreendia quase tudo:

– Angolano, este merdas? Puta que o pariu!...

Aldemiro abriu a boca sem saber como explicar (em inglês) o súbito furor do anfitrião.²²

A reacção de Café, por um lado, é típica, nestas literaturas, de negros africanos que ocupam uma posição social elevada: quando confrontados com a história da escravatura, têm tendência para identificar-se com os negros escravagistas, portanto com gente que contribuiu para organizar e beneficiou do tráfico, e não com as suas vítimas, e fazem questão de o sublinhar. O facto de Café sintetizar a sua suposta superioridade social com o calçar sapatos liga-se a uma típica característica dos africanos considerados “civilizados” no tempo do colonialismo, remetendo para um elemento europeu trazido pelo colono: são os sapatos, metonímia

²² Agualusa, *Fronteiras perdidas*, 93.

da sua permeabilidade à civilização europeia, a distinguir a família de Café de outras.

Perante isso, Aldemiro é forçado a mentir redondamente, escolhendo dizer exactamente o que acha que Jimmy queria ouvir e nisso confirmando a sua tese. É de notar que Aldemiro tem de entrar na conversa com a maior urgência, porque tem medo que Café queira explicar-se directamente em inglês. É a primeira vez que o leitor é informado de que Café, afinal, fala inglês, pelo menos ao ponto de entender o que o americano diz, e até de responder. Todavia, ele não gosta de usar esse conhecimento. A sua recusa é interpretável, portanto, como um *statement* sociocultural, não se podendo considerar a presença de um tradutor uma necessidade. Com isto ficamos também a intuir que, de alguma forma, Café deve estar consciente da manipulação posta em acto por Aldemiro, e que a verdadeira função deste último não era, desde logo, a de traduzir, mas a de se interpor entre os dois, provavelmente também por uma questão de prestígio.

Com este retrato, Agualusa parece querer desmontar com furor e humor umas vertentes fundamentais do pensamento negro. A suposta unidade da comunidade negra global, especialmente no que diz respeito à ligação entre negros em África e negros da diáspora, é arrasada pela postura de Café. Esperanças de um “retorno” à África-mãe por parte da diáspora, que alimentaram a reflexão de autores negros a partir da *Harlem Renaissance* e do movimento Rastafariano, esbarram contra um mundo construído de forma diferente. A certa altura, surge um branco, e Jimmy fica desconfiado com esta aparição: “Jimmy olhou para ele com desconfiança. O que fazia um branco naquela casa? [...]— O José Bento é branco, mas é um branco da terra, é angolano.”²³

O que é que fazia um branco ali, na terra da negritude, onde os negros são donos de si mesmos? A resposta de Aldemiro é magistral: o José Bento é sim branco, mas “da terra”, angolano, o que deixa Jimmy ainda mais confuso. Como pode ser um branco angolano, ou seja africano, para uma pessoa que vê, de facto, o mundo em termos estritamente raciais?

²³ Agualusa, *Fronteiras perdidas*, 93.

Logo passamos à final, com desfecho-surpresa:

Já toda a gente tinha terminado de comer a sobremesa quando dona Maricota encheu um prato com lagosta. O marido estranhou:

– O que é que estás a fazer?

– É para o guarda – explicou ela –, o desgraçado ainda não jantou.

Café zangou-se:

– Isso é que era bom! Os pretos não sabem comer lagosta.

Jimmy, inquieto, perguntou o que é que se estava a passar. Aldemiro traduziu:

– O Carlinhos diz que os pretos não sabem comer lagosta.

Toda a gente se riu. Todos menos Jimmy Waters. Tinha regressado a África, estava na terra da sua avó, a rainha Ginga, e aquela não era a sua casa.²⁴

A estratégia de Aldemiro de manipulação ciente da tradução, afinal, fracassa de forma ainda mais fragorosa do que o silêncio a que se tinha reduzido na página anterior: o guarda é “preto”, ao contrário de Jimmy, que é americano, e dos próprios Café e Aldemiro. Em Angola, portanto, há brancos que são legitimamente angolanos, há negros, mas há também ainda “pretos”. Perante isto Jimmy tem de concluir que África não é necessariamente a casa de todos os negros do mundo, como ele sonhara.

O tradutor, para não desiludir o hóspede, decide edulcorar as mensagens de Café, dando lugar a uma cena hilariante em que cada uma das duas partes continua o que pensa ser um diálogo, mas acaba por redundar numa justaposição de dois monólogos. Tal como no caso precedente, há manipulação ciente do processo de tradução, mas aqui temos um estrangeiro que vem de um mundo linguisticamente hegemónico e que está a ser prejudicado (no fundo, ludibriado) por este processo. Jimmy é monolingue, ele não precisa de aprender línguas estrangeiras, ao contrário dos subalternos, que precisam de aprender a língua dele. Esta sua posição de poder, todavia, é aqui transformada numa situação de total impotência de que o único árbitro é o próprio tradutor, que possui o conhecimento necessário para mediar entre os dois mundos. Subalterno que ele é, o tradutor assume o papel de poder.

No conto “A beleza americana”, contido no livro *O Dia em que o pato Donald comeu pela primeira vez a Margarida*, o escritor angolano

²⁴ Agualusa, *Fronteiras perdidas*, 94-95.

João Melo apresenta uma situação de negação total perante a tradução, neste caso a tradução de si. Dona Augusta é uma anciã angolana, cujo filho, um engenheiro, é transferido para os Estados Unidos por razões de trabalho, onde aporta com a mulher (uma angolana branca), os filhos e a própria mãe, Dona Augusta, que, céptica, alinha sem entusiasmo na empreitada. Ela imaginava, na sua vida, ver Portugal antes da América: “Dos Estados Unidos também já ouvira falar, claro, mas com menor frequência. Seja como for, Portugal, não se sabe porquê, parecia-lhe mais próximo.”²⁵ Assim denunciando, desde logo, as linhas de força verticais entre pós-colónia e ex-metrópole, que impedem às vezes uma colocação continental dos países africanos, mas também implicam uma resistência a uma globalização monocêntrica.

A vida de Dona Augusta na América reduz-se às lides domésticas; o filho, todavia, pretende que a velha mãe aprenda inglês, para ela poder desfrutar melhor das possibilidades do seu novo país de residência. Para o efeito, contrata Miss Jennifer, uma professora que, por acaso, é também negra. Dona Augusta, para agradar ao filho, aceita – embora contrariada – começar as aulas. Mas a certa altura Miss Jennifer deixa escapar um comentário menos elegante sobre a nora da sua nova aluna:

Clarinha – informe-se – era uma branca angolana natural da Chibia. [...] A primeira maka aconteceu certo dia, quando Miss Jennifer perguntou directamente à Clarinha, em tom arrogante, se ela era angolana. Dona Augusta ia a passar e, apesar de não saber inglês, até parece que entendeu a pergunta.²⁶

A esta primeira *gaffe*, ela acrescentará uma segunda ainda mais grave:

“Lá em Angola, vocês, pretos, casam com brancos?”

Dona Augusta olhou com tal estranheza para a professora de inglês, que esta experimentou um arrepio na coluna. De súbito, levantou-se, foi para a cozinha

²⁵ Melo, *O Dia em que o pato Donald*, 70.

²⁶ Melo, *O Dia em que o pato Donald*, 71.

e fechou a porta, deixando Miss Jennifer na sala, perscrutando a sua própria consciência, a fim de descobrir o que eventualmente tinha feito de errado.²⁷

Dona Augusta (que afinal sabe inglês o suficiente para perceber esses comentários, tal como Café no conto acima referido), aquando da aula seguinte, decide não só recusar-se a submeter-se à aula, mas dá azo aos seus dissabores, num monólogo longuíssimo em umbundu:

Quando acordou, Dona Augusta, motivada por essa conversa nocturna com o espírito de Toni Morrison, decidiu imediatamente tomar uma medida radical contra Miss Jennifer. [...] Quando esta chegou, depois do almoço, e, com ar simpático e cortês, lhe começou a falar como se nada tivesse acontecido entre elas na véspera, Dona Augusta respondeu-lhe em umbundu. Atónita, Miss Jennifer ficou sem saber o que fazer. Sentou-se, para ver se tinha alguma ideia, mas Dona Augusta escolheu um sofá ao lado dela e continuou a falar com ela em umbundu, sem parar, impedindo-a de pensar.

A professora de inglês [...] não teve outra solução: fugiu e, do primeiro telefone que encontrou, ligou ao filho de Dona Augusta, informando-lhe que a partir daquele instante deixava de dar aulas à mãe dele.²⁸

A reacção de Miss Jennifer é abrupta: ela foge, telefona ao filho de Dona Augusta da primeira cabine telefónica que encontra e despede-se do trabalho, pensando que a senhora enlouqueceu. A resistência linguístico-epistémica de Dona Augusta perante a aprendizagem do inglês é integral e sem hesitações (e até com justificações muito válidas e práticas): “Aka! Para quê que eu preciso de falar inglês, se mesmo com o meu português misturado com umbundu e kimbundu já consegui ensinar uma mexicana a fazer funje?!...”²⁹

Neste conto, como no anterior, aparece o abismo entre a construção racial angolana e a americana: “Miss Jennifer [...] aos olhos de Dona Augusta, era uma cabrita (uma das muitas subclassificações raciais inventadas pelos angolanos, a qual serve para identificar a mistura de

²⁷ Melo, *O Dia em que o pato Donald*, 72.

²⁸ Melo, *O Dia em que o pato Donald*, 73.

²⁹ Melo, *O Dia em que o pato Donald*, 71.

mulata com branco ou vice-versa), ou seja, quase branca.”³⁰ Vemos que é a esta discrepância, para evitar a imposição da mundivisão de Miss Jennifer, que Dona Augusta reage.

O paralelismo entre o comportamento de Miss Jennifer e o de Jimmy Waters no conto de Agualusa é patente: ambos ficam desconfiados ao descobrir que há angolanos (africanos) brancos, que nem por isso deixam de se reconhecer e de ser reconhecidos pela comunidade como angolanos (africanos).

Neste conto, embora não haja propriamente tradutores, o papel de ponte entre duas línguas caberia a Miss Jennifer, que, todavia, pertence à categoria tópica dos negros americanos e como tal fala só a sua língua materna. A subalterna Dona Augusta (neste caso subalterna entre subalternos: negra, mulher, africana, anciã, humilde), pelo contrário, sabe ao menos umbundu e português, além de ter a flexibilidade mental, e conhecimentos rudimentares, que lhe permitem comunicar com “a mexicana” e perceber os ataques da própria Miss Jennifer, proferidos em inglês.

Quem se recusa à tradução, depois de a abraçar de uma forma não muito proficiente, mas eficaz, é a própria Dona Augusta, que o faz para se proteger a si e à sua comunidade, à cosmogonia em que se inscreve, contra o ataque do subalternizador. A arma usada por ela é a ostentação da sua língua materna, o umbundu, a sua “verdadeira” maneira de se expressar, ou seja, em última instância, uma faceta do seu plurilinguismo necessário de subalterna. O umbundu aqui tem um papel identitário e de revelação da intimidade: é completamente opaco para a modernidade/colonialidade representada por Miss Jennifer, indo constituir-se como instrumento de resistência decolonial e de afirmação da diferença.

O romance *O Outro pé da sereia* de Mia Couto (2006) alterna dois planos entrelaçados, marcados até materialmente na primeira edição portuguesa pelo uso de um papel e de uma fonte tipográfica diferentes. Um plano narrativo é narrado no presente, o outro é situado no século XVI, e nele aparecem vários “línguas”: a tradução é explicitamente ficcionada no plano narrativo histórico, mas também no outro, o do

³⁰ Melo, *O Dia em que o pato Donald*, 71.

presente, surgem situações de contacto interlinguístico e intercultural que iremos explorar ou analisar.

Entre outros elementos que se abrem ao longo de uma narrativa muito mais longa e complexa do que as dos exemplos anteriores, aparecem mais uma vez negros americanos. Neste caso, trata-se de um casal de académicos (portanto, duplamente privilegiados): o marido, Benjamin, é norte-americano; a mulher, Rosie, é brasileira. Ambos percebem português, pelo que não se encontram exactamente na posição das personagens estrangeiras dos exemplos anteriores, como se torna evidente para o leitor no próprio momento da sua chegada ao território moçambicano: “– *Benjamin, my brother! Welcome to Mother Africa!* [...]//– *What is happening?*”//– Em português, por favor, eu falo português, avisou o recém-chegado.”³¹

As duas personagens são guiadas, no seu percurso de pesquisa cultural, em busca de uma pressuposta “África típica”, para uma aldeia do interior moçambicano – com o significativo nome de Vila Longe –, onde o chefe da aldeia, Casuarino, conspira com a população toda uma encenação para que a aldeia pareça muito mais “pitoresca” e pré-moderna do que na realidade é. Exemplar é a cena em que o chefe manda instruir o feiticeiro para dar aos hóspedes uma ideia de tipicidade africana:

Na véspera da consulta, Casuarino mandou Singério à frente para instruir o curandeiro sobre a necessidade de manter a aparência primitiva. A comitiva de Vila Longe levava o norte-americano a uma excursão pela África mais profunda. A palavra de ordem era: Tudo selvagem, nada de modernices. E as instruções do empresário desciam ao detalhe:

– O telemóvel, por exemplo, ele que o esconda. Rádio a pilhas, a mesma coisa. Quero tudo arcaico, tudo bem rústico.

Quando a delegação chegou [...] o *nyanga* trajava a rigor, tronco nu, um bastão de madeira repousado nos braços, uma cabaça amarrada à cintura. Em redor do pescoço, um desses antigos colares de missangas – um “chimpote”, assim se chamava o adorno – rematava o exótico quadro.³²

³¹ Couto, *O Outro pé da sereia*, 162.

³² Couto, *O Outro pé da sereia*, 314.

Casuarino, com a colaboração de todos os moradores, portanto, vai maquinando uma manipulação da representação da vida e da realidade moçambicana contemporânea: não será suficiente para os hóspedes conhecerem a língua portuguesa para resistir à opacidade comunicativa a que esta manipulação os vota. As razões disto, mais uma vez, são económicas: o primeiro objectivo desta *mise-en-scène* é o dinheiro que os hóspedes têm a possibilidade de deixar na aldeia em troca de hospitalidade:

- É simples: os tipos vão pagar. Vão pagar para ficar numa casa, pagam pela comida, pagam pela estadia, pela informação... todos vamos ganhar o taco respectivo...
- O mano Casuarino me desculpe, corrigiu Matambira, mas a nossa tradição de receber bem as pessoas?!
- Eles gostam de pagar.
- Ninguém gosta de pagar.
- Estes gostam porque sentem-se culpados, está perceber? Saíram daqui, deixaram a malta a sofrer com o colonialismo e, agora, regressam engravatados, cheios de inglesuras, e a gente inda passando fome.³³

O facto de que a comunidade, num primeiro momento, reage com espanto e indignação mostra a discrepância entre a estratégia mercantilista do chefe e as convicções e práticas pré-modernas da população. Uma mulher da aldeia, Mwadia, é alistada pelo chefe na sua operação, com as credenciais de ter estudado no Zimbabuê, e com mais um *quid pro quo* interessante aquando deste recrutamento:

Apontando para Mwadia, inquiriu:

- Você é capaz de falar inglês, você estudou no Zimbabwe, não foi?
- Vou ser tradutora?
- Nem tanto, nem tanto. Os tipos desenrascam bem português, a esposa até é brasileira.³⁴

³³ Couto, *O Outro pé da sereia*, 152.

³⁴ Couto, *O Outro pé da sereia*, 150.

Casuarino escolhe Mwadia como quase-tradutora (“nem tanto”), ou melhor, veremos, como traidora, ou seja, uma tradutora que não terá de traduzir, pois os hóspedes são americanos, mas falam português. Mwadia, todavia, deverá contribuir para que eles *não* entendam: o seu papel será fingir transes. Mas para isso Casuarino escolhe-a a ela porque fala inglês. Porquê, visto que os hóspedes são proficientes em português? É verdade que alguns moradores da aldeia declaram ter alguma dificuldade com o português; parece, todavia, que é preciso alguém que tenha estudado no Zimbabué, e que, portanto, *conheça* o inglês, não tanto para usar o código linguístico, mas o código cultural a ele ligado. O que está em causa, mais do que uma proficiência linguística, é o conhecimento prévio de uma cosmogonia.

Mais uma vez surge a questão da escravatura: os negros americanos, tal como Jimmy, surgem nestas obras como obcecados pela narrativa da mesma e pela culpabilização que ela cria não só nos brancos, mas também nos negros ocidentais. Neste caso, todavia, há um *quid pro quo* muito revelador: quando os historiadores americanos perguntam pela escravidão, em vez de obter as respostas que esperavam, são confrontados com uns escravocratas negros, os Vanguni, que não se encaixam na sua mundivisão:

- Queríamos que nos dissessem tudo sobre a escravatura, desses tempos de sofrimento...
- Ah, sim, sofremos muito com esses vangunis, disse Matambira.
- [...]
- Como lhes chamou, vagumis?
- Vanguni, rectificou o pugilista.
- Deixe-me anotar. Portanto, era esse o nome que davam aos traficantes de escravos?
- Exacto.
- E diga-me: há lembrança do nome dos barcos que eles usavam?
- Barcos? Eles não vinham de barco, vinham a pé.
- Como a pé? Como é que transportavam a carga humana lá para a terra deles?
- A terra deles era aqui, eles nunca saíram daqui. Nós somos filhos deles.³⁵

³⁵ Couto, *O Outro pé da sereia*, 173.

Eis um sinal de que a realidade, neste caso a africana, é muito mais complexa e contraditória do que os discursos universalizantes e por vezes demasiado simplistas que sobre ela se constroem. De qualquer forma, tudo parece estar a correr da melhor das maneiras possíveis para a população de Vila Longe, quando, de repente, o curandeiro desliza, saindo da bolha de tipicidade em que a operação de Casuarino o tinha encapsulado:

O curandeiro dispensou a verificação. Com um largo sorriso, saudou o americano. E logo a seguir, em inglês e à queima-roupa, despachou a imediata pergunta:
– *How is the dollar, my friend?*

Atrapalhado, Casuarino fez sinais a Lázaro para emendar aqueles modos cosmopolitas. O adivinho acenou imperceptivelmente e regressou ao seu papel de mediador dos deuses.³⁶

A farsa do exótico, do típico e do arcaico – e da sua mercantilização (mais uma vez surge o exótico pós-colonial) – é aqui exposta de forma brutal. Casuarino está a tentar evitar que se “ traduza ” a realidade da modernidade da sua aldeia, porque julga que os americanos precisam de ver a África que eles têm na cabeça, supostamente parecida com a África de Jimmy do conto de Agualusa: um lugar ancestral, atávico, encapsulado no tempo, a negação do progresso – ainda o coração das trevas de conradiana memória, ou a África fora da história da tradição herderiana, muito embora actualizada e com sentimentos humanitários. Mas a realidade, apesar de todos os esforços de Casuarino, acaba por aflorar descaradamente. De repente, abre-se uma janela ao mesmo tempo linguística, temporal e cultural: o curandeiro sai prepotentemente da sua bolha atemporal para directamente se dirigir ao estrangeiro em inglês, traduzindo-se de repente para a realidade moderna.

Afinal Mwadia finge-se possuída (estará mesmo?), e o resultado é óptimo; Benjamin fica tão emocionado que até se esquece de falar português, redundando num erro de tradução:

³⁶ Couto, *O Outro pé da sereia*, 315.

Os americanos estavam paralisados de tanto fascínio. Benjamin Southman estava tão alterado que até falou em inglês:

– *Can I shoot?*

– O que é ele disse?

– Pergunta se pode disparar...

– Disparar?

– Pergunto se posso filmar?, corrigiu Benjamin.³⁷

Não sabemos quem é o tradutor, mas este parece mesmo um mau tradutor sem segundos fins, porque simplesmente faz um erro de tradução, sem uma manipulação consciente. Mas nesta história entra de novo em acção uma estratégia de manipulação da transparência, uma operação de opacidade que não traduz, e mais uma vez são os subalternos que fazem isso para dano de personagens que ocupam um lugar mais central.

É importante mencionar aqui também a “novela burlesca” *Hinyambaan*, de autoria do moçambicano João Paulo Borges Coelho e publicada em 2007. Nessa narrativa, uma família de sul-africanos decide ir passar férias a Moçambique; os seus planos sofrerão uma repentina e imprevista viragem ao darem boleia a um rapaz moçambicano, Djika-djika, que acabará por os desviar da sua rota e tornar a viagem numa imersão no Moçambique profundo. Numa situação de contacto Norte/Sul ao contrário, os sul-africanos, brancos, representam claramente o nexo modernidade/colonialidade, enquanto Djika-djika, a sua família e a sua aldeia representam a África negra, o Sul do Mundo. O papel de Djika-djika é o de mediador, ou intérprete intercultural. Ele não manipula a sua acção de tradução em função de um interesse financeiro, como alguns dos tradutores que já vimos, mas tem um papel de mediador que manipula a vontade dos brancos, para o fim de os “forçar” a visitar a sua aldeia e a conhecer a sua família, algo que estava absolutamente fora do percurso dos veraneantes, mas que se revelará uma encruzilhada na vida deles.

³⁷ Couto, *O Outro pé da sereia*, 273.

Neste caso, a personagem mediadora decide mostrar, em vez de ocultar, a realidade contemporânea da sua África, incluindo e mostrando aos hóspedes brancos a verdadeira cara do Sul além fronteira.

3. Maus intérpretes, bons resistentes, subversores da ordem global

Resumindo o nosso percurso: nos textos que seleccionámos há sempre uma situação de contacto entre línguas com um estatuto desigual, em que, geralmente, o português ocupa o espaço de língua “interior(izada)” e “inferior” (num dos exemplos substituído pelo umbundu) e a outra língua (geralmente o inglês) ocupa o espaço “superior” e “exterior(izado)”. Aparece sempre um indivíduo externo à comunidade e com um estatuto superior, por ser estrangeiro e vir de uma cultura hegemónica. Regra geral, este indivíduo, para quem a realidade africana tem de ser traduzida, não tem conhecimentos suficientes de português, e ainda menos de outras línguas africanas, para poder sozinho “ler” a realidade circundante. Desta forma, o patamar de vantagem dado pelo prestígio social, cultural e linguístico da posição ocupada, ao ter de ser traduzido, acaba por se perder no seu monolinguismo.

Como é sabido, a palavra “bárbaro” foi-nos legada pelos Gregos, que através dela indicavam, com escarninha onomatopeia, os povos que não falavam a sua língua, a grega, a única digna deste nome. Isso demonstra que é pelo menos desde então que os grupos hegemónicos exercem o seu privilégio cerrando-se no seu monolinguismo, e obrigando os grupos marginais a fazerem o esforço de aprender a língua hegemónica. Ao longo da história da humanidade não foi considerado prestigioso dominar vários códigos linguísticos, pelo contrário: é prestigioso dominar (possivelmente desde a nascença) o código linguístico certo, o hegemónico. Estas narrativas invertem esta constatação, tal como consta na publicidade das escolas de línguas estrangeiras: quem tem mais poder, afinal, é o intérprete, que conhece mais códigos linguísticos e isso faz com que não só se possa interpor entre discursos de várias línguas, mas tenha também a possibilidade de os modificar a seu gosto no processo de tradução, até usar a opacização deste processo tradutório, ou a sua cabal recusa, como arma contra a prepotente intervenção da modernidade, que visa impor o seu modelo a todo o planeta.

De facto, todos os “tradutores” do nosso *corpus* manipulam cientemente o processo tradutório, nisto revelando-se de facto “maus tradutores”, ou seja, fugindo ao imperativo de passar para o outro código linguístico a mensagem que é emitida com o mínimo de interferência. Essas interferências são efectuadas sempre, parece-nos, de forma consciente, e com um claro objectivo em vista: uma resistência à tradução que se prende com a protecção de si e da comunidade, subalterna, a que o próprio tradutor pertence.

O tradutor/traidor da crónica de Agualusa manipula a tradução em função de uma vantagem pessoal imediata (subir na vida e substituir-se ao Presidente); Aldemiro, no conto seguinte, defende os negócios de Café, evitando chocar o hóspede/investidor americano, imaginando-se que ele próprio receberá alguma vantagem disso; Dona Augusta do conto de João Melo recusa inteiramente o processo de tradução de si e da sua família, desta forma repelindo não só a prepotência de Miss Jennifer (aqui representando os Estados Unidos, metonímia suprema da modernidade/colonialidade), mas também com ela toda a sua mundivisão, nisto defendendo indivíduo, família e cultura de origem; os moradores de Vila Longe recusam-se a mostrar a sua realidade, nisso impedindo um processo de “tradução cultural”, ou a queda do véu de opacidade, em função de um retorno económico imediato (a paga pela hospitalidade) e futuro (dinheiro de ONGs para projectos de desenvolvimento).

Boa parte da agenda que está por trás destas operações, que levam à manipulação da tradução e a que estas personagens possam ser definidas como maus tradutores no plano literal, prende-se ou reconduz-se a uma postura de resistência epistémica exercida através do instrumento linguístico. A má tradução que deste percurso emerge tem algo de profundamente subversivo: ela subverte a ordem mundial entre línguas e culturas, entre países e grupos humanos, entre etnias e raças. Conhecer a língua do dominador e ao mesmo tempo a(s) língua(s) dos dominados é a raiz do poder conferido a estes subalternos que assim conseguem sair temporariamente do seu estatuto de subalternidade.

É assim que o mau tradutor, portanto, se torna num bom intérprete da situação cultural em que está inserido, servindo uma série de objectivos epistémicos e de resistência decolonial.

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Besa Hashani

UCLouvain, KU Leuven
ORCID 0000-0001-9125-8194
besa.hashani@uclouvain.be

Ismail Kadare's Tragic *Dragomans*: Translators as Mediators

The present study aims to scrutinise the construction of a particular image of the Albanian author Ismail Kadare (1936-) in the English-speaking literary world, in particular zooming in on Kadare's self-profiled image in the context of the inaugural Man Booker International (MBI) Prize (2005). Particular attention will be paid to Kadare's discourse surrounding the award and his choice to reward David Bellos, one of his translators into English who worked indirectly from the French intermediary translations. Via the MBI Prize, Kadare distinctively positioned himself towards translation and literature: by choosing Bellos as co-recipient of the prize, he consequently recognised indirect translation as legitimate for consecration. Yet, the indirectness of the English translations of Kadare's texts in their reception has often been pinpointed as an issue, whereas the writer refrained from commenting upon translation at all in his acceptance speech. Why is that? This phenomenon will be illuminated by a close reading of Kadare's fictional representation of translation and translators in a selection of fictional and non-fictional literary works available in the French-speaking literary field to better understand such a position. In order to describe and envisage these dissimilar, yet complementary, objects of study, the recent discussions in discourse analysis on the notions of *posture* and *ethos* will be mobilised. This investigation will arguably elicit the ways in which the comparative study of interconnections between his *posture* during the MBI Prize and previous *ethos* as constructed in the selected literary works, unveil Kadare's own mediation strategy towards his reception in English – namely, by capitalising on the triangulation generated from indirect translation.

Keywords: world literature; Albanian literature; indirect translation; consecration; discourse analysis

Introduction

In 2005 the first Man Booker International Prize (henceforth MBI Prize) was awarded to Albanian writer Ismail Kadare. This prize was created as a response to “criticisms that the Booker Prize is only open to British and Commonwealth authors.”¹ It awarded £60,000 biannually to a living author of any nationality for her/his whole body of works published in English or available in English translation. This configuration lasted from 2005 until 2015 to celebrate “quality fiction from all over the world.”² Interestingly, the award enabled Kadare to select a translator of his own works as the recipient of a £15,000 sum to celebrate “the vital work of translators.”³ Unsurprisingly, Kadare chose literary translator David Bellos as co-recipient of the prize. From 2016 onwards, the prize evolved into a £50,000 sum split equally between writer and translator.

This study zooms in on this moment of recognition in the English-speaking literary field and aims to provide insight into how the prize has shaped Kadare’s international *posture*. Theoretical and pragmatic discussions on the concept of *ethos* and *posture* bring insightful tools for the study of the ways in which a singular image of Kadare is constructed through the MBI Prize and its related ‘traces’. In an interview Jérôme Meizoz defines the concept of *posture* as the presentation of the ‘self’ and the construction of a singular author figure – a mask or *persona*⁴ – through the linguistic *ethos* and the public behaviours on a given literary scene.⁵ The concept of *posture* therefore combines a rhetorical dimension with an ‘actional’ dimension. Little research has been carried out on Kadare’s international *posture*; the focus has so far been on his works and his biography. This article aims to initiate the study of Kadare’s international *posture*, taking the MBI Prize as a point of departure. It further wishes to open the discussion on the agency, or lack

¹ Unknown, “Albanian Wins First World Booker”.

² Unknown, “Albanian Wins First World Booker”.

³ Unknown, “Booker Prize to Award Translators”.

⁴ Meizoz and Martens, “La fabrique d’une notion”, 203.

⁵ Meizoz, *La Fabrique des singularités*, 18; Meizoz, “Ce que l’on fait dire au silence”, 2.

thereof, of writers from 'small literatures' on their own reception within the centre of the world literary field.⁶

The first section lays the emphasis on Kadare's discourse surrounding the MBI award and his choice of the translator to be awarded alongside his body of works translated into English. The second half of this article casts a comparative look at a selection of works untranslated into English where Kadare expressed a certain view on translation. This analysis will shed light on the writer's particular conceptualisation of translation in these works, in order to interpret his positioning towards translation around the MBI Prize. Particular attention will be paid to the fictionalisation of translators-interpreters and translation in *Le Grand hiver/L'Hiver de la grande solitude* (henceforth *L'Hiver*),⁷ a novel that places a translator-interpreter at the centre of the plot, and *Les Quatre interprètes* (henceforth referred to as *Les Quatre*), a non-fiction piece that responds to *L'Hiver*.⁸ This two-fold analysis will arguably uncover the connivances that exist between Kadare's reception as a world literary writer and his own vision of world literature. It will be demonstrated that consistent interconnections are established between his *posture* shaped through the MBI Prize and previous *ethes* constructed in the chosen literary works. His conceptualisation of translation and translators-interpreters in these works clarifies his choice of Bellos,

⁶ Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*; Chitnis, Stougaard-Nielsen, Atkin, and Milutinović, *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations*.

⁷ Kadare, *Le Grand hiver*; Kadare, *L'Hiver de la grande solitude*; Kadare and Fernández Recatalà, *Les Quatre interprètes*.

Le Grand hiver is reportedly the adapted and extended version of *L'Hiver de la grande solitude* which was published after the first version was forbidden from being reprinted by the Albanian communist state. Bruno Clément has argued that the order might be reversed: *Le Grand hiver* contains more passages that do not appear in *L'Hiver de la grande solitude*. The preface to the Albanian edition highlights this conundrum by mentioning the fact that the version translated by Fayard (*Le Grand hiver* in 1978) returns to the uncensored original text. For this reason, *Le Grand hiver* has been used as the main reference text in the present article, although the analysis is informed by both editions. It is worth mentioning that the French translations of the texts have been used (instead of the Albanian originals) since *Les Quatre interprètes* responds to the French versions. Clément, "Réécrire", 237-257; Kadare, *Vëpra*, 15.

⁸ These books have not been translated into English.

as well as his silence towards indirect translation issues raised in his reception. It confirms not so much his disinterest in these issues, as much as it does his strategic use and capitalisation on the triangulation generated by indirect translation.

Challenging the hyper-centre of world literature

The international reception of Albanian writer Ismail Kadare and his literary works has not been consistent. Unlike his success in French translation (observable in the numerous translations and editions of his works by Fayard), the reception of Kadare's literary works in English translation has encountered widespread resistance in the Anglophone literary field. There are multiple causes for the problematic circulation and reception in English, but one of them is striking: there has always been a considerable lack of literary translators from Albanian into English. Nevertheless, Anglophone publishers have bypassed this obstacle by relying considerably on the French translations of Kadare's works as intermediary source texts. To this date, nearly half of the translations available in English are indirect translations, defined here as translations of translations,⁹ performed from the French translations. The difficulties surrounding the translation of his texts into English have not significantly hindered Kadare's legitimation and recognition in institutions of world literature. Judge of the MBI Prize, John Carey qualified Kadare as "a universal writer in the tradition of storytelling that goes back to Homer."¹⁰ In 2020 the writer obtained the Neustadt International Prize for literature – a prize sponsored by the University of Oklahoma, managed by the literary journal *World Literature Today* and often referred to as a lead-up to the Nobel Prize. This award confirms the general tendency of the writer's growing international consecration as world literary author.

Interestingly, the use of the "world literature" label has not been restricted to Kadare's reception. The author has frequently formulated his own conceptualisation of world literature and used it in his own international self-profiling. Reindert Dhondt and Beatrijs Vanacker

⁹ Gambier, "La retraduction, retour et détour", 413; Gambier, "Working with Relay", 57.

¹⁰ Unknown, "Albanian Wins First World Booker".

point to how an author's *ethos* is anchored in the collective imaginary of a given culture, which the author either confirms or transgresses.¹¹ This idea echoes Meizoz's concept of a "repertoire" of *postures*. Kadare has frequently appropriated Goethean ideas in the 'repertoire' of already-existing definitions of world literature in his own discourse. World literature, in his view, is a "kingdom" where "his masters" are Shakespeare, Dante, and Cervantes:

Mon royaume était ailleurs. Mes chefs se nommaient Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantès. Mes ministres, les Tragiques grecs, Goethe, Rimbaud, Pouchkine, Kafka, Borges. C'est à eux que je rendais des comptes, non à cet État ridicule [BH: Communist Albania], en tout risible sauf dans le crime. Il aurait beau fouiller ma maison comme il le fit en octobre 1990 en confisquant tous mes manuscrits, jamais il ne pourrait accéder à mon "laboratoire" afin d'y briser, ou, pis encore, d'y altérer mes instruments de créateur.¹²

This literary "kingdom," which reminds us of Goethe's *Weltliteratur*, is viewed by the writer as an actualisation of anti-totalitarianism in itself. In his acceptance speech to the MBI Prize, Kadare reiterates his definition of world literature as anti-totalitarian tool.¹³ He affiliates his own production to a 'universal' literary "kingdom" similar to the one he had previously formulated, to which he bears a "fascination as to a religion"¹⁴ triggered by "the castle of Macbeth, Thane of Glamis and Cawdor,"¹⁵ and in which canonical Western authors govern. Literature and its themes become a bridge across geographical distance and hence universal, as per the motif of the castle which, he argues, "[a]ll regimes

¹¹ Dhondt and Vanacker, "*Ethos*", 8.

¹² Ismail Kadare cited in Velo, *La Disparition des "Pachas rouges"*, 174.

¹³ What remains nowadays from the 2005 MBI Prize ceremony is almost entirely enclosed within the four-page acceptance speech that David Bellos transcribed, translated, and subsequently published as an afterword to the Canongate edition of *Agamemnon's Daughter* (2007) (Kadare, *Agamemnon's Daughter*).

¹⁴ Kadare, *Agamemnon's Daughter*, 228.

The afterword contains no page numbers. The page numbering has been continued for the sake of referencing.

¹⁵ *Agamemnon's Daughter*, 230.

had used [...] as a prison.”¹⁶ The writer subsequently views his own position as that of a “citizen of another realm, the realm of literature” where “[i]ts leaders – Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Kafka – became his true masters.”¹⁷ Kadare confirms the Goethean definition of world literature in Western literary history by displaying an *ethos* of erudition about, and proximity and affiliation to, the Western world republic of letters (which he deems universal).

Not only does Kadare consider literature as ‘universal’ and his works as affiliated to the canons of European literature, but his conceptualisation also appears to correspond to the frames in which he is received and consecrated internationally. Nevertheless, the international circulation and reception of his literary works depend on their availability in translation. Yet, translation is absent from his conceptualisation of world literature. At the end of his acceptance speech, Kadare points out that “that signal [literature as a sign of life in communist Albania], broadcast by means of literature and so nobly picked up by you [...] is what has made the unthinkable [obtaining the MBI Prize] possible.”¹⁸ Kadare omits the means that made the “unthinkable” realisable at all, namely translation.¹⁹

Looking for his views on translation elsewhere does not deliver the expected results. Other well-known authors writing in ‘minor languages’ (understood here as languages from the literary peripheries in world literature) and enjoying an international circulation and reception in translation into ‘major languages’ such as French or English have shown visible concern as regards the perceived quality and fidelity of the translations of their own literary texts. Some writers have sometimes openly interfered in the translation process (see, for instance, Milan Kundera’s control of, and discomfort with, his own translations, now a famous anecdote in translation studies).²⁰ Kadare’s comments on

¹⁶ *Agamemnon’s Daughter*, 227.

¹⁷ *Agamemnon’s Daughter*, 232.

¹⁸ *Agamemnon’s Daughter*, 232.

¹⁹ The recording of Kadare’s MBI Prize acceptance speech was requested for the present article. However, no such recording exists according to communication officers of the MBI Prize.

²⁰ Margala, “The Unbearable Torment of Translation”, 30-42.

the translation of his texts, on the contrary, are scarce and scattered; the few existing remarks are neutral and elusive. The indirectness of the translation of his works into English does not seem to compel him the least. David Bellos hints at the author's relative open-mindedness as regards the translation of his texts into French: "Yes, he said, I do change the Albanian when I feel that the French is better. He was not at all worried about being translated from his French translations; in fact, he said, he really preferred it that way."²¹ "[O]ne of the reasons why," Bellos explains, is the Albanian regime's refusal to join the copyright convention until 1994.²² It has therefore been easier for Kadare to "trade the French versions" (copyrighted by Fayard or Albin Michel for the first editions).²³ Moreover, Bellos mentions Kadare's alleged admiration of Vroni's "fluid, spare, slightly old-fashioned... and not quite native" French, with "a poetry of its own."²⁴ He goes further by arguing that Kadare "could hardly be more different in his attitude to linguistic particularity than (for example) Milan Kundera."²⁵

Nevertheless, one stumbling point in his reception in English translation is the indirectness of his works' English translations. In a 2005 review Murray Bail notes that "[a]lthough twice translated (from Albanian and French), the tone is consistent, a tone in casual harmony with the whole."²⁶ The first word is important here: "although" denotes concession. What this means is that indirect translation, despite its supposed inherent feature of increased distance between source and target texts, managed to defy the odds and keep the invariable "harmony." The journal of the *Historical Novel Society* tackled the issue head-on as well:

Another question that has generated lively debate focuses on the problem of judging a book in translation. This is especially true in Kadare's case, because few of his works have been translated directly from Albanian. Most have been

²¹ Bellos, "The Englishing of Ismail Kadare".

²² "The Englishing of Ismail Kadare."

²³ "The Englishing of Ismail Kadare."

²⁴ "The Englishing of Ismail Kadare."

²⁵ "The Englishing of Ismail Kadare."

²⁶ Bail, "Continental Shift".

translated from French and are therefore “twice-removed” from the original text. Translation is a complex art, an imperfect process: Umberto Eco and others have drawn attention to the Italian pun on “tradurre/tradire” (to translate/to betray), which raises the problem of the translator’s loyalty to the original. In Kadare’s case, the addition of another layer of language, a “retranslation,” adds yet another filter.²⁷

This passage discloses similar concerns: indirectness allegedly increases the risk of disloyalty to the source text by adding yet another “filter.”

Since the MBI Prize rewards literature precisely *in* translation, one expects that the writer addresses these questions in his reception. Yet, not only does he refrain from engaging with issues of indirectness raised in his Anglophone reception, but he also decides to choose Bellos, indirect translator of his works from French into English, as co-recipient of the MBI Prize. It is worth mentioning that by 2005, ten different translators had been involved in the translation of his works into English. Five of them worked directly from the Albanian originals (Ali Cungu, Pavli Qesku, Arshi Pipa, John Hodgson, and Peter Constantine) and five of them based their translations on the French intermediary translations (Derek Coltman, David Bellos, Jon Rothschild, Barbary Bray, and Emile Capouya) – a considerable number of translators to choose from. Be it as it may, Bellos stands out as the most successful translator until 2005: he performed three translations, which were reedited and reprinted sixteen times. Kadare chose *de facto* the most visible translator on the Anglophone literary market. But is this the sole reason for his choice?

His choice certainly challenges and transgresses the *doxa* surrounding indirect translation in the western cultural world. Attitudes towards indirect translation have traditionally been precautions, at best, and more often negative, despite its having been a widespread practice throughout centuries.²⁸ As the aforementioned reviews on Kadare’s indirect translations show, the increased distance imposed between the source text and the target text is often pinpointed and criticised, as relying

²⁷ Byatt, “Judging a Book in Translation”.

²⁸ Assis Rosa, Pięta, and Maia, “Theoretical, Methodological and Terminological Issues”, 113.

on a so-called 'relay translation' allegedly inhibits the transmission of an (or many) invariant(s).²⁹ In Lawrence Venuti's terms, the "instrumental model" prevails in discussions on translation.³⁰ Therefore, handing out the MBI award to an indirect translator is at odds with the traditional value that has been ascribed to indirect translation. In fact, one can go as far as to argue that choosing Bellos implicitly acknowledges the legitimacy of indirect translation in the hyper-centres of the world literary landscape. Kadare, by openly rewarding this type of translation, builds his *posture* as an author who disregards the prevailing rhetoric of 'gain and loss' regarding translation.

Emily Wittman refers to the politico-historical reason that might account for this positioning towards indirect translation.³¹ It is true that in choosing French as an intermediary language, Kadare manages to bypass the "frequently expurgated and mutilated Albanian originals in favor of the French editions revised and approved by Kadare himself,"³² although this hypothesis invites further research. However, this does not explain the absence of comments on indirect translation. Wittman foregrounds a more promising line of enquiry for the case under study. She indicates the possibility of interpreting Kadare's choice as a way of acknowledging Bellos' positive mediation in the English-speaking world.³³

For his first consecration ceremony in the hyper-centre of the world literary field, the author moves beyond concerns of linguistic accuracy and fidelity that have permeated the discourse on indirect translation. If Kadare transgresses the pre-existing collective imaginary towards indirect translation without commentary, then which one does he confirm or develop by handing the complementary prize to Bellos? This

²⁹ Dollerup, "Relay and Support Translations", 23. Dollerup's arguments are deconstructed by Silvia Kadiu in her article that contrastively and comparatively analyses David Bellos' translation of *The File on H*. Kadiu empirically challenges the hypothesis that the mediating language, here French, consistently accounts for the shifts present in the English version of David Bellos. Kadiu, "David Bellos' Indirect Translation", 1-24.

³⁰ Venuti, *Contra Instrumentalism*.

³¹ Wittman, "An Award Heard Around the World?"

³² "An Award Heard Around the World?"

³³ "An Award Heard Around the World?"

question leads to another one: How does he envisage translation, if not primarily within the “instrumental model”, and the role of translators, if not (only) as wordsmiths ensuring the safe transmission of an ‘invariant’?

Representations of translation and translators-interpreters

Kadare wrote *L’Hiver* (published in 1972 in Albania) based on archives of the minutes of the Moscow conference that led to the diplomatic break between the USSR and Albania in 1961 and those of a meeting with Agim Popa, one of the translators present.³⁴ The novel chronicles the day-to-day life of a multitude of characters, ranging from a street sweeper to office workers in Tirana in 1961. It is an epic-imprinted novel with a nationalist touch that celebrates Albania’s (and dictator Enver Hoxha’s) ‘bravery’ of challenging the ‘predatory’ USSR. Alongside these heavily engaged political and cultural themes, the novel also stages intricate love and family stories as the characters witness the diplomatic break. Within this large panorama of bustling life in a complex political and social configuration, the novel focuses on the particular storyline surrounding the main character, Besnik Struga.

In their discussion of the notion of “prior *ethos*” (“*éthos préalable*”), Dhondt and Vanacker indicate that the reputation of an author (established upon their discourse and behaviour anterior to the discourse) plays a crucial role on the *ethos* under study.³⁵ Meizoz similarly suggests that studying an author’s particular *posture* presupposes taking into account previous *postures* that weigh on the studied one and describing the consistencies and evolutions across time.³⁶ In *L’Hiver* and *Les Quatre*, Kadare turned towards issues of translation several years before the first MBI Prize. This positioning lets us read into Kadare’s apparent lack of concern about potential negative reception to rewarding Bellos and, consequently, his activity as indirect translator.

³⁴ To avoid backlash from the authorities, Kadare used Albania’s communist dictator Enver Hoxha’s exact words. A controversy emerged in the international reception of this work, as attention was called to Kadare’s positive and heroic depiction of Hoxha. Eissen, “L’Albanie et les trois Romes”, 66.

³⁵ Dhont and Vanacker, “*Ethos*”, 3.

³⁶ Meizoz and Martens, “La fabrique d’une notion”, 207.

However, examining the author's *ethos* in the study of *L'Hiver* imposes its limits. Meizoz sounds a note of caution regarding the analysis of an author's *ethos* in works of fiction, since it often relies on complex mediations, such as through delegated characters. Nevertheless, it is possible to point to the values illustrated by the *postural* choices of the author.³⁷ There are two distinct cases where the notion of *ethos* is more easily deployed: (1) when the author comments on his work of fiction explicitly, and (2) when the line between the author and (one of) his characters is blurred. The last option implies that the notion of *ethos* is operative when a direct link can be established between a character and the author through autobiographical correspondence. The first case, however, better enables one to approach *L'Hiver*. Studying an aspect of Kadare's *posture* through the *ethos* enclosed within values in *L'Hiver* is facilitated by the fact that Kadare and Denis Fernández Recatalà have published in *Les Quatre* an essay commenting on *L'Hiver*. Nevertheless, David Martens considers this approach as restrictive and insufficient.³⁸ His hesitant notion of "value poetics" points to a useful complementation of the concept of *ethos*. Values emerge when reading fictional narratives; these values, in turn, inform the author's *posture*. In short, the "poetics of value" governing the conceptualisation of translation and translator-interpreter in *L'Hiver* are supported and informed by the *ethos* established in *Les Quatre*.

In *L'Hiver*, Besnik endorses the role of translator-interpreter between the Albanians and the Russian-speaking interlocutors during the diplomatic break. Although he is not a professional translator or interpreter, he is chosen to fulfil these roles because he has mastered Russian and Albanian, comes from an ideologically reliable family, and claims to be a strong believer in communist ideals himself.³⁹ The novel positions this ideal profile as a cardinal mediator who is entrusted with considerable power and responsibility, as per Dirk Delabastita and Rainier Grutman's hypothesis of the power of fictional translators:

³⁷ Saint-Amand and Vrydaghs, "Retour sur la posture".

³⁸ Meizoz and Martens, "La fabrique d'une notion", 210.

³⁹ Kadare, *L'Hiver*, 502.

Albania's future weighs on Besnik's shoulders.⁴⁰ In the novel, the character of the translator-interpreter sheds his traditional invisibility for a grander role in shaping historical events.

The centralised translator-interpreter is further depicted as a complex and polyvalent character. He is entrusted with much more than just the technical task of decoding and encoding linguistic data from a source language to a target language. Alongside his newly acquired task as a translator, Besnik is a journalist whose talents come to fruition in Moscow. He is depicted as a mediator who experiences the historical events himself and identifies with the Albanian camp in this dissension.⁴¹ He is primarily a non-neutral witness to the events that unfold in Moscow, to which the novel gives access chiefly through his perspective, experience, and perception. Character depiction and focalisation techniques convey his complex array of skills and bring depth and subjectivity to the character.

The process of translation itself is also subject to complexification. Translation is less depicted as a purely linguistic transaction, requiring thorough technical precision and professionalism, than a form of political, cultural and linguistic mediation. However, despite the visible lack of concern for linguistic accuracy and the Albanian delegation's (almost blind) confidence in Besnik's skills,⁴² the translator-interpreter cannot repress a fear of breaching the principle of fidelity. The aforementioned "instrumental model" colonises Besnik's thoughts. When translating between the Albanians and Khrushchev, he mistranslates and the latter notices his mistake.⁴³ Besnik subsequently experiences a sudden surge of anxiety triggered by social pressure:

Mais maintenant que signifiaient leurs regards? Pouvaient-ils vraiment penser qu'il devenait la cause de leur rupture définitive? Tout se précipitait. Tout

⁴⁰ Delabastita and Grutman put forward the hypothesis that (in fiction) "the translator's power can be assessed in terms of two variables: the importance of the message that is to be communicated, and the distance between the cultures which enter into communication via the translator" (Delabastita and Grutman, "Introduction", 19).

⁴¹ Kadare, *L'Hiver*, 140.

⁴² *L'Hiver*, 171.

⁴³ *L'Hiver*, 168.

semblait absurde. Ils pouvaient se mettre à consulter les dictionnaires, les traités linguistiques, les encyclopédies, fouiller les grammaires historiques, les papyrus, puis se mettre à crier “erreur!” “erreur!”. Enfin, nous avons découvert le défaut de la machine. La cause des désaccords. L’obstacle. Cet homme est à l’origine de la discorde. Cet homme ne traduit pas bien Eschyle. Ce traducteur est un traître.⁴⁴

It is true that this passage highlights Besnik’s concern of having turned into a *traduttore traditore*, in accordance with the Russians’ pejorative opinion regarding translators and interpreters in the narrative,⁴⁵ which would haunt him long after in the form of somatic effects.⁴⁶ Yet, its satirical style undermines, to the point of showing the irrelevance and absurdity of, these linguistic issues in historically and politically important times. In fact, the novel reveals how little difference Besnik’s mistake has made on the outcome of the discussions between Hoxha and Khrushchev. Communication between them was doomed to fail for different reasons, hence the Albanian politicians’ lack of negative reaction to that mistranslation.⁴⁷

Although this linguistic slip has little impact on the wider political events at play, it has reached another layer of importance in the collective imagination of the Albanians: the narrative shifts linguistic concerns from the ‘real world’ to the imaginary one. After his comeback to Tirana, rumours abound across the city concerning the mistranslation of ‘the translator’, conceived of as an unidentified protagonist, rather than specifically referring to Besnik. Towards the end of the novel, Besnik resumes his work as a journalist and is given the task of compiling a report on letters sent by readers. When leafing through the stack of letters, he discovers epic poems and ballads that build on the current political situation. He observes how the events are moulded and mystified into tragic stories and how history is mediated through literature in the collective consciousness. In these epic poems, he is transformed into the abstracted epic figure of the translator-interpreter, fictionalised in the tragic encounters between ‘glorious Albania’

⁴⁴ *L’Hiver*, 170.

⁴⁵ *L’Hiver*, 149.

⁴⁶ *L’Hiver*, 216, 286, 335, 415, 192, 392.

⁴⁷ *L’Hiver*, 171.

and the ‘predatory USSR’. Besnik gradually sheds his guilt over his mistranslation to admire the poetical substance of what he represents in collective memory. His linguistic ‘mistake’, in other words, belongs in the world of imagination. This distance installed between Besnik and the unfortunate events via poetry reduces his feeling of guilt and acts as a “narcotic,” suddenly soothing the somatic symptoms: “Il [Besnik] était encore sous l’emprise des ballades, comme sous l’effet d’un narcotique [...]”.⁴⁸ In other words, debates on linguistic accuracy gain relevance only in the fictionalisation of historical events.

This shift shines the spotlight back on the translator-interpreter. By bringing psychological depth to this character, the narrative challenges the invisibility that is traditionally associated with the figure of the translator.⁴⁹ Having access to Besnik’s intimacy and feelings through, amongst others, this internal focalisation enables the reader to understand how the diplomatic break and his role therein have deeply altered his personal life. Further emphasised by the rainy and chilly atmosphere, the diplomatic freeze goes as far as to overwhelm the main character’s daily routine, such as a regular welcome meal with his family: “Les assiettes, les cuillères, et sa plus belle combinaison qu’elle [Zana] avait mise pour lui, tout devint d’un froid glacial.”⁵⁰ As Eissen argues, “Besnik’s unconscious [...] is a form of historical memory” and the cold experienced during the historical events infiltrates him profoundly.⁵¹ The degradation of Besnik’s mental health, as the cold is setting in, unveils his internal struggle between the political and the personal. The “tragedy of Moscow” leads to a personal “tragedy,” namely his separation from his fiancée.⁵² In short, Besnik absorbs the political and historical cold: “C’était l’histoire elle-même. Son corps encore tiède, non embaumé, était là, autour de lui, chair vive délivrée de sa coquille, pâte déversée généreusement dans les rues et les places [...]. Je vis un moment de vérité [...]. Il l’avait perdue [Zana].”⁵³ The

⁴⁸ Kadare, *L’Hiver*, 558.

⁴⁹ Simeoni, “Le traducteur, personnage de fiction”, 25.

⁵⁰ Kadare, *L’Hiver*, 201.

⁵¹ Eissen, “L’Albanie et les trois Romes”, 61 (my translation).

⁵² Kadare, *L’Hiver*, 313 (my translation).

⁵³ *L’Hiver*, 571.

translator-interpreter is *part* of this context, interacts with it and is transformed by it, as the excerpt demonstrates. The depiction of Besnik brings humanisation, complexity, and a tragic touch to the figure of the translator-interpreter, whose destiny has been shaken by his role played in the political events. It slides the attention of the reader from matters of linguistic accuracy in translation to the translator and his part in “*l’histoire*.”

In *Les Quatre*, Ismail Kadare and Denis Fernàndez Recatalà investigate the biographies of the three translators (and a fourth mysterious one, according to Kadare) who have facilitated the communication between Albanians and the USSR delegation in Moscow in 1961 and on whom the character of Besnik Struga is based. The non-fiction work’s primary function is to reinforce and complement the historical dimension and truthfulness of *L’Hiver*. It serves as a prior *ethos* in that it further unveils and makes explicit Kadare’s engagement with and stance towards translators-interpreters and translation within these historical events. *Les Quatre* also encapsulates comments on translation, via chapters that are explicitly signed by the author at the beginning and at the end of the book. These chapters are in agreement with the values ascribed to the translator-interpreter and translation in *L’Hiver*. These comments directly shape Kadare’s *ethos* by reaffirming in his own name the conceptualisation expressed in *L’Hiver*.

The author starts the book by returning to Faik Konica’s essay on translation and exposing his thesis that “the first words of literature” (that is, the translation of the first verses of the *Iliad* in several languages according to Konica) are imbued with “approximations.”⁵⁴ Instead of interpreting this as an affirmation of the impossibility of translation, Kadare considers this as the onset of the exact opposite: “Bref, la traduction infère la faute et l’interprète postule le sacrilège. On pourrait conclure à l’impossibilité de traduire. Je pense l’inverse: l’Histoire de l’Humanité est celle de la traduction.”⁵⁵ In other words, untranslatability does not exist and “translating is part of our condition.”⁵⁶ Translation is

⁵⁴ Kadare and Fernàndez Recatalà, *Les Quatre*, 12 (my translation).

⁵⁵ *Les Quatre*, 12.

⁵⁶ *Les Quatre*, 13 (my translation).

also tragic: its very essence implies inevitability as well as danger for the translator-interpreter. In his view, concerns of infidelity and, in the worst case, treason are irrelevant since translation can never result in pure and simple equivalence.⁵⁷ The paradoxical combination of impossibility and inevitability emerges in his approach to indirect translation during the Moscow conference. In such a big congregation of people mastering different languages – a true microcosm – indirect translation is unavoidable;⁵⁸ equivalence between languages therefore becomes a secondary, not to say irrelevant, concern. Kadare uses the ‘archetype of the *dragoman*’ (literally an interpreter and translator of Arabic, Turkish or Persian, but broadly used by Kadare as an equivalent to the translator-interpreter in the history of the Balkans) as the embodiment of the *traduttore traditore* in Balkan ballads.⁵⁹ Because of this inherent paradox, translators-interpreters have frequently been (metaphorically or literally, and wrongly) sacrificed after having served,⁶⁰ as Kadare suggests with his suspicions concerning the existence of a fourth translator at the Moscow conference who, he presumes, must have mysteriously disappeared after completing his duties because of the secrets that s/he knew. *Dragomans*, in other words, are tragic heroes, at once essential mediators and scapegoats.

The two *ethe* woven in *L’Hiver* and *Les Quatre* come full circle: translators-interpreters are portrayed as complex figures who carry out the central, polyvalent and necessary, yet dangerous duty of ensuring interlingual and intercultural communication at the cost of their own lives, either metaphorically (as for Besnik Struga) or literally (as for the fourth translator-interpreter in *Les Quatre*) – the danger lying in accusations of mistranslation and, hence, treason.

Final thoughts

Reading *L’Hiver* and *Les Quatre* sheds light on the ways in which Kadare views translation as an unavoidable mediation in complex

⁵⁷ *Les Quatre*, 14.

⁵⁸ *Les Quatre*, 120.

⁵⁹ *Les Quatre*, 15.

⁶⁰ *Les Quatre*, 15.

political and historical settings. It is performed by translators-interpreters who are depicted as, on the one hand, visible, humanised and multifaceted characters and, on the other hand, 'tragic' characters immersed in the political and historical milieu in which they perform their duties. Their activity as mediators overshadows issues of linguistic correspondence between languages. Accusations of 'infidelity' to the source language are perceived as offensive and beyond the point: such accusations, at best, belong to fiction. Kadare's choice of Bellos as co-recipient of the MBI Prize comes as no surprise after all: these values ascribed to translation and translators-interpreters constitute a "prior *ethos*," albeit in another language (namely French), to the 2005 MBI Prize acceptance speech. A comparative look at Kadare's *ethos* has enabled us to better comprehend the author's particular *posture* of apparent indifference towards and non-engagement with issues of indirectness. Wittman's hypothesis is thus reinforced: Kadare conceivably rewards "Bellos the mediator," more than the linguistic transaction proper and the transmission of an 'invariant' in the source text.

Kadare had perceived and perhaps foreseen (and most likely enhanced) Bellos' important mediation in his reception in English. In fact, in the aftermath of the MBI Prize, Bellos repeatedly resurfaced as a mediator of Kadare's work in the English-speaking literary landscape. On 29 July 2005 (a few weeks after winning the MBI Prize), he rose up in "defence" of Kadare's image in the dissidence debate.⁶¹ Recently, Bellos contributed a considerable piece which discussed Kadare as world literature in the special issue of *World Literature Today* after Kadare obtained the 2020 Neustadt Prize for Literature.⁶² These two interventions, alongside the numerous forewords to his translations of Kadare's works and reviews, show how Bellos has consistently helped forge the *posture* of Kadare as a universal, anti-totalitarian, and world literature writer in the Anglophone world.

The values foregrounded by Bellos had already been extensively ascribed to Kadare in another centre of the world literary field: Paris. A closer look at his discourse unveils the influence of the ascription

⁶¹ Bellos, "In Defence of Ismail Kadare".

⁶² Bellos, "Why Should We Read Ismail Kadare?", 54-55.

of value to, and consecration of, Kadare in the French literary field. Further research is needed to determine to what extent Kadare's principal mediator has reasserted the legitimation frames that had been progressively forged in French and hence served as a consecrating connector. If this hypothesis is confirmed, to what extent does this imply that Kadare has directed his own reception in English by capitalising on indirect translation? In other words, did the writer perform a *tour de force* as his own mediator by deliberately considering triangulation as a legitimation opportunity during his first recognition event in English? If that is indeed the case, then the writer of this 'small literature', by pushing the right buttons, has undeniably exerted agency in his own reception within the centre of the world literary field by remodelling traditional values associated with indirect translation and by drawing on the positive mediation potential of the triangulation. Although these hypotheses remain tentative for the moment, further research is encouraged in order to better understand and nuance the centrality and agency of New York as the consecrating centre of world literature.

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Manuel Azuaje-Alamo

Waseda University

ORCID 0000-0001-7687-8854

mel.alamo.academic@gmail.com

Intercultural and Intersemiotic Translation as Autobiography in Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha*

Widely known throughout the West as the representative poet of the haiku tradition, Matsuo Bashō lived in seventeenth-century Japan and, besides haiku and renga poetry, also wrote a series of poetic travelogues. Adriana Lisboa's 2007 novel *Rakushisha* prominently features one of these travelogues, Bashō's *Saga Diary* 嵯峨日記, which narrates one of the poet's journeys to Kyoto. Furthermore, Lisboa intertextualizes this travelogue by featuring three main characters all of whom perform different but parallel translational acts on Bashō's text: (1) the Brazilian-Japanese female translator, Yukiko, who translates *Saga Diary* into Portuguese; (2) Haruki, Yukiko's ex-lover, who is tasked with illustrating this Portuguese-language translation; and (3) Celina, Haruki's new companion and the novel's main narrator, who travels with him to Japan and, influenced by the diary format of Bashō's original, re-writes *The Saga Diary*'s itinerary using a twenty-first-century, Brazilian-centered global tone, all while embedding Bashō's original text into her narrative. This article analyses the ways in which Lisboa's *Rakushisha* handles these different modes of translation by considering its structure and themes while also comparing Lisboa's Portuguese-language text against Bashō's original in classical Japanese.

Keywords: classical Japanese literature; Bashō; translation; Latin American literature; Adriana Lisboa; travelogues

Introduction: translating and thinking Japan from a Latin American place of enunciation

Se há uma relação entre o crescente interesse pelo haikai e a projeção internacional do Japão moderno, essa relação é bem mais complicada do que a de simples causa e efeito. Isso porque a imagem do novo Japão parece ser, entre nós, objeto de projeções várias.¹

The position that Japanese literature occupies within the context of Latin American literature is somewhat special. Although Japanese literature does not enjoy the same level of familiarity in the continent as that enjoyed by Western literature, it has nonetheless served as a source of inspiration for many Latin American writers. Various reasons can be posited in order to explain this attraction for Japanese literature, but, in any case, the result has been that works by multiple Latin American authors show influence from Japanese literature.² Perhaps more so than in Hispanic America, in Brazilian letters a veritable local tradition of haiku-writing has been partaken in by writers of the caliber and fame of Afrânio Peixoto (1876-1947), Guilherme de Almeida (1890-1969), Paulo Leminski (1944-1989), Haroldo de Campos (1929-2003), and Millôr Fernandes (1923-2012).

¹ Franchetti, “O haikai no Brasil”, 24.

² Within the context of interest in Japanese literature on the part of twentieth-century Latin American literature authors, it is also worth mentioning that representative writers from the three most populous countries in the region – Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil – published important translations of works of Japanese literature. They are the Mexican Octavio Paz, the Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, and the Brazilian Haroldo de Campos, who translated into their languages, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* おくのほそ道, by Matsuo Bashō, *The Pillow Book* 枕草子 by Sei Shōnagon 清少納言, and the Noh play *Hagoromo* 羽衣, respectively. Needless to say, as well, that a major contributing factor behind the interest in Japanese culture and literature in Brazil can also be traced back to the waves of Japanese migration that started in 1908 with the arrival in Brazilian coasts of the passenger ship *Kasato Maru*. A recent analysis of Nikkei Brazilian literature can be found in Ignacio López-Calvo’s *Japanese Brazilian Saudades: Diasporic Identities & Cultural Production* (2019).

Notable in the twenty-first century, from the perspective of non-Nikkei Latin American writing with Japanese themes, are the examples of the Peruvian-Mexican novelist Mario Bellatin and of the Brazilian novelist Adriana Lisboa. The former has written a series of postmodern fictional “false” translations from putative works of Japanese literature,³ while the latter is one of a very small group of writers in modern Latin American letters to write semi-autobiographical fiction based on actual lived experiences in Japan.⁴ This article will focus on Adriana Lisboa’s Japanese-themed novel *Rakushisha* (2007) and will read it as a postmodern re-writing and translation of Japanese classical writer Matsuo Bashō’s 松尾芭蕉 (1644–1694) haiku narrative *Saga Diary* 嵯峨日記 (1691).

Widely known throughout the West as the representative poet of the Japanese haiku tradition, Bashō lived in seventeenth-century Japan and, besides haiku and renga poetry, also wrote a series of poetic travelogues such as *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* おくのほそ道 (1702) or *Travelogue of Weather-Beaten Bones* 野ざらし紀行 (1698), amongst other works. Lisboa’s 2007 novel *Rakushisha* prominently features one of these travelogues, *Saga Diary* 嵯峨日記, which narrates one of Bashō’s journeys to Kyoto. Furthermore, Lisboa intertextualizes this travelogue by featuring three main characters all of whom perform different but parallel translational acts on Bashō’s text: (1) the Brazilian-Japanese female translator, Yukiko, who translates *Saga Diary* into Portuguese; (2) Haruki, Yukiko’s ex-lover who is tasked with illustrating this Portuguese-language translation; and (3) Celina, Haruki’s new lover and the novel’s main narrator, who travels with him to Japan and, influenced by the diary format of Bashō’s original, re-writes *The Saga*

³ Works by Bellatin dealing with Japanese themes include *El jardín de la señora Murakami* (2000), *Shiki Nagaoka: Una nariz de ficción* (2001), *Biografía ilustrada de Mishima* (2009), and *El pasante de notario Murasaki Shikibu* (2011). My use above of the term “false translation” is taken from López-Calvo’s “The Death of the Author through False Translation in Mario Bellatin’s Orientalised Japan.”

⁴ By “non-Nikkei Latin American writing” here I mean writers lacking Japanese descent. As Ignacio López-Calvo’s recent *Japanese Brazilian Saudades: Diasporic Identities & Cultural Production* makes clear, Brazilians of Japanese descent have a long and rich history of semi-autobiographical or self-reflective fiction.

Diary's itinerary using a twenty-first century, Brazilian-centered global tone, all while embedding Bashō's original text into her narrative.

Amongst modern and contemporary Latin American writers, Lisboa is not alone in her interest in Bashō and his haiku and *haibun*.⁵ Past generations of Latin American writers have engaged widely and deeply with the Japanese tradition of haiku. For example, one need only think of Octavio Paz's ambitious Spanish-language translation of *The Roads to the Deep North* (first edition 1957, with a revised second edition in 1970), which was the first version of that text to be translated into a Western language. Paz's translation even served as the base text for one of the first complete translation of this classical Japanese travelogue into the Portuguese language, which was carried out by the Brazilian poet Olga Savary.⁶ Similarly, Argentinian short-story writer and poet Jorge Luis Borges, too, tried his hand at tanka and haiku poems, works which he included in his late poetry collections, *El oro de los tigres* (1972) and *La cifra* (1980).⁷

However, what makes Lisboa's case stand out is that she possesses the experience of living in Japan and of having studied its literature and culture *in situ*. In 2006 she was a research fellow at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies 国際日本文化研究センター, Japan's premier literature and culture research center located in the outskirts of the ancient capital of Kyoto. Because of this experience *Rakushisha* is a novel that displays a rich tapestry composed of metatextual references to the actual Japanese geographies in which Lisboa lived and intertextual references to the works by Bashō that she read while she was there.

⁵ *Haiku* 俳句 is a traditional Japanese poetic form consisting of three verses in a 5-7-5 mora pattern. *Haibun* 俳文 is a prose narrative or chronicle in which haikus appear intercalated with prose sections. The most representative are those by Bashō, and they usually consist of recollections of a journey by a haiku poet – or *haijin* 俳人, to use the Japanese-language term – and his poetic reactions in the form of haikus to the vistas or moods that he experienced on the road.

⁶ *Matsuo Bashō. Sendas de Oku*. Translated by Olga Savary. São Paulo: Roswitha Kempf, 1983.

⁷ For an analysis of Borges's haiku and tanka in these collections, see Hagimoto, "Borges and Japan".

Considered one of the salient voices of contemporary Brazilian literature, Lisboa has authored a series of introspective and first-person voiced novels that describe the inner lives of modern Brazilian women. In novels such as *Os Fios da memória* (1999), *Sinfonia em branco* (2001), and *Rakushisha* (2007), she has portrayed a Brazilian female subjectivity that has garnered her praise and marked her as a significant voice in contemporary Brazilian letters. Her work has been analyzed as being a depiction of the ways in which personal trauma is connected to national Brazilian history,⁸ or as the reaction of a female subjectivity against the patriarchy of the dictatorship.⁹ However, an extremely interesting facet to her work is that related to East Asian literature and culture. Joining the Japanese-themed *Rakushisha*, there is also the novel *Hanói* (2013), the collection of traditional Japanese folktales for children *Contos populares japoneses* (2008), and *Caligrafias* (2004), a short story collection intercalated with works of East Asian calligraphy, reminiscent of a mix between Japanese Nobel prize-winner Kawabata Yasunari's *Palm-of-the-hand Stories* (1971) and traditional Japanese text scrolls illustrated with calligraphy pieces. This is all to say that Lisboa has functioned as a sort of cultural ambassador for Japanese culture within the world of contemporary Brazilian letters. This role as a producer of cultural translation is precisely one of the themes that I will pick up in the following analysis.

Furthermore, Lisboa herself has also worked as a literary translator, not only translating from English into Portuguese Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, Stephen King's *The Night Shift*, and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals*, amongst other works, but also translating from French Maurice Blanchot's *L'Entretien infini*. Thus, Lisboa's own multilingual experiences with literary translation, and her knowledge of the Japanese language and culture that she gained during her stay as a research fellow in Kyoto, are key to this article's reading of her novel as a cultural translation and post-modern re-writing of Bashō's *Saga Diary*.

In the following sections I will analyze the plot of the novel and the multiple reworkings within it of the theme of translation

⁸ Brandellero, "Family Secrets and National Trauma in the Work of Adriana Lisboa".

⁹ Nielson, "Patriarchy's Traumatic Afterlives".

that Lisboa weaves throughout its narrative through juxtaposing the journeys undertaken by its two main protagonists. In the first section I will focus my analysis on the role of Celina as cultural translator and rewriter of Bashō's *Saga Diary*. The focus there will be on intercultural intertextuality between Bashō's Japanese texts and Celina's embodying of Lisboa's authorial voice that explains Japanese cultural terms and concepts. In the second section I will focus on the character of Haruki, and how he, an illustrator and book designer, is responsible for adapting Bashō's text into a visual medium, thus representing the figure of the intersemiotic translator, a figure often eclipsed in discussions surrounding literary translations.

1. Translation as intercultural translation in *Rakushisha*: the character Celina and the authorial voice

Mesmo em Kyoto sinto saudades de Kyoto.¹⁰

Rakushisha possesses an alternating narrative structure that intertwines, around the axis of Bashō's *Saga Diary*, the stories of its two main characters. One of them is Haruki, a Brazilian Nikkei born in São Paulo. He is an illustrator who has been commissioned by a publisher to design the cover of the Portuguese translation of Bashō's *Saga Diary*. The other protagonist is Celina, who one day meets Haruki by chance in the Rio de Janeiro metro, and who ends up falling into a relationship with him that, while having hints of romance in the beginning, is still at the platonic level when they travel together to Japan.

Lisboa's re-writing in *Rakushisha* of *Saga Diary* is based on her real knowledge of the Japanese language and her experiences in the country. Because of this, the Japan featured in her novel is far from being an over-exoticized portrayal of the country, a common feature of Japanese-themed works in Latin American letters. As Brazilian Japanese literature researcher Paulo Franchetti argues: "O Japão que existe no imaginário brasileiro contemporâneo parece carregado de uma grande percentagem de saudosismo, de idealização do mundo pré-industrial e da

¹⁰ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 16.

vida sob o regime feudal dos Tokugawa. Ou seja, ainda, como sempre, de exotismo.”¹¹ Celina’s Japan is different. For sure, Celina does visit Kyoto’s traditional sites, but she is also as likely to be fascinated by trivial, everyday things, such as the *pachinko* machine parlors that are ubiquitous in the contemporary Japanese metropole.¹²

Perhaps more fruitful than discussing how much latent exoticizing or orientaling gaze can be found in the novel is to ask just what kind of intercultural praxis is embedded within the fact that Celina becomes so knowledgeable about Japanese culture in the mere three weeks of her stay there as a tourist. On its face, the novel is astonishing in this aspect; Celina the tourist becomes, over a short period of time, as knowledgeable about Japanese culture and literature as Lisboa, the Japanese post-graduate literature researcher. In places, this borders on breaking the suspension of disbelief necessary for the narrative. For example, after a mere three weeks Celina, who has until then never been to Japan nor studied Japanese, becomes not only knowledgeable enough in the language to know, for example, that the word “Saturday” in Japan is pronounced “doyoubi,” but also that it is written in Chinese characters as 土曜日, and that those three characters mean “o dia da terra.”¹³ More surprisingly, in the course of the narration, Celina becomes able to make intertextual allusions to seventeenth-century Japanese poetry by Bashō and other poets. Perhaps more surprisingly, Celina also makes repeated visits to the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, located far away from central Kyoto and not a usual tourist destination.¹⁴

My contention here is that Lisboa’s relationship to Celina – the protagonist and narrator who walks the same streets and visits the same research center where Lisboa was based during her stay in Kyoto –

¹¹ Franchetti, “O haikai no Brasil”, 24.

¹² Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 17.

¹³ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 16.

¹⁴ The author of this article has repeatedly visited the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in order to do research. The center is not only located in the outskirts of Kyoto, in a place that is difficult to access if one does not speak Japanese, but many of its facilities are not even open to the general public. The library, for example, can only be accessed by previous appointment.

occurs at the meta-textual level and is reflective of a postmodern understanding of literary creation *as* a kind of translation.¹⁵

At another level, joining Celina as *Rakushisha*'s other protagonist is the Nikkei Brazilian illustrator Haruki. In making him the male counterpart to Celina's story, Lisboa is engaging in an interesting game of mirrors. While Celina is a kind of cultural translator – retreading Bashō's steps and quoting from his haikus in her very own travel diary – Haruki can be seen as a translator working in another medium, that of visual media: he has been tasked with illustrating *Saga Diary*'s Portuguese-language translation. That is to say, he is a kind of intersemiotic translator, tasked with conveying the context of Bashō's poetic travelogue into illustrations to accompany the Brazilian Portuguese-language translation that his ex-lover translated from the Japanese. The term intersemiotic translation was first proposed by linguist Roman Jakobson in his 1959 essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," where it is defined as a "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems."¹⁶

¹⁵ Translation scholar Paul F. Bandia provides a succinct summary of the changes that postmodernist ideas brought to the field's thinking on writing and translation: "In the 1990s translation studies witnessed a powerful intellectual renewal which could be recorded in historical terms as the *postmodern turn*. New approaches to studying translation phenomena revealed the limitations of previous methodologies, bringing to the forefront issues of gender, ethics, postcolonialism, globalization, and minority in translation, all related to what is generally referred to as the postmodern condition. Following the *cultural turn* (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990) in translation studies of the 1980s, these new approaches raised doubts about long-held views on matters of fidelity, sameness, and binary oppositions (such as the relationship between original and translation), introducing other paradigms of investigation such as power relations, ideology, and identity. Translation theory began to acknowledge other definitions of translation ranging from manipulatory rewriting to transformation, subversion, cannibalism, carnivalism, hijacking, and what not (Koskinen 2000). [...] Textuality is seen as open to changing interpretations rather than as a system of fixed meanings" (Bandia, "The Impact of Postmodern Discourse", 54-55). As I explore in this article, Celina's rewriting of Bashō's text reflects such an understanding of the relationship between creative writing and translation.

¹⁶ Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", 233.

Taken together, it can be said that Celina, by writing her diary, performs a cultural translation of *Saga Diary*, describing the locations in the original from a modern Brazilian subjectivity, while Haruki performs a similar translative act, a translation of *Saga Diary* from a literary text into the visual medium of illustration. The fact that their narratives alternate – with Celina narrating the odd chapters and Haruki becoming the focus character of the even ones – further foregrounds the fact that the novel can be taken as an allegory for the process of weaving together two types of different translations of Bashō’s travelogue. These two types of narrators, each embody a different experience and facet of translation – the translator of textual works and the translator of visual works, the translator possessing family ties to the source language and the translator lacking such ties, etc. Through the alternate threading of its chapters, Lisboa achieves a novel that interrogates the links between memory, identity, and the culture and language of the Other.

The Japan that is described in *Rakushisha* has, at first glance, a slight tinge of exoticism. As was mentioned previously, Celina even writes near the beginning of the novel, “Even in Kyoto, I feel nostalgic for Kyoto.” Yet, what in the opening pages of the novel might strike the reader as exoticism is later revealed to be what Kyoto has come to mean for Celina: a foreign location that has allowed her to come to terms with her past. She begins her diary after being in Kyoto for three weeks, and as is eventually revealed, this writing has an ultimately therapeutic undertones: retracing Bashō’s steps in *Saga Diary* becomes for Celina a way of dealing with the lingering sense of loss caused by the past death of her daughter. The nostalgia with which she describes Kyoto is, ultimately, a personal nostalgia for her own past, her dead daughter, and her failed marriage. Kyoto is merely the location that allows her to voice this to herself.

Similar to Celina’s story, Haruki’s also begins by facing a loss: the end of his past romantic relationship with the translator Yukiko. Much in the same way in which Celina will use the text of *Saga Diary* as a kind of roadmap out of her depression, so will Haruki use the creative process behind translating the world of the *Saga Diary* into illustration as an attempt to overcome his relationship with Yukiko.

In this way, the two protagonists of this novel approach Japan as cultural bystanders. Any dialogue that they might have had with the locals as they transit through the Japanese space is not portrayed in the novel. It is rather their inner worlds that progressively unfold as the plot of the novel unravels. Thus, in a manner similar to the film debut of American director Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003), Lisboa's Japan is characterized by a sense of detachment that allows its main protagonists the time and space for inner inspection and reflection.

What we may call the postmodern element in Lisboa's novel is precisely Japan's portrayal mixing and juxtaposing its physical space – with its now global elements of what is termed “Cool Japan” – with the problems of identity and trauma exemplified, in different ways, by the stories of Celina and Haruki. In a way that is concordant with much of Lisboa's past works, the narrative center of *Rakushisha* is its female first-person narrator, Celina, even as Haruki also performs an important role in the novel. After all, echoing the form of Bashō's *Saga Diary*, Celina's story – the one that opens and closes the novel – takes the form of a personal diary. This choice is not a coincidence. Celina herself confesses that she has never kept a diary:

Nunca pensei em ter um diário. Nem quando era menina, nem quando adolescente. Talvez esteja fazendo isso agora só porque não resisti ao papel fabricado no Japão. [...]

Comprei o caderno. O caderno se tornou um diário. Só depois disso me lembrei do poeta Matsuo Bashō e de seu *Saga Nikki*, o *Diário de Saga*. O diário que Bashō escreveu perto daqui, quando estive de visita pela segunda vez ao seu discípulo Mukai Kyorai.¹⁷

The above piece of information is quite something to know for somebody who, as Celina supposedly is, has never been to Japan nor had too much interest in Japanese literature in the past. Celina's stance towards Japanese literature – at times pronouncing herself to be possessed with the amateur's superficial fascination for it while at other times being incredibly knowledgeable of it – is one of the keys for reading

¹⁷ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 35.

the translational dimension of *Rakushisha* as an intertextualization of Bashō's *Saga Diary*.

How does Lisboa intertextualize Bashō in *Rakushisha*? By having its main narrator, Celina, act as a stand-in for herself. As we saw above, Lisboa herself lived in Kyoto and studied Bashō's haikai and *haibun* at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies. On the other hand, fictional character Celina lacks both the experience of having lived in Japan and Lisboa's experience of having studied the language. However, Celina's section, narrated in the first-person, is full of specific references to Japanese literature and culture, the kind of which would probably be unrealistic to have for an average resident of Rio de Janeiro, from which both Haruki and Celina hail. This is quite notable in multiple passages of the novel. In fact, Celina, who joined Haruki's business trip to Japan on a sudden impulse, is shown at times to be more knowledgeable about the country than Haruki himself. Compare, for example, the stances that the two main protagonists have in regard to Matsuo Bashō. Near the beginning of the narrative, in the first chapter of the novel, which is narrated from Celina's female voice, she talks about her thoughts on traveling:

Eu me pergunto se a vida por acaso se faz de reencontros. Talvez se faça muito mais de tangentes, de movimentos periféricos, de olhares fugidios que no instante seguinte já se dissiparam. [...]

Essa é a verdade da viagem.

Eu não sabia.

A viagem nos ensina algumas coisas. Que a vida é o caminho e não o ponto fixo no espaço. Que nós somos como a passagem dos dias e dos meses e dos anos, como escreveu o poeta japonês Matsuo Bashō num diário de viagem, e aquilo que possuímos de fato, nosso único bem, é a capacidade de locomoção. É o talento para viajar.¹⁸

In this manner, within the opening pages of the novel, Celina presents herself to readers as a cultural translator, intertextualizing Bashō's text for her narrative purposes. However, attendant readers will be able to

¹⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 14.

infer the coyness, or Lisboa's coyness, expressed in the passage above through the veiled and understated reference to "um diário de viagem" [a certain travel diary]. As would be clear to Japanese readers of this novel, the text from which this idea is taken, whose identity Celina-Lisboa intentionally glosses over, is actually one of the most famous passages in Bashō's most widely-recognized masterpiece, the *haibun* *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*.

月日は百代の過客にして行きかふ年も又旅人なり。

Tsukihi wa hyakutai no kakaku ni shite yukikau toshi mo mata tabibito nari.

[The moon and the sun are eternal travelers; the years, which come and go, are also travelers]¹⁹

The postmodern game of mirrors in Lisboa's opening passage, however, is further enriched when one realizes that Bashō himself had borrowed the image of days, months, and years as passengers or travelers of Time from another work of world literature, Tang-dynasty poet Li Po's 李白 (701-762) classical Chinese poem "Preface to the Feast in Peach and Plum Garden on a Spring Night" (春夜宴桃李園序), which opened with the same image. All this is to say that in the mere opening pages Celina displays a notable deftness in handling references to classical Japanese literature. While at the surface level the opening passage might read as being similar to Lisboa's past narratives of female subjectivity contrasted against the backdrop of Brazilian modern history, the opening chapter of *Rakushisha* subtly hints at what it might just be: a Portuguese-language attempt at re-writing a *haibun* travel narrative. This effect is compounded almost a hundred pages later, when the rest of the opening passage of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* is quoted, through indirect speech in the form of Haruki's stream-of-consciousness musings during his visit to the place where Bashō's house was located in Tokyo:

¹⁹ Bashō, *Bashō Bunshū*, 50. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Japanese are by the author.

A viagem sempre é pela viagem em si. É para ter a estrada outra vez debaixo dos pés. O lar de Bashō, como o dos navegantes, como daqueles homens que passam a vida a conduzir cavalos, é em qualquer parte. É o lugar aonde a viagem decidir levá-lo.

Muitas pessoas morreram na estrada. Entre elas, os poetas Tu Fu, Li P'o, Saigyō e Sōgi. Como a nuvem se desmanchando no céu. Os meses e os dias não são outra coisa senão peregrinos. Assim disse o chinês Li P'o, séculos antes: o céu e a terra e todo o cosmos estão na esfera da transformação.²⁰

The above passage contains sentences that are either direct calques from the opening of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, especially the lines in italics in the passage quoted above, or that play on words and expression present therein. The sections I emphasized above are taken from the opening passage of the text, in which Bashō famously alludes to the Chinese and Japanese “ancients” (*kojin* 古人) who preceded him in traveling and writing poetry:

古人も多く旅に死せるあり。[...] 片雲の風に誘はれて
Kojinmo ōku Tabini shineruari. Hen'un no kaze ni sasowarete
[Among the Ancients too many were there that died in the road. (...) Carried away by the wisps of the clouds.]²¹

In this way, in a surreptitious manner, passages from Bashō's renowned works are embedded, uncredited, within Lisboa's prose as she attempts to rewrite this *haibun*. These allusions are not mere references to Bashō, but are rather an homage to the praxis in *haibun* of intertextualizing allegories, passages, and verses from the Chinese and Japanese tradition.

²⁰ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 121-122 (emphasis added).

²¹ Bashō, *Bashō Bunshū*, 50. Part of what makes this allusion by Lisboa interesting is the fact that she mistranslates the original passage, which in a way gives credence to the fact that she was writing, or attempting to write, her references to Japanese literature directly from Japanese sources while she was studying the language. The expression that she translates in Portuguese as “Como a nuvem se desmanchando no céu” is from the Japanese *Hen'un no kaze ni sasowarete* 片雲の風に誘はれて, but the original rather means something closer to “similar to how a cloud is invited by the wind [I have also traveled].”

What is interesting in Lisboa's novel is the fact that surely many of these allusions would be invisible to most Portuguese-language readers.

For sure, Lisboa's novel lacks any scene in which Celina actually actively composes any haiku in reaction to her surroundings, but, through its conscious choice to use a diary format, its recurrent use of quotes from Bashō's oeuvre, and its sensibility in regard to space and movement, it aims to hit the same tones but in a different key as Bashō's *Saga Diary*. In this manner, within the opening pages of the novel, Celina presents herself to her readers as a cultural translator, intertextualizing Bashō for her narrative purposes. My contention is that we can understand Celina as a cultural translator; in *Rakushisha* her story can be read as an attempt to re-write a *haibun* in Portuguese, an attempt informed by Lisboa's own experiences in Japan, as the life story of Celina lacks any reason for her frequent references to Japanese literature or culture.

Celina's own position as the cultural translator within the novel is thrown into starker relief if we compare her stance toward Bashō with that of Haruki. Unlike Celina, who in the opening pages of the novel already is making an intertextual appeal for the validity of Bashō's philosophy of travel, Haruki – despite being of Japanese descent himself – is shown to be rather detached from that poet's tradition and outlook. Upon recollecting how it came to be that he was tasked with illustrating this work, Haruki nostalgically reminisces that:

E então as páginas, poucas do *Diário de Saga*, *Saga Nikki*, foram guiadas até chegar às mãos de Haruki. Yukiko, a tradutora, já tinha falado a ele sobre Bashō antes que o silêncio aparecesse na vida – vida? – que ela e Haruki tinham juntos. Um antigo poeta do Japão. Nada que interessasse particularmente a Haruki: apenas na medida em que tudo o que interessava a essa mulher era mais urgente do que a fome, do que a sede, do que o sono, do que as catástrofes naturais, globais, planetárias, interplanetárias, cósmicas.

Assim, Matsuo Bashō veio parar em sua vida através dela.²²

Haruki's stance toward his own identity as a non-Japanese-speaking Nikkei Brazilian is resonant with that sensibility explored in

²² Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 89.

Lopez-Calvo's *Japanese Brazilian Saudades: Diasporic Identities & Cultural Production* (2019). I will explore this angle in more detail in the next section, but what is important here in relation to the role played by Celina in the novel is that, unlike her, Haruki provides no cultural commentary, no intertextual reference to Japan and its literature. Instead, Celina is the one with the cultural and sentimental connection to ancient and traditional Japanese literature which Haruki lacks. As if to underline this, during his business trip Lisboa makes Haruki travel *alone* to Tokyo (the political modern capital of Japan), leaving Celina behind in Kyoto, the classical imperial capital of the country.

The connection that Celina displays to notions of place and movement is a theme that has been considered by past scholarship of this novel.²³ Lisboa herself has also commented on how her own sense of transit during periods of living in Brazil, France, and Japan all contributed to *Rakushisha*'s theme of wandering and reencounter.²⁴

Some have connected the ubiquity of what philosopher Marc Augé has termed "supermodern non-places" (coffee shops, international franchises, etc.) in her novels with a larger interest by Latin American writers of her generation toward a sense of a globally shared reality.²⁵ As Cecily Raynor has argued, "Lisboa's many references to popular culture remind us of the poetics of the Macondo movement of the 1990s

²³ For example, see Lisboa de Mello, "Deslocamento, iniciação, transfiguração, em *Rakushisha*"; Gomes, "Os sentidos da viagem em *Rakushisha*, de Adriana Lisboa"; or Vejmelka, "Viagens e leituras japonesas em *Rakushisha*, de Adriana Lisboa".

²⁴ This is most succinctly stated in an interview she gave to the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo* in 2013 on the occasion of the publication of her novel *Hanói*, some years after the publication of *Rakushisha*. See Trigo, "Em 'Hanói', Adriana Lisboa retrata personagens fora do lugar": "O tema do desenraizamento, explicitado na situação dos protagonistas, me parece recorrente na sua ficção[.] Você se sente deslocada no mundo? A literatura é uma forma de se encontrar?///ADRIANA: Tem sido um tema recorrente de alguns anos para cá, nos últimos três romances. Quando escrevi *Rakushisha*, morava no Brasil, mas tinha as memórias de ter sido imigrante na França, com uma porção de dificuldades. Para escrever o livro passei um mês em Kyoto com uma bolsa da Fundação Japão. O tema do deslocamento, do desenraizamento, era óbvio. No ano seguinte vim para o Colorado, uma mudança de país e também para uma paisagem física tão distinta" (unpaged).

²⁵ See Gonçalves da Costa, "*Rakushisha*: heterotopias, não-lugares e silêncio".

and writers such as Alberto Fuguet and Edmundo Paz Soldán.”²⁶ Lisboa de Mello also coincides in pointing out that efforts by contemporary writers such as Lisboa to portray a “flat” modern world are resonant with larger changes in contemporary Brazilian society at large:

Tornaram-se também recorrentes na literatura contemporânea as mudanças espaciais dos protagonistas, que, situados temporariamente em outros países e culturas, enfrentam a solidão, o estranhamento e encetam a busca de si mesmos. Essa abertura à cultura do outro tornou-se mais recorrente nas últimas três décadas da literatura brasileira, o que pode ser atribuído à globalização e ao advento da internet a partir dos anos 1990.²⁷

However, while valid to a degree, these approaches to this novel fail to understand Lisboa herself as a translator and *Rakushisha* as a cultural translation or adaptation of *haibun*, an ellipsis that is evident in their failure to notice that *Rakushisha*’s aesthetics of wandering and displacement are not merely reflections of a Latin American subjectivity in an age of global commerce, but rather also a reflection or *refraction* of the aesthetic notion of *wandering* (*shōyō* 逍遙) so prevalent in *haibun* literature.²⁸

Of course, as explained in the introductory section of the present article, already in the twentieth century there was, in Spanish-speaking Latin American and perhaps more prominently still in Brazil, a rich local tradition of haiku writing. In Brazil it could even be argued that the local tradition to some degree even eclipsed works from the source Japanese tradition. As Paulo Franchetti, an important researcher of Japanese literature in Brazil, argued already in 2002, five years before Lisboa’s novel was published, the tradition of haikai was firmly

²⁶ Raynor, “The Digital Ruins of *Amores expressos*”, 141.

²⁷ Lisboa de Mello, “Deslocamento, iniciação, transfiguração, em *Rakushisha*”, 131.

²⁸ For an exploration of the concept of *shōyō*, its connection to Taoism, and how notions of wandering as a form of meditation or philosophy towards life is reflected in Bashō’s work, see “Bashō’s Fūkyō and the Spirit of Shōyōyū,” the third chapter of Qiu’s *Bashō and the Dao*. My use of “refraction” in the above sentence is an extrapolation from David Damrosch’s notion of world literature as a “refraction” of national literatures.

established within Brazilian letters: “Mas, quando se pensa em haikai escrito em português, os nomes que logo nos vêm à mente não são de *nihonjin*, mas os de Afrânio Peixoto, Guilherme de Almeida, Haroldo de Campos, Millôr Fernandes e Paulo Leminski, entre outros.”²⁹ In fact, Lisboa’s novel shows that she is also conscious of this local Brazilian haiku tradition when she opens her novel with the following epigraph in the form of a haiku by the Brazilian poet Paulo Leminski:

Amar é um elo
entre o azul e
o amarelo³⁰

As such then, we can say that *Rakushisha* stands in an intertextual triangulation between the Japanese tradition of haiku, the modern Brazilian tradition of haiku, and Lisboa’s own narrative praxis of subjective memory aesthetics.

Further imbricating the act of translation to the structure of the novel, however, is the novel’s explicit use of Lisboa’s own translation of *Saga Diary* from Japanese.³¹ This is because Celina not only makes references to Bashō’s original text, but the actual full text of the *Saga Diary* appears intercalated throughout the narrative translated into Portuguese. The opening of the *Saga Diary*, for example, is quoted in full across two pages,³² and from that point onward, keeping pace with the novel’s narrative, the Japanese text is quoted in Portuguese translation throughout the other sections of the novel.³³ The final pages of the novel proper are also the closing passages of *Saga Diary*.³⁴

Considering the fact that the full version of the *Saga Diary* in a recent English translation takes only ten pages, one begins to realize how

²⁹ Franchetti, “O haikai”, 23.

³⁰ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 9.

³¹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 195.

³² Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 50-51.

³³ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 70-72, 83-86, 93, 104-107, 142-143, 153-157, 166-167, 175-176, 184.

³⁴ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 189-192.

the entirety of the text has been embedded into Lisboa's text.³⁵ What is notable to my argument in regard to Lisboa's postmodern mirror games involving the process of translation described in the novel is the fact that the translation that Celina is "reading" within the text is not the text that Yukiko "translated" as is implied by the novel's description of it,³⁶ neither is it an existent translation into the Portuguese language. It is, instead, an original Portuguese-language translation from the classical Japanese written by Lisboa herself, a translation that, so far, is only available to Portuguese readers embedded within Lisboa's narrative framework of this novel.

This is something that is not readily apparent to the novel's reader. It is only in the novel's acknowledgements section, at the very end of the novel, that Lisboa reveals the key fact that the passages that we have been reading throughout the novel *Rakushisha* are actually a new and original translation of the *Saga Diary* written completely by herself:

Para a tradução do *Diário de Saga* usei a edição japonesa *Bashō Bunshū – Nihon Koten Zensho*, Tóquio, Asahi Shinbunshakan, 1955, e as traduções de René Sieffert (em *Journaux de voyage*, Presses Orientalistes de France, 2000) e David Landis Barnhill (em *Bashō's Journey*, State University of New York Press, 2005). A compreensão do original em japonês não teria sido possível sem a ajuda de Sonia Ninomiya.³⁷

The novel thus depicting both a translated piece itself as well as multiple fictional allegories for the process of translation (those of Celina, Yukiko and Haruki), translation and its different modes should be considered the most prominent theme of *Rakushisha*.

2. Intersemiotic translation and identity: Haruki's journey

Nenhum vínculo com o país de seus antepassados. Nada.
Nenhuma informação, nenhuma curiosidade.³⁸

³⁵ For the English-language version referred to here, see: Matsuo Bashō and David Landis Barnhill. *Bashō's Journey: The Literary Prose of Matsuo Bashō*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2005. *Saga Diary* occupies pages 79-89.

³⁶ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 50-53.

³⁷ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 195.

³⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 52.

In contrast to Celina's section in the novel, which has traditionally been read as depicting her self-healing process following the death of her daughter during her now-finished marriage, past scholarship has regarded Haruki's section as dealing either with his stance towards his identity as a Nikkei Brazilian or as his own journey of self-healing from a past torrid love affair with the translator Yukiko. For example, contrasting what would be the usual expectation for a narrative portraying a Nikkei Brazilian character returning to the land of his forefathers, Marcel Vejmelka remarks that: "Mais do que enfrentar as suas raízes japonesas, no Japão Haruki enfrenta seu amor desesperado por uma mulher casada e solidifica a sua identidade enquanto artista gráfico."³⁹

In a sense, despite his Japanese background, Haruki can only engage in an intersemiotic translation of *Saga Diary* because he *does not speak or read* the language of his forbears. The first chapter in the novel featuring him shows him perusing the Japanese original text of *Saga Diary* in the Rio de Janeiro metro. However, after Celina, meeting him for the first time in that train car, asks him if he can actually read it, Haruki's relationship to the language of his descent is a fraught one.

Haruki admits to her that yes, he is indeed "japonês, mas eu não estava lendo o livro, estava folheando. Não falo japonês. Está vendo estes símbolos? Podia ser grego. Podia ser russo. Não conheço nenhum. Não tenho a menor ideia do que querem dizer."⁴⁰ Separated from his cultural heritage by this language barrier, throughout the novel Haruki negotiates his own sense of identity as he moves through Japan. More than a journey in search of his roots, his visit to Japan becomes a journey to overcome his past relationship with Yukiko, his ex-lover who at the same time is also, in his own eyes, a much "better" Nikkei Brazilian than him.

In Haruki's sections there are many instances of stream-of-consciousness narration in which it becomes clear that Yukiko's own bilingualism and biculturalism is, for Haruki, one of the reasons for the end of his relationship. Yukiko is the absent translator; she is never

³⁹ Vejmelka, "O Japão", 221.

⁴⁰ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 26.

shown in the narrative save in flashbacks. In a manner that reads almost like a metatextual play on the notion of the invisibility of translators described in Lawrence Venuti's *The Translator Invisibility* (1995), *Rakushisha*, a novel that is on many levels about the act of translation, lacks any actual scenes featuring the fictional Brazilian translator of *Saga Diary*. Yukiko does not appear in an active role once in the novel, only in Haruki's flashbacks, but her presence and her ultimate role in being the one responsible for Celina and Haruki's physical presence in Japan hangs over the whole novel. With hints of a sense of inferiority, Haruki posits her as his complete opposite: "Ao contrário de Haruki, uma profunda conhecedora do Japão. Ao contrário de Haruki, fluente na língua. Tradutora de japonês. Entre outras coisas."⁴¹

It was Yukiko who had recommended Haruki as the illustrator for the Portuguese-language translation that she has written. She was the literary translator of the narrative, and she passes on the role now to Haruki so that he becomes the intersemiotic translator of Bashō and illustrates this translated travelogue for a Brazilian audience.

His journey to Kyoto eventually provides Haruki with a sense of closure from his romantic entanglement with her, a closure that will, ironically, take place *literally* within the cover and pages of the Portuguese-language book that they co-produce: "O Japão saltando como um soluço para dentro de sua vida, tudo por causa dela. Yukiko. A tradutora. Hoje, só isso: a tradutora. Os nomes dos dois iam se casar na ironia da capa de um livro. Iam colocar seus nomes no papel. Amorosamente, friamente, levianamente."⁴²

Insofar as Haruki is actually involved in the physical and commercial endeavor of translating a work of literature – in this case the upcoming Portuguese-language translation of Bashō's *Saga Diary* – his role in the novel is markedly different from that of Celina, who acts as a re-writer and cultural translator of a Japanese *haibun* into a modern Brazilian travel narrative. Furthermore, one of the factors that makes Lisboa's novel so germane to a reading based on translation studies is the fact that Haruki's role as illustrator of foreign literature foregrounds an aspect

⁴¹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 122.

⁴² Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 23.

of translation that is often overlooked: book design and paratextual material surrounding a translated work.

In his monograph *Re-Covered Rose: A Case Study in Book Cover Design as Intersemiotic Translation* (2011), Marco Sonzogni succinctly states some of the issues involved in cover design and translation, all of which are also applicable to the case of translated foreign literature:

Should there be a relationship of fidelity or integrity between a cover and its book? Also, should that relationship be safeguarded as recognition of the intentions of the author? And should the prospective reader, who may not be familiar with the text, be taken into account? [...] Clearly, by negotiating between the verbal and the visual, book covers reveal *the cultural assumptions* of their designer, of their authors and of the readers of the texts.⁴³

Being in many cases the venue in which the reader first encounters a text from a foreign culture, then, book covers can be said to play a key role, perhaps even more so that in the case of local works of literature whose paratexts are more familiar to local readers. After all, “book covers translate the verbal signs of the text into a (predominantly) non-verbal sign-system of culturally encoded images.”⁴⁴ Haruki then stands as a mediator between a classical work of Japanese literature and its potential Brazilian readership. His very presence in Japan is tied to his role as illustrator of *Saga Diary*.

This truth is underscored in *Rakushisha* in the key scene near the beginning of the novel in which Celina first meets Haruki when he is about to disembark at Rio de Janeiro’s Botafogo metro station. Shortly before their meeting, as Haruki was starting to ponder the work ahead of him, he is shown considering precisely the kind of intersemiotic possibilities of translating Bashō’s work into a visual medium:

Certo, havia um prazer nisso: tirar da mochila um livro em japonês e folheá-lo interessado, *como se estivesse entendendo alguma coisa*. Como se os motivos que o fizeram apanhá-lo, naquela mesma tarde, na biblioteca não fossem apenas

⁴³ Sonzogni, *Re-Covered Rose*, 4 (emphasis added).

⁴⁴ Sonzogni, *Re-Covered Rose*, 4.

estéticos, apenas ver aquele monte de sinais gráficos indecifráveis juntos e tentar saber em que podiam colaborar nas ilustrações.

Virar as páginas para um lado, para o outro, e de soslaio acompanhar a reação dos mais próximos, os olhares indisfarçados.⁴⁵

Contrasting the visual quality of Japanese calligraphy, Haruki begins to ponder their possible adaptations into illustrations legible to a local public, that is to say to consider the possible intersemiotic translations of this foreign Japanese text, both as an intersemiotic translation of *Saga Diary*'s linguistic and literary content, but also of the effect caused by the (to a Brazilian reader) unintelligible Japanese characters in which it is written. Furthermore, there is in Haruki's initial encounter with Bashō's Japanese text an interesting layer of performativity. He himself knows that he does not understand a word of it, yet at the same time perceives a sort of pleasure from the gazes around him ("a reação dos mais próximos, os olhares indisfarçados"), because he understands that in their eyes he himself is the Other that can mediate and translate this text for them. It is this act of self-voyeurism, of looking at himself as others probably look at him, that starts the action proper of the novel, because it is his performance of "reading" Bashō's *Saga Diary* while riding the Rio de Janeiro metro that makes Celina talk to him for the first time. Meaningfully, initially Celina herself is not even able to tell if what Haruki was reading was Japanese or Chinese.⁴⁶

Throughout the novel there is a sense of sexual tension and budding romance between the two main protagonists, with the shadow of Haruki's ex-lover hovering in the background. Thus, if we are to think of Haruki as the intersemiotic translator of *Saga Diary*, of Celina as the cultural translator or adapter of the *Saga Diary*, and of Yukiko as the textual translator of *Saga Diary*, what emerges is a love triangle between symbols of different types of translation. Seen from this perspective, *Rakushisha* can thus be read as tale about three different but interacting aspects of translating a work of foreign literature.

⁴⁵ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 24 (emphasis added).

⁴⁶ "Isso aí que você lia é japonês ou chinês?" (Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 25).

Conclusion: Bashō in Brazilian travelogue

As we have explored in this article, while *Rakushisha* has prominently been read in the same vein of much of Lisboa's previous first-person and self-reflective past oeuvre, once due consideration is given to the fact that the praxis of translation is deeply embedded in both its form and content, a richer subtext is laid bare from which to enjoy the novel. This subtext reveals a hidden autobiography, as the novel is a fictionalized account not only of Lisboa's own stay in Kyoto and her research at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies, but it is also a fictionalized account of the making of her own Portuguese-language translation of Bashō's *Saga Diary*, whose full text is to be found within the novel. The conceit of the novel is that this is a translation written directly from the Japanese original by the character Yukiko, whereas, as the novel's epilogue reveals, it was actually written by Lisboa herself from the Japanese original and an English-language translation. Not a traditional annotated translation, Lisboa's text is, rather, a fictionalized translation in a heavy autobiographical key; Bashō's full text is given, but instead of the usual accompanying critical apparatus of an annotated translation, Lisboa offers her own insights both as a novelist and as a student of Japanese language and literature.

Rakushisha's project is fresh in its endeavor. It is not a display of a translation of *Saga Diary* with an attached commentary, nor is it even a display of a translation with a behind-the-scenes description of *how* it was translated. Rather, it is a display of a full translation from a work of classical Japanese literature while also being, *at the same time*, two other stories: a story about how we have the potential to rewrite these works as we weave them into our modern sensibility in our everyday lives, as Celina does; and a story about how works of world literature are refracted on the material culture of the culture that imports and translates them, as Haruki's endeavors to find a way to illustrate Bashō's text shows.

In this configuration of reading then, *Rakushisha* becomes a text that gains layers of meaning as it invites its readers to think across the linguistic, semiotic, and spatial boundaries through which its protagonists, and implied author/translator, move. "Translation" is, after all, another word for movement.

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Olivia Holloway

U.S. Military Academy

ORCID 0000-0003-2005-0454

olivia.holloway@westpoint.edu

Prosthetic Poetics: Projecting Companionship in Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha* (2007)

Adriana Lisboa, poet and novelist, translates Matsuo Bashō's travel diary *Saga Nikki*, inserting it as a paratext of her 2007 novel *Rakushisha*. The present study examines the role of Lisboa's translation and depictions of the fictional translator as crucial narrative keys to the structure and plot of *Rakushisha*. In addition, the functionality of absent characters (including author-poets and translators) that emerge in the form of written text, memory, and imagination prompt an exploration of the definitions of character and genre as well as the visibility of translators in prose and poetry. Examining the underlying, unspoken contracts that occur in translation and all forms of communication reveals some assumptions that readers, writers, translators, and other stakeholders make when participating in these media.

Keywords: translation; poetry; Japan; untranslatability; immigration; belonging

Adriana Lisboa is a prominent Brazilian author and poet now well-known outside Brazil. Author of six novels, as well as poetry, short stories, and children's and youth literature, Lisboa has worked and written from Japan and the U.S. and her work has been translated into several languages. Her novel from 2007, *Rakushisha*, narrates the trip taken by two Brazilians, Haruki and Celina, from Rio de Janeiro to Japan and their divergent trajectories through Tokyo (Haruki) and Kyoto (Celina). Haruki, a Brazilian illustrator of Japanese descent, is recommended by his married ex-lover, Yukiko, to illustrate her translation of Matsuo Bashō's travel diary *Saga Nikki*, an autobiographical account of the

famous haiku poet's wanderings in Kyoto in the summer of 1691.¹ Yukiko's publisher agrees to fund a visa for Haruki travel to Japan for inspiration. Just days before his trip, he meets Celina, a Brazilian woman, and invites her to travel to Japan with him. Celina has been single and alone for six years since the tragic death of her daughter Alice at the age of seven.

The novel intercalates between third-person omniscient narration, diary entries by Celina, and passages from Bashō's *Saga Nikki* in the original Japanese and in Portuguese translation. Lisboa draws from an English translation and her knowledge of Japanese to craft the Portuguese rendition of *Saga Nikki*, effectively translating Bashō's book to Portuguese in multiple forms. It exists in Lisboa's own translation of *Saga Nikki* into Portuguese, interspersed throughout *Rakushisha*. Furthermore, the fictional translation rendered by Yukiko represents the Portuguese translation of *Saga Nikki* within the plot. Finally, readers of *Rakushisha* essentially read yet another iteration of Bashō's travel narrative by witnessing Haruki's and Celina's travels as they follow Bashō's geographic path.

This novel tells several stories, all revolving around minor characters. On one level, they are the minor characters in the protagonists' lives: Haruki's deceased father and his ex-lover; Celina's estranged husband and the daughter she lost in the car accident. On another level, *Rakushisha* tells the story of the hidden players in all translations, including the translator, editor, and publisher. This fictional translation portrayed within *Rakushisha* will eventually be published with illustrations, so it tells the story of yet another player: the illustrator, Haruki. As successive producers of meaning in the path of a text from one language to another, their roles are pivotal to the plot of this novel, yet they remain predominantly hidden from public view.

In *Rakushisha*, translation inhabits the pages and the plot, moving the narrative and begging the question: where does translation fit into genre studies? Whereas in recent decades we have witnessed the

¹ For a survey of Matsuo Bashō's travel writings and poetry, see Stephen D. Carter's "On a Bare Branch: Bashō and the Haikai Profession" (1997) or David Landis Barnhill's introduction to his translated volume *Bashō's Journey: The Literary Prose of Matsuo Bashō* (2005).

multiplication of plots focusing on minor characters from canonical texts, this novel does the opposite. Lisboa features the poetry of Matsuo Bashō within *Rakushisha* and intertwines the poet, his poetry, and other minor absent characters as narrative fulcra. The overarching objectives of the present study are to bring light to the hybridity of translation and the genres represented in this work, to contextualize Lisboa's placement of characters who do not apparently belong, and to reinforce the role of translation as a phenomenon that generates meaning, as opposed to reproducing it.

As Susan Bassnett notes, there seems to be an “abyss between the study of world literature and the study of translation,” noting that one reason for this disconnect is that translation studies allows to remain between itself and other disciplines, especially neglecting literary translation in favor of vocational, technical, and technological aspects of translation.² The two fields are more closely related than may be obvious, especially since they both involve creation. Bassnett, again, notes that this generates concerns about whether the translation is a true equivalent to the original:

Definitions of faithfulness and equivalence have changed over time too, and the endless debates have proved pointless [because] languages are structured differently, have different grammars and vocabularies, and different modes of expression, so any attempt to translate something written in one language into another will necessarily involve transforming that text into something else.³

While Bassnett's definition of “something else” is undoubtedly a written linguistic rendering, Lisboa might suggest that it could mean much more. *Rakushisha* demonstrates the multiplicity of metaphors that work for translation. Matsuo Bashō's *Saga Nikki* in translation is at once a roadmap, a companion, and a means of crossing borders. Bashō's diary-poem, a textual mapping of the collective movements of the poet, Haruki, and Celina around Japan, instructs the two modern-day travelers on a prescribed trajectory as much as it communicates to readers of

² Bassnett, “Introduction: The Rocky Relationship”, 1.

³ Bassnett, “Introduction: The Rocky Relationship”, 2.

Rakushisha the path taken by all three travelers. What the narrator calls Celina's and Haruki's shared path is the "histórico de paisagens", a term that would likewise apply to the itineraries they share with Bashō.⁴ *Saga Nikki* narrates the plights and pleasures of Bashō and his companions as they interact closely with landscapes surrounding Tokyo and Kyoto. As the diary progresses, the poems express with growing poignancy the subtle joy of traveling and the melancholy quality of human interaction.

In his study of the relationship between geography and translation, Federico Italiano asserts that

spatial imaginations negotiate geographies not only across epochs, languages, and literary texts but also across media, in particular between the medium of writing and the medium of the map [...] the word "orientation" – that is, to face east towards the rising sun in order to find one's way – goes beyond the simple illustration of a spatial practice and in fact works as a cultural paradigm [...]

which influences attitudes and perspectives.⁵ In sum, translation can variably be understood as a roadmap to navigate that which is foreign, be it language, culture, or geography. Lisboa portrays translation in its multiple forms, which, I aim to demonstrate, encompass various functions to include that of a roadmap. Translation in *Rakushisha* does not purport to represent a complete transmission of meaning, as the role of the illustrator will demonstrate.

Rakushisha intercalates between highlighting and hiding the presence of translation and the translator within the novel. The translation of Bashō's text represents an accompanying presence for both Haruki and Celina, making his words and the paper on which they are printed into a character. *Rakushisha* is unique at first glance because it doubles as a novel and a translation into Portuguese of Bashō's *Saga Nikki*. By presenting Bashō's work as a paratext, *Rakushisha* ruptures the "translation pact" defined by Cecilia Alvstad as the intention to package and present translated texts as though they were originals.⁶ As Alvstad

⁴ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 19.

⁵ Italiano, *Translation and Geography*, 2.

⁶ Alvstad, "The Translation Pact", 271.

explains, the translation pact resembles what Lejeune (2005) calls the “fictional” and “autobiographical” pacts. Whereas the fictional pact asks the reader to pretend to believe what is told, the autobiographical pact implicitly binds authors to attest to the truthfulness of their texts. In contrast, the translation pact routinely advises readers to consume the translated text as though it were an original in the target language.⁷ Paratexts help translations become books that mimic the format and experience of the original text, yet Lisboa rejects this translation pact by integrating the entirety of Matsuo Bashō’s poem-diary *Saga Nikki*, inserted in sections, at relevant points in Celina’s and Haruki’s movement. As they read the original text and it appears in translation in Portuguese, we as readers also confront those same passages. This narrative mechanism obliterates the narrative fourth wall by pulling readers of *Rakushisha* into the novel to acknowledge *Saga Nikki* in its original form and read it in translation with Celina and Haruki.

The simultaneous use of Yukiko’s translation as a paratext and narrative driver is just one of Lisboa’s innovative strategies. She likewise inserts absent figures as prosthetic voices simulating the role of secondary characters. Though not the only ones, the most important are Alice (Celina’s deceased daughter) and Bashō. In reading Bashō’s text and carrying it around, the characters simulate the poet’s presence through metonymy. His writing constitutes a voice and the pages and text represent a physical presence that accompanies the travelers. Bashō’s poetry is a tritagonistic projection of the poet himself; in other words, Bashō’s text, and the characters’ interaction with it, transform the translation into a character. As the following examples will illustrate, the poetic paratext accompanies and influences characters to such a degree that the poetic voice becomes a metonymic surrogate for its creator.

Deciphering hidden characters

It is not necessarily conventional to conceive of literary texts being much more than just texts. Indeed, words on paper possess a physical quality hard to ignore. Yet, understanding what came before printed texts can help us imagine the multiple functions that texts can now

⁷ Alvstad, “The Translation Pact”, 271.

fulfill. In an exploration of the evolution of Latin vernacular languages into what we know today as Romance languages, Katie Chenoweth coins an innovative conception of printed language as a prosthetic voice transmitting languages previously communicable only through speech and handwriting. In charting the “veritable ‘new media’ movement,” Chenoweth demonstrates that “by extending the reach of the voice typographically, printing endows the vernacular with a new spectral presence and an augmented form of ‘life.’”⁸ Similarly, the printed translation of *Saga Nikki* in Portuguese bestows the manuscript with a physicality that allows it to do a great deal for those who hold it. Both Haruki and Celina gain a sense of companionship and security resulting from their physical possession of the *Saga Nikki*, which essentially takes on the quality of a prosthetic character in the novel.

Soon after arriving in Japan, Haruki departs from Celina’s company and travels to Tokyo, where he networks with his editors’ associates and continues his research. Though the pair’s paths diverge, Bashō continues to accompany both. Not all chapters in *Rakushisha* have titles; however, those that do, have characters’ names as the chapter titles to indicate which characters are featured therein. Two chapters in which Bashō functions as a prosthetic character are titled “Haruki and Bashō.” In one, Haruki retraces Bashō’s path through Tokyo and cites *Saga Nikki*: “Em Tóquio, Haruki caminhava por Fukugawa, onde séculos antes ficava a cabana da bananeira, a Bashō-an [...] Haruki pensa: um mosquito pousado na mão de Matsuo Bashō chupa seu sangue sem que ele perceba [...]. Dormindo, Bashō mexe a mão, para se livrar do incômodo.”⁹ Haruki’s imagination conjures Bashō’s presence; the poet’s actions expressed with present verbs suggest contemporaneity. The other chapter with the same title begins with the sentence “Sozinho em Tóquio.”¹⁰ This contradiction suggests that Haruki, traveling alone, is in fact accompanied by Bashō, who had taken the same path earlier. Haruki carries a collection of Japanese photos, artwork, and haikus compiled in a book he bought for Celina. As he leafs through the book

⁸ Chenoweth, *The Prosthetic Tongue*, 2.

⁹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 80.

¹⁰ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 97.

and finds work by Bashō, he reflects, “Sabia que encontraria Bashō em algum momento, relido ou revisitado por um fotógrafo de quase quatrocentos anos depois.”¹¹ Haruki encounters the poet by reading his work and by spending time in the same places Bashō frequented. The name Bashō refers to his writing, yet the sentence’s metonymic construction allows readers to imagine Haruki finding Bashō himself.

The same companionship occurs for Celina. Upon finding the translated manuscript left by Haruki in their Kyoto apartment, Celina reflects, “Pego as folhas da tradução [...] e reencontro o poeta Bashō.”¹² Within the pages Celina encounters not only Bashō’s poetry, but also the poet himself. On a different day, while carrying the translated manuscript around the city, Celina recounts: “Saí para passear com Bashō. Coloquei as folhas soltas dentro da bolsa.”¹³ When Celina uses Bashō’s name she is referring to his manuscript and his travel narrative. The double sense of her reference to Bashō’s diary reveals that she retraces his steps, thereby travelling with him, though separated from him by more than three centuries. His writing functions not only as a travel guide; it also instructs readers how to accompany him. By carrying the pages of his travel diary, Celina takes the writer with her and reinforces the metonymic quality of his text.

Bashō’s persona as a poet and traveler induces Haruki and Celina to voluntarily follow and be accompanied by the poet/protagonist of *Saga Nikki*. Haruki, the son of Japanese immigrants to Brazil, lacks a connection to his parents’ culture and language, a disconnect that renders him all the more impressionable by Bashō’s text. Likewise, Celina’s alienation from society at large as a consequence of Alice’s death causes her heightened receptiveness to the companionship offered by the *Saga Nikki*. These two examples of social isolation serve to facilitate and heighten the importance of Bashō’s companionship. Their connection to the text, however, is made possible and compelling only because of its accessibility to Haruki and Celina in the Portuguese language; therefore, the importance of the invisible translators (Yukiko and Lisboa) cannot be ignored.

¹¹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 97.

¹² Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 47.

¹³ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 55.

While Celina and Haruki share the role of main character, their imagined accompaniment by absent characters creates the illusory presence of secondary characters. Whereas Bashō as companion inhabits physical text on the printed pages that Celina and Haruki carry around, Yukiko and Alice exist simultaneously through the main characters' memory and longing. To a lesser degree, Haruki's late father and Celina's estranged husband accompany the two characters as reminders of hurt and rejection. Lisboa's narrative and intertextual techniques sustain Bashō, Yukiko, and Alice in an oscillating mid-ground between main and minor characters. By delegating important characters to minor, absent roles, this novel highlights the interconnected and relative sense of all lived experiences. To some extent, the bifurcating plot line subverts the tropes of this narrative genre and the very concept of a main character.

In his recent monograph on genre and minor characters, Jeremy Rosen executes a careful and thorough study of the proliferation of minor character elaboration in recent decades, noting that these spin-offs give voice to human and non-human voices, such as the raven in Madison Smartt Bell's "Small Blue Thing" (2000) and the woodworm on Noah's Ark in Julian Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1990).¹⁴ Rosen asserts that his project is just as much a study of genre as it is of this resurgence of minor-characters-turned-main-characters, noting:

[M]inor-character elaboration usefully demonstrates the overlapping of cultural spheres that are often thought to be in tension if not antithetical. [...] Engagé writers have gravitated to the genre in order to articulate subaltern perspectives or critique the politics of representation in canonical texts, but others have used it to launch explicit programs of cultural conservation and homage.¹⁵

Rosen contends that all genre analysis is comparative in nature because genres evade monolithic characterizations and tend to borrow

¹⁴ Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day*, 3.

¹⁵ Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day*, 6.

traits and tropes from other genres.¹⁶ With these considerations, a look at Adriana Lisboa's *Rakushisha* reveals a move in the opposite direction: a delegation of Matsuo Bashō, previously hailed as poet-protagonist, to minor character status. This commutation in no way signifies a diminution in importance. On the contrary, Bashō's function as minor character enables his prominence as companion and narrative instigator. Though the shift occurs in a direction contrary to the trend Rosen describes with minor characters coming to the fore, the one effect of this relegation is that *Rakushisha* pays homage to Bashō's foundational cultural text.

The genre of the travel diary is paramount to Celina's emotional evolution. The very idea of starting a diary, a new hobby for her, is inspired by reading the diary entries in Bashō's *Saga Nikki*. Celina recounts, "Compreei o caderno. O caderno se tornou um diário. Só depois disso me lembrei do poeta Matsuo Bashō e de seu *Saga Nikki*, o *Diário de Saga*."¹⁷ Within her new diary, Celina narrates her interaction with Bashō's diary:

Aproximo-me do livro. O diário de Bashō em Saga. São cinco e dez, uma tarde úmida e clara. Sozinha, vejo Kyoto do alto [...]. Aproximo-me do diário de Bashō, cuja tradução para o português Haruki se prepara para ilustrar e que foi o motivo de sua viagem ao Japão. Leio: [...] Os papéis dentro do envelope, o envelope sobre o sofá.¹⁸

Bashō's narrative accompanies Celina in her travels; similarly, Celina's own diary translates for readers the ubiquity of Alice in her thoughts and actions. In this way, the diary genre may be understood as a translation of emotion and lived experience. Physical proximity to the translated manuscript, which Celina mentions twice within two pages, signify a pivotal key to Celina's own diary-writing. As soon as she gets close to Bashō's diary, she initiates her own narration of the hour, weather, location, and social condition. The transmission of meaning

¹⁶ Rosen, *Minor Characters Have Their Day*, 20.

¹⁷ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 24.

¹⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 33 and 34.

(both between languages and between people) of Bashō's experience through his diary catalyzes Celina's subsequent transmission of meaning through her diary. *Rakushisha* is highly effective at communicating these stories of grief and isolation, essentially translating nuanced experiences for readers.

Emerging from the shadows

While *Rakushisha* insistently highlights the presence of the author Matsuo Bashō, it is equally insistent on disguising the translator. Lisboa's novel creates Yukiko as a fictional translator who exists at once absent and present throughout the narrative. Though never placed in a scene within *Rakushisha*, Yukiko surfaces through Haruki's memories and Celina's curious imagination. The translator's absence creates in Haruki feelings of longing and alienation that echo his frustrated attempts to understand his Japanese heritage. Lisboa's exploration of these dimensions of alienation run in tandem with the concept of untranslatability as embodied in Haruki's profession as illustrator. The premise of untranslatability is an unstated circumstance that legitimizes Haruki's trip to Japan; in other words, Yukiko's translation of *Saga Nikki* insufficiently communicates images necessary for Haruki to execute the illustration. Not to mention, the very commissioning of Haruki's illustration suggests that Yukiko's readers need a visual aid to fully comprehend what translation fails to transmit.

In his study of the alienating effects of alterity in “narrativas que buscam expatriar suas vozes para além do espaço nacional,” Leonardo Tonus examines the series Amores Expressos, which commissioned several Brazilian authors to temporarily reside in various countries and write love stories set in those destinations.¹⁹ In particular, the novel *O Único final feliz para uma história de amor é um acidente* (2010), written by one of the series organizers, João Paulo Cuenca (1978), shares in the act of expatriating Brazilian voices to Japan. Tonus critiques this phenomenon in Cuenca's novel:

¹⁹ Tonus, “Alteridades expressas”, 109.

O encontro com o “Outro” já não se realiza aqui pelo conhecimento ou reconhecimento de sua diversidade, mas antes mediante uma “interpelação” eufórica, consensual e cômoda. Os romances de ou sobre a imigração cristalizam assim a contradição que caracteriza o discurso sobre a diversidade no Brasil; por um lado, a hipervalorização de um ideal de diversidade e de coexistência pacífica entre culturas enquanto elemento fundador da identidade brasileira; por outro lado, a instrumentalização de uma diversidade em prol de um projeto social, cultural, e político unanímista.²⁰

While Cuenca’s novel portrays an Eastern European woman who immigrates to Japan, Lisboa’s novel traces a migratory example much more common in Brazil: that of the Nikkei like Haruki who struggles to fully belong to either Japaneseness or Brazilianness. Much as Tonus suggests, Lisboa’s *Rakushisha* critiques this contradiction of diversity, manifesting as the difficulty of belonging.

Marcel Vejmelka studies *Rakushisha* and two other contemporary Japan-centric novels in his attempt to synthesize the use of Japanese themes in contemporary Brazilian literature. In particular, Vejmelka considers the themes of travel, intertextuality, and Japanese immigration to Brazil, concluding that confrontation with and comprehension of “o Outro” allows readers to contemplate “[a] universalidade da natureza humana” and brings them closer to Japan through a common aesthetic index.²¹ *Rakushisha* also illustrates an Orient-to-Orient relationship, as Martín Camps describes, as an example of a Brazilian seeking mutual understanding with Japan.²² Lisboa fleshes out this scenario within her narrative and demonstrates it meta-fictionally by translating Bashō’s text in the pages of *Rakushisha*. The perspective taken by both Celina and Haruki, seeking commonality and recognizing difference, is precisely what Italiano points to: the importance of distinction as a prerequisite to successful orientation. The assessments put forth by Vejmelka and Camps both apply, considering that Lisboa’s protagonists seek to understand themselves and Japan more deeply as a consequence of exploring Japan, and that their emotional and geographic orientation

²⁰ Tonus, “Alteridades expressas”, 109.

²¹ Vejmelka, “O Japão na literatura brasileira atual”, 216 and 229-230.

²² Camps, “Travel and Japanese Migration to Brazil”, 215.

starts with recognizing their alterity with relation to Japan. Italiano summarizes: “Kant argues [...] that in order to identify and recognize the cardinal directions [...] we must necessarily be able to experience [...] the difference namely ‘between [one’s] right and left hands.’”²³ Stated another way, “differentiation is what enables orientation in the first place.”²⁴ Nelson Vieira, in turn, would likely agree that cultural and geographic differences stimulate the ability of characters in *Rakushisha* to sort out their internal conflicts. He asserts that “Lisboa encena como a locomoção de viajar ao e dentro do Japão pode despertar em personagens nisseis a disposição de serem mais abertos aos elementos estéticos e culturais que enriquecem sua etnicidade.”²⁵ While Vieira seems to suggest that the act of traveling, on its own, instigates the confrontation of other cultures and thereby permits the characters’ expanded understanding of themselves and the world, I argue that the real transformation occurs only because Haruki and Celina also possess the translated *Saga Nikki*, their own cultural and geographic guide(book). In experiencing the world of his parents in conjunction with the accompaniment of Bashō, Haruki gains a more complete acceptance of his stake in his Japanese cultural heritage.

With absolutely no connection to Japan, Celina is likewise out of place when she travels there. She notes, “Eu não nasci aqui [...] Sou do outro lado do planeta.”²⁶ This internal dialogue, carried on with a Labrador she sees on the streets of Kyoto, illustrates how she is distanced from the humans in Japan, an alienation not different from her isolation from Brazilian society. Haruki’s and Celina’s foreignness in the Japanese contexts serves as the premise for their trip to Japan out of a need to delve into the unfamiliar. Haruki’s genetic heritage, which in no way provides him with linguistic or cultural familiarity with Japan, accentuates his alienation in the Japanese consulate and upon arrival in Japan. He embodies untranslatability similar to the way in which immigrants embody invisibility in hegemonic societies. As Siri Nergaard points out in *Translation and Transmigration*, “people

²³ Italiano, *Translation and Geography*, 2.

²⁴ Italiano, *Translation and Geography*, 2.

²⁵ Vieira, “Fora do Brasil”, 61.

²⁶ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 9.

who feel that their lives are suspended in an endless border condition, at the margins of society, in liminality, refer that [...] certain features [of themselves] cannot cross borders, but stand at the threshold, and remain untranslatable.”²⁷ If taken according to Naoki Sakai, translation is the message from one person to another across a language gap. Originating from a “communication model” in which an utterance “travels from the speaker’s consciousness to that of the interlocutor, so the action of translation is represented in a similar schema of communication in which a message is transferred from one language to another.”²⁸ Sakai notes that language is among the more powerful unifiers for national communities, if not the strongest unifier, an assertion supported by the fact that nationalities and languages often have the same name. Looking back upon this commonality, states Sakai, “the trope of border works powerfully to make and determine a particular incident of social and political transaction as translation.”²⁹ I agree with Sakai’s assessment that the communication model, which posits that translation is like any other communication, with the addition of a “gap” between the language bridged by a translator, is faulty. It is more accurate to note that links between languages are fractured and complicated, far deeper than just different words and grammars. As Sakai explains, “The relation between translation and borders is crucial here. For, translation can inscribe, erase, and distort borders; it may well give rise to a border where none was before; it may well multiply a border into many registers; it may erase some borders and institute new ones.”³⁰ Sakai beautifully illustrates how complicated translation can be, and, in so doing, emphasizes the significance of culture and experience involved in the act of communicating meaning. In this way, Sakai’s metaphor of translation as warfare most acutely brings to light the multiple meanings of this process:

Similar to the maneuver of occupation in war, translation deterritorializes and reterritorializes languages and probable sites of discommunication. It shows

²⁷ Nergaard, *Translation and Transmigration*, 115.

²⁸ Sakai, “The Modern Regime”, 105.

²⁹ Sakai, “The Modern Regime”, 106.

³⁰ Sakai, “The Modern Regime”, 106.

most persuasively the unstable, transformative, and political nature of border, of the differentiation of the inside from the outside, and of the multiplicity of belonging and non-belonging.³¹

Like Sakai, Nergaard sees translation as a type of border crossing and adopts Shahram Khosravi's "border gaze" to describe how xenophobic perspectives marginalize marks of alterity, including physical features, religions, and language.³² In Haruki's case, his Brazilian identity causes him to feel alienated by his own Japanese markers: his physical features and his parents speaking Japanese. Haruki simultaneously rejects his Japaneseness and longs to understand that element of himself and his parents. Haruki's father and Yukiko embody antithetical affective representations of Haruki's Japanese identity. Haruki is attracted to the idea of Yukiko's heritage and her link between Japanese and Portuguese languages, while his father represents the memory of Haruki's failure to embrace his Japanese heritage. Yet both the father and the translator cause pain for Haruki because of their absence from his life.

In a way, Yukiko is hidden because she never presents herself on the "scene" unless through secondary media or correspondences and memory. At the same time, however, her existence is paramount to the entire plot, for her translation drives the characters' movement from Rio de Janeiro to Japan. Yukiko functions as surrogate for Lisboa herself. In fiction and in reality, respectively, Yukiko and Lisboa render Bashō's *Saga Nikki* in an unprecedented translation in Portuguese. *Rakushisha* therefore manufactures a fractured meta-translation, or a narrative *about* the translation in Portuguese and its path to publication. In his study of poet-translators, or poets who translate poetry, Christian Refsum (2017) traces the "creative tension between authorship and translatorship in translated poetry."³³ Refsum draws on Michel Foucault's concept of the "author function," which defines authority and ownership, and has changed over time and through different contexts, to coin the concept of the analogous "translator function."³⁴ Just as time and context have

³¹ Sakai, "The Modern Regime", 106.

³² Nergaard, *Translation and Transmigration*, 116.

³³ Refsum, "When Poets Translate Poetry", 102.

³⁴ Refsum, "When Poets Translate Poetry", 102.

variously influenced whether a person is defined as an author or just as someone who writes, the field of translation has historically influenced whether someone is called a translator and whether the translator's name is even given.³⁵ When applied to *Rakushisha*, this discussion becomes salient because Adriana Lisboa, though the translator of Matsuo Bashō's *Saga Nikki*, evades the official role of translator of this text by positioning her translation as a narrative fixture, prosthetic character, and paratext of her own novel.

Yukiko evades readers' view except when the translation links readers to Haruki's memories. Her vestige is in fact just an erasure of a memory, existing in imagination and in correspondence. Her presence resembles the original text that exists only as an awareness of past existence but no longer manifests visibly. Yukiko's as an entity resides in the margins of the plot, in correspondence, memory, and imagination. In a chapter titled "Yukiko e Bashō," Celina constructs a mental figure of Yukiko: "Imagino-a. Imagino mãos firmes e unhas curtas. Unhas sem esmalte. Mãos firmes que digitam com força no teclado do computador. [...] Costas ligeiramente arqueadas enquanto ela digita palavras. Montes de palavras. Multidões de palavras que se acrescentam ao ruído do mundo."³⁶ The volume of translated words and the force with which the imagined Yukiko types them suggest not only a supposition about the imagined work of translators, but also a clue to the real translation task undertaken by Lisboa. In this chapter, Lisboa even provides a translator's introduction with a brief history of Japan's Tokugawa era, more than a page long, a paratext camouflaged within Celina's reading: "O senhor Bananeira, Matsuo Bashō, Celina leu na apresentação que Yukiko Sakade escreveu para sua tradução, nasceu em família de samurais de baixa linhagem."³⁷ Lisboa's clever structural stunts allow the translator to exist, at once exhibited and hidden, within *Rakushisha* and behind the text of *Saga Nikki*.

³⁵ Refsum, "When Poets Translate Poetry", 102-103.

³⁶ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 91.

³⁷ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 93.

One of the metaphors this novel offers is that of the translator as a fleeting, volatile essence. Haruki contemplates his longing for Yukiko while acknowledging her ephemeral nature:

[O] espírito, Haruki pensava, morava nas células nervosas, e o corpo era substância volátil, como álcool – apenas demorava um pouco mais para se volatilizar [...] Não fazia muito tempo, tinha intuído o silêncio em outra mulher [...] Guardava dessa mulher invisível, desse corpo alcoólico que evaporou quando o sol voltou a bater, uma quantidade alarmante de desenhos [...] Yukiko era o nome dela. A tradutora.³⁸

Yukiko's name often precedes the qualifier "a tradutora," as though her profession is inextricable from her identity. Perhaps as part of her identity, Yukiko is also invisible, silent, and practically evaporating into thin air. Yukiko's persona, characterized by absence, inevitably reflects the imperceptibility of the figure of the translator. As transmitters of meaning, translators are not meant to make themselves visible, audible, or perceptible at all. Instead, their role is to support the text and camouflage their role in its creation.

Before Haruki departs for Japan, he notes how Yukiko, though absent, instigates the personal and professional interruption in his life: "O Japão saltando como um soluço para dentro de sua vida, tudo por causa dela. Yukiko. A tradutora. Hoje, só isso: a tradutora. Os nomes dos dois iam se casar na ironia da capa de um livro. Iam colocar seus nomes no papel. Amorosamente, friamente, levianamente."³⁹ The adulterous relationship between Yukiko and Haruki ends when Yukiko returned to her husband and left Haruki's life. Haruki's thought here, imagining Yukiko's name next to his on the cover of the illustration, is doubly ironic. Haruki imagines their names "married in irony on the book cover" (translation mine) because they will reside together textually despite not being a couple. The double irony is understood at the end of the novel when the couple reunites. It is as though the concrete reality of the names written together on the published translation brings resurrections

³⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 52-53.

³⁹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 16.

their personal connection. Even in this sense, the written translation produces meaning.

The manuscript pages on which the translation is printed and the excerpts inserted strategically through *Rakushisha* convey the multivalent importance of translation as a process and a product. Celina's access to the translation, but not (initially) the translator, elicits vivid ruminations on the nature of translation and Yukiko's translation techniques. Much like Yukiko exists for readers only through the thoughts and utterances of Celina and Haruki, the translator of any text is both present and absent in the text. Bassnett, citing André Lefevere, notes that translation should be seen as a manipulation of the text, or "rewriting," akin to the intervention exercised by editors.⁴⁰ Ironically, though Lisboa translates Matsuo Bashō's *Saga Nikki* within the pages of *Rakushisha*, the responsibility for this act is refracted through the fictional translator, Yukiko. In line with Bassnett and Lefevere, Rosemary Arrojo's work on fictional translators corroborates the assertion that translation is an act that generates new meaning. Using Jorge Luis Borges's "Pierre Menard," asserted as the "most concentrated commentary [...] on the business of translation"⁴¹ as the inspiration for her work, Arrojo observes that Borges's short story offers "a wealth of material on the dynamics of reading, which, like translation, is viewed by the story's narrator as a practice that actually produces meaning rather than merely reproduces it."⁴² Furthermore, states Arrojo:

["Pierre Menard"] also underscores some of the multiple ways in which fiction can be read as a deconstructive instrument that helps us reevaluate mainstream statements about the relationships that should be established between texts and what is routinely repressed or ignored by such statements, that is, the premises, the illusions, as well as the anxieties and the desires that often underlie the ways in which we deal with issues of language and the subject.⁴³

⁴⁰ Bassnett, "Introduction: The Rocky Relationship", 1-14.

⁴¹ George Steiner, quoted by Rosemary Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 31.

⁴² Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 31.

⁴³ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 31.

For instance, the physical placement of the translated manuscript functions almost as a portal in and out of memories for Haruki. When the transcript first arrives by mail at Haruki's apartment in Rio de Janeiro, he sets it aside: "Deixou os papéis dentro do envelope. Deixou o envelope em cima do sofá..."⁴⁴ When Celina and Haruki arrive together in Kyoto, Celina finds the manuscript. A nearly identical description of their location, "Os papéis dentro do envelope, o envelope dentro do sofá,"⁴⁵ opens and closes small flashback vignette about how Haruki earned the translation gig. Enclosing this memory about the translation and commissioned illustration with the same sentence denoting the manuscript's location on the couch reveals the translation's physicality as a bridge between past and present, as well as a bridge between Brazil and Japan.

For Haruki, the failure to belong in the Japanese-Brazilian community generates emotional conflict and professional productivity. He experiences a subtle pathology of isolation linked to his exclusion from full Japaneseness as the child of Japanese immigrants as well as his inescapable mark of difference from other Brazilians because of his Japanese facial features. Just as much as Celina, Haruki is an outsider in Japanese contexts. Haruki's trip to the Japanese consulate in Rio de Janeiro to obtain a visa exemplifies this exact alienation. Phenotypically Japanese but culturally Brazilian, Haruki understands several words in Japanese but does not speak the language. Upon entering the consulate, he feels discomfort: "Haruki se sentia um corpo estranho [...] sentia-se integralmente desajeitado [...] [t]ão atrasado, tão deselegante e antinipônico, que direito ele tinha de sair por aí usando um par de olhos puxados?"⁴⁶ Haruki's own perceived inferiority in comparison with the meticulous, methodical Japaneseness permeating the consulate exacerbates his feeling of exclusion from the community of Japanese descent in Brazil despite his facial features. Saito Tamaki likewise notes that expectations for academic, professional, and financial success are especially high for firstborn Japanese sons.⁴⁷ For

⁴⁴ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 32

⁴⁵ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 34 and 35.

⁴⁶ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 14-15.

⁴⁷ Saito, *Hikikomori*, 51.

instance, in *Rakushisha*, Haruki's father is disappointed in him for disregarding traditional values, including learning to speak Japanese. The two have trouble identifying with each other and Haruki feels disconnected from his Japanese heritage. His parents' admonitions and expectations alienate him from Japanese culture at large, a dilemma resolved with Haruki's travel through Japan in conjunction with his reading of Yukiko's translation.

The translation of Bashō's *Saga Nikki* sparks a connection with Haruki's past in Brazil and his heritage in Japan. From Haruki's point of view, "O Japão não tinha nada a ver com sua vida e com seus olhos puxados. Até que um dia conheceu aquela moça. Yukiko Sakade. A tradutora."⁴⁸ Haruki lives his life disconnected from his Japanese identity, a fact that limits his professional repertoire: "Em seu arsenal de metáforas visuais, Haruki pensava em um Brasil de jabuticaba e jaracatiá..." It came as a surprise to find that Yukiko had suggested him to illustrate the translation of Bashō's work. He scoffs to hear his editor thought it a good idea: "Ótima idéia! Não era para ele, Haruki. Era para alguém com maior conhecimento de causa. Alguém que colocasse uma cerejeira florida no lugar do jatobá. Um samuraizinho no lugar do menino descalço."⁴⁹ Haruki recognizes his unpreparedness to depict what he supposes to be Japanese visual icons, once again nodding to his own embodiment of untranslatability. At once an assimilated Brazilian who rejects his Japaneseness at the margin, he acknowledges that Yukiko's rendering of the *Saga Nikki* in Portuguese is insufficient to inspire Haruki's creation of Japanese images. This crucial point in Lisboa's narrative links Nergaard's dual notion of untranslatability in language and migration. Not only does this demonstrate Haruki's perceived failure in inhabiting two cultures; it also brings to the fore the shortcomings of assuming that exact, equivalent meaning can be conveyed between two languages, especially when differences in the cultural context will inevitably leave beautiful imperfections in the translation.

⁴⁸ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 36.

⁴⁹ Lisboa, *Rakushisha*, 35.

Conclusion

In many ways, Lisboa's *Rakushisha* conforms to what the translation industry asserts that translation should do: simulate a text in its original form and disguise the translator. This novel highlights the original author, Matsuo Bashō, making him visible even more than a strict translation would do, by giving his translated manuscript physicality, placing it in the hands of the main characters, and intercalating the Japanese original and Portuguese translation as paratexts in her novel. At the same time, Lisboa reminds us of the translation process and subverts the supposition that a translation can be read as though it were the original work. Bashō's visibility unravels the simulation of translation as an original work by compelling readers to see Bashō and his texts as characters. More than an author, Bashō is made into a companion. The translator, in contrast, is traditionally a hidden role. Yukiko's existence, though pervasive in Haruki's memory and Celina's imagination, is also fleeting, explicitly invisible and volatile. In these descriptions, Yukiko literally lacks visual and tactile substance and seems, therefore, to not exist. This contradiction responds to the misplaced idea that successful translation should obliterate our awareness of the translator or the deed of translation. While it is true that translation, when executed well, should sound like an original utterance, this is not to say that the act of translation should be hidden. Likewise, the translator need not be occluded. I surmise that Lisboa shuffles Yukiko to the background to highlight her centrality and, more broadly, the importance of all translators.

Repeated reminders of Haruki's initial alienation in Japanese contexts bring to light the other metaphors of translation, such as the creation of meaning and the crossing of borders. Haruki's physical transition to Japan coincides with his full engagement with Yukiko's translation. The two actions, taken in tandem, create meaning that Haruki has hitherto failed to grasp. Though Haruki's travels through Japan and his reading of Yukiko's translation succeed in delivering him to a new plane of understanding, his embodiment of untranslatability still applies to his professional role in illustrating that which translated language cannot necessarily convey. Whether an illustration suffices to bridge the gap that

skillful translators cannot bridge remains undetermined. What matters is that among the many analogies of translation that *Rakushisha* offers, readers may be most delighted to discover the metaphor of translation as a process of nuanced reading, which, even after multiple encounters with this novel, continues to generate poignant new meanings.

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Denise Kripper

Lake Forest College

ORCID 0000-0002-0629-1406

kripper@mx.lakeforest.edu

Stranger than Fiction: The Biographies of Shiki Nagaoka and José Salas Subirat

Following the “cultural turn” of translation studies, recent works centered around translators have highlighted their longstanding invisibility while bringing to the fore the importance of their figure. The portrayal of translators in academic research, memoirs and biographies, and literary fiction can challenge commonplace assumptions about their task. In this article, I address the tension between the real practice of translation and its literary rendering by focusing on two biographies: a fictional one and a real one. The novel *Shiki Nagaoka: Una nariz de ficción*, by Mexican writer Mario Bellatin (translated into English by David Shook as *Shiki Nagaoka: A Nose for Fiction*), recounts the life of a Japanese writer and translator, and *El traductor del Ulises*, by Argentine scholar Lucas Petersen, researches the life of the first translator into Spanish of James Joyce’s masterpiece. Comparing and contrasting the fake biography of a fictional translator and the real biography of an actual translator, I draw especially from their paratexts: prologues, translation commentaries, archival research, and photographs that introduce the text, frame the narrative, and can corroborate or falsify its authenticity. The aim of this article is to foreground how representations of translators, whether historiographical or fictional, can assist in visibilizing the role of translators and, in turn, rethinking their task.

Keywords: fictional turn; translator; biography; paratexts

*Que la historia hubiera copiado a la historia
ya era suficientemente pasmoso;
que la historia copie a la literatura es inconcebible...*
Jorge Luis Borges

The “cultural turn” of translation studies, spearheaded by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere in the early 1990s, has brought about a shift in focus from translation to the translator. This visibilization of their role has affirmed translation as a decision-making process tied to translators’ subjectivity. Recent publications by translators respond to an interest in learning more about how they approach their task. These books offer meta-reflections and introspective insights. For example, Kate Briggs’s translational experience in *This Little Art*, Jennifer Croft’s fictionalized memoir *Homesick*, or the autobiographical chronicle of self-translation *In Other Words*, by Jhumpa Lahiri and translated by Ann Goldstein. In addition, other books by translators and translation scholars such as the volume *The Man Between: Michael Henry Heim & a Life in Translation*, edited by Esther Allen, Sean Cotter, and Russell Scott Valentino, or the monograph by María Constanza Guzmán *Gregory Rabassa’s Latin American Literature: A Translator’s Visible Legacy* pay tribute to the work of specific literary translators. As the scope of translation studies as a discipline continues to broaden, novels and short stories have also become a productive source for critical inquiry. This “fictional turn,” proposed first by Else Ribeiro Pires Vieira,¹ considers the recent upsurge of “transfiction”, i.e., literary works that include discussions on translation and feature translators as characters.² The recent books *Fictional Translators* by Rosemary Arrojo and *The Translator’s Visibility: Scenes from Contemporary Latin American Fiction* by Heather Cleary, to name but a couple of a growing corpus, illustrate how, in addition to biographical accounts, literature can act as a rich reference for translation studies and be a prime locus for the continued visibilization of the translator’s task.

By conceptualizing translation through models of representation, literary works subsequently have the potential for bridging the gap that often exists between the theorization and the practice of translation. But because readers would usually come to these texts with their own expectations and perceptions around translation and about translators, transfiction can often be met with resistance. For example, the volume

¹ Vieira, “(In)visibilidades na tradução: troca de olhares teóricos e ficcionais”, 50-68.

² Kaindl and Spitzl, *Transfiction*.

Crossing Borders, edited by Lynne Sharon Schwartz, includes both short stories and essays about translation (and some in translation) by a wide array of authors with varying degrees of experience with translation, including acclaimed writers Lydia Davis and Primo Levi. Notably, only an asterisk distinguishes the essays in an index that otherwise does not differentiate between fiction and non-fiction. In her review, however, Veronica Esposito praises the essays but objects to the short stories because of their “somewhat inaccurate representation of the discipline.”³ The reviewer is not alone in her annoyance at the often mismatch between her personal experience with translators and their fictional portrayal. In the context of translation, this is particularly relevant because it brings up issues of faithfulness of representation that permeate more traditional theoretical discourses and misconceptions around its practice. The tension between an original and its “copy,” the pervasive notion of translation’s impossibility to fully recreate an original, extends to transfiction and the tension between fact and fiction, reality and its literary rendering. The veracity of, and fidelity to, real events are central issues in biographical works; likewise it is worth expanding the analysis to include the representation of the translator’s profession in this literary genre.

In this article, I will focus on two biographies, a fake one and a real one. *Shiki Nagaoka: Una nariz de ficción* (2001), by Mexican writer Mario Bellatin (and translated into English as *Shiki Nagaoka: A Nose for Fiction* by David Shook in 2012), is a novel that recounts the life of a Japanese writer and translator named Shiki Nagaoka, and *El traductor del Ulises* [The Translator of *Ulysses*] (2016), by Argentine scholar Lucas Petersen, researches the life of José Salas Subirat, the first translator into Spanish of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. These two biographies can be mutually illuminating in that they make use of similar paratextual strategies that can both corroborate and falsify the authenticity of their claims. In order to examine the blurring of discursive authority proposed by these texts, I draw especially from their titles, cover images, and prologues that introduce the text, and the archival research and photographs that frame the narrative. Comparing

³ Esposito, “All the Thrills Without the Terror”.

and contrasting the fake biography of a fictional translator and the real biography of an actual translator, the aim of this article is to foreground how representations of translators, whether historiographical or fictional, can assist in visibilizing the role of translators and, in turn, rethinking their task.

Jorge Luis Borges has actually been attributed with being the first one to attempt a translation of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In 1925, just three years after it first appeared in English, he published his translation of only the last page of the modernist masterpiece in the magazine *Proa*. It was prefaced by an essay titled "El Ulises de Joyce" [Joyce's *Ulysses*], which was twice the length of the translation, and which would become seminal for his reflection on the work and notorious for confessing to not having fully comprehended it nor read it in its entirety. Borges's fragmented translation, along with his commentary on some of the linguistic and cultural challenges of the novel, helped create an aura of mystery around this obscure book, which would remain inaccessible to Spanish-speaking readers for a couple more decades still. During that time, several writers in Latin America and intellectuals of the Argentine literary sphere, Borges included, would entertain efforts to translate the work collaboratively. It would ultimately take an outsider, an insurance salesman with basic command of the English language, to accomplish the feat of the full-length translation of *Ulysses*, published by Editorial Rueda in 1945. In his biography, author Lucas Petersen unveils the story of José Salas Subirat, the man who managed to translate the quintessential untranslatable book in his free time. His life story is at times so unbelievably farfetched and utterly incredible that could pass for a work of fiction. It even includes a plane crash he miraculously survived but that destroyed the manuscript of the third and final revised version of his translation, and which would remain a lost enigma. Petersen's book is however impressively well documented. His research constructs Salas Subirat's life from his early childhood as the son of immigrants through his social ascent to a salesman of economic means, with records of all of his different addresses, his marriage and family life, his travels, hobbies, his incursions in literature, journalism and the arts, and his autodidactic language learning. Petersen also describes in detail Salas Subirat's odd jobs and other professional

endeavors, including working as a stenographer, agent, customs officer, toy manufacturer, and being the author of bestselling self-help and personal development books. He did not belong to the times' cultural elite nor was he part of a group of authors who also translated. José Salas Subirat was by all accounts a rather unexpected translator for the task at hand. Petersen's book tells the spectacular story of someone spectacularly minor, much in the same way *Ulysses* explores the life of the common man, and indeed there are parallels between Joyce's translator and Leopold Bloom, the fictional protagonist of Joyce's novel. Grounded on veritable facts and archival research, Petersen claims to have written the book against the temptation to exploit those, yet acknowledges that many times his "investigación parecía ir tras la vida y la trayectoria no de un ser humano sino del último, *el más real* de los personajes de Joyce" [investigation seemed to be going after the life and career not of a human being but of the last, *the most real* of Joyce's characters].⁴ The first biography of an Argentine translator, *El traductor del Ulises* is an invaluable resource for the construction of an archive that historicizes translators in the Latin American literary tradition and contributes to a wealth of representations of translators that challenge traditional expectations of the translator's task.

Mario Bellatin is an author known for his literary acrobatics that defy authorial privilege and destabilize authenticity, challenging readers to push the boundaries of literature. The mystifying extraliterary events that surround and make up an integral part of his work have made of Bellatin a cult writer and a nonconformist artist whose oeuvre is never fully contained by the written text.⁵ Staging the scene for the literary forgery to come, Shiki Nagaoka manifested in an interview, when Bellatin was asked about his favorite writer. The supposed interest raised by this author who was virtually unknown in the Western world led Bellatin to write his biography. As its subtitle indicates, Nagaoka's work could not be fully understood without acknowledgment of, and attention to, his physical deformity. He was the bearer of a notoriously

⁴ Petersen, *El traductor*, 11 (emphasis added). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

⁵ Logie, "¿Escritos en la traducción y para la traducción?", 205.

large nose, which made him resemble closely the character of a 1916 short story by Japanese writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke; a likeness ultimately heightened by Bellatin's claim that Nagaoka's nose was so extraordinarily big "he was considered by many to be a fictional character."⁶ Playfully confounding fact and fiction, a recurrent trope in Bellatin's literature, the book is "a biography of a fictional Japanese writer based on the fiction of a real one."⁷ Yet when *Shiki Nagaoka: Una nariz de ficción* first came out in 2001, it was received by the press as a work of nonfiction, followed by a series of lecture-performances by Bellatin dedicated to the Japanese writer. It was the seriousness of Bellatin's dedication to his ploy which seemed to be the only evidence of Nagaoka's existence.⁸ A little bit over a decade later, however, a new chapter in the fabrication of this character ensued, when Phoneme Media published the novel in David Shook's English translation, which included a preface that confirmed Nagaoka as a real writer. The translation, a literary work in its own right, sustains and expands Bellatin's literary happening, adding a new text that is subordinated to the original yet subverts its authorial hierarchies. In the novel, the same resource characterizes the work of Shiki Nagaoka, who uses a translational approach in his creative writing: "[He] began to write his literary texts in English or French, to later convert them into his mother tongue, thereby achieving the effect that everything from his pen resembled a translation."⁹ The blurring of the lines between writing and translating responds to Bellatin's characteristic intermingling of artistic disciplines. In *Shiki Nagaoka*, for example, he introduces photography into the narrative which, as we shall see, is a key component in the dismantling of authorial discourse at play in the book. Lastly, another way in which Bellatin carries out his narrative experimentation with authenticity is by presenting the novel as a pseudotranslation. Praises for, and back covers of, Mario Bellatin's novels boast about having been translated into over two

⁶ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 11.

⁷ Cleary, *The Translator's Visibility*, 90.

⁸ Cuenca, "The Seed of Uncertainty".

⁹ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 13.

dozen languages, but he has also made “translations without novels.”¹⁰ Such is the case of *Shiki Nagaoka*, inviting a reconsideration of literary categories and genres, such as novel and biography, and also of narrative subjects, such as author and translator. In this context, it is not superfluous to wonder how translation imbues his literary production and, in turn, how his experience may color the literary representation of his translator: “Most authors construct a *mise en abyme* which makes their translator figures function as images of themselves. This strategy suggests that translation and writing are allied phenomena of re-inscription of the self.”¹¹

With a translator protagonist, whether real or fictional, Lucas Petersen’s biography and Mario Bellatin’s novel are bringing to the foreground a figure that has traditionally remained marginal or hidden. Furthering this thematic transgression are the elements that surround their narratives, i.e., the paratext, which influences the reading experience and shapes the reception of the work through commentary that is legitimated by authorial intentions.¹² For the translator, the paratext has largely been a place of (in)visibility. While forewords and translator notes have served as the privileged space where translations are revealed as such, footnotes have often been taken as an admittance of the translator’s failures, and it is still not uncommon for book covers to omit the translator’s name, contributing to the erasure of the mediation process in favor of a fiction of originality. Making use of the elastic boundaries between reality and its literary representation that the books by Bellatin and Petersen explore, their paratexts fittingly employ strategies that simultaneously comply and destabilize authorial and translatorial conventions.

The titles themselves, and their respective display on the covers, already suggest interesting dynamics in place. Both are divided in a title and a subtitle. In the case of Bellatin’s novel in English translation (see Figure 1), the full title appears at the bottom of the cover, divided in two. First appears the main title – *Shiki Nagaoka*

¹⁰ Cabrera, “Mario Bellatin”.

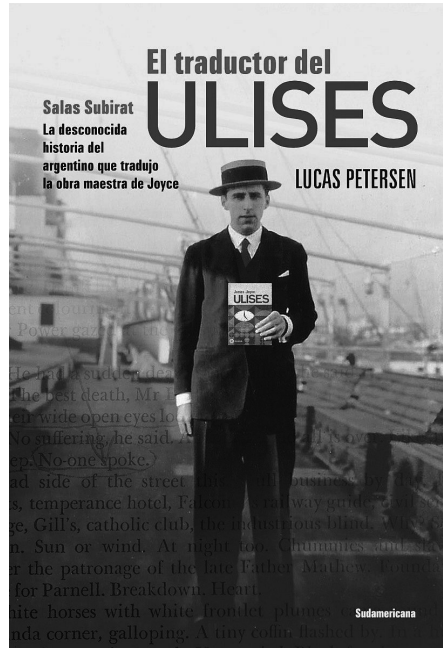
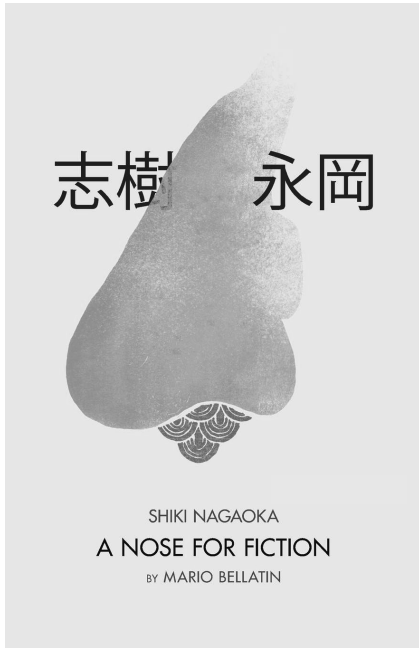
¹¹ Wilson, “The Fiction of the Translator”, 393.

¹² Batchelor, *Translation and Paratexts*, 12-13.

– in an olive-green color and a medium size, followed below by the subtitle – *A Nose for Fiction* – in a noticeably larger black font. Under this second line comes the credit indicating authorship – by Mario Bellatin – in the same olive-green color and a slightly smaller font than the translator character’s name in the main title. The sizing of the three lines that compose the English cover (main title, subtitle, author credit) highlights the merging of fact and fiction at play in the novel, as the protagonist appears more prominently than the real author. The central placement of the subtitle foreshadows the fictive aspect of his persona foregrounded by the word “fiction,” and stands out because of its different color and larger size. At the top of the cover in an even larger font appears Shiki Nagaoka’s name again, this time written in Japanese characters. Paired with the noticeable absence of the actual translator’s name, this inclusion can be read as a playful way to continue upending authorial hierarchies. The design of the title on the cover of Bellatin’s novel suggests that its protagonist, Shiki Nagaoka, is in reality the author of the book, possibly titled *A Nose for Fiction*, which in turn would make it a (pseudo)translation from the Japanese. While the order and size of the names as they appear on the title page usually indicate a hierarchy that tends to erase the translator’s intervention,¹³ the absence of David Shook’s name on the cover of the book elevates translation by rendering it akin to creative writing, posing Mario Bellatin not as the novel’s author but rather as its translator. This is maintained in the novel itself. Towards the end, a metaliterary reference is made about a “certain Mexican writer” – Bellatin as a character – who was able to decode Shiki Nagaoka’s seemingly untranslatable work¹⁴ – Bellatin as a translator. The conflation of writing and translating will reappear in Shook’s translator preface where, as we shall see, the English translator plays an authoritative and authenticating role in keeping with Bellatin’s literary forgery continuing the farce of having Nagaoka pass as a real author.

¹³ Hermans, “The Translator’s Voice”, 26.

¹⁴ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 42.



Figures 1 and 2. Cover images courtesy of Deep Vellum/Phoneme Media and Penguin Random House/Sudamericana.

Petersen's *El traductor del Ulises* is followed by the longer subtitle *Salas Subirat. La desconocida historia del argentino que tradujo la obra maestra de Joyce* [Salas Subirat. The unknown story of the Argentine who translated Joyce's masterpiece]. Located at the very top of its cover (see Figure 2), the main title occupies a central space in a sizable font with the subtitle aligned to the left in a smaller print. José Salas Subirat is first introduced by his occupation, but complying with Petersen's visibilizing efforts, he is promptly named. Both his profession and name appear in the same orange color. *Ulises* is displayed prominently in a larger blue font becoming a focal point in the cover design suggesting the interest in Salas Subirat's story lies not precisely in that he was a translator, but in that he translated this particular book. The contrast between "unknown" and "masterpiece" in the subtitle emphasizes the unexpectedness of his literary pairing with the Irish author. Furthermore, in the Spanish, *historia* could be translated as

either “story” or “history,” which brings about issues germane to the boundaries between the two in any biography, especially one that is also mediated by yet another authorial voice. Lucas Petersen’s name appears right below the main title creating multilayered readings of authorship: Joyce wrote a masterpiece, Salas Subirat rewrote it in translation, and Petersen wrote a book about it and its translator.

A picture of Salas Subirat purposefully illustrates the cover design of the biography by Petersen, countering the literal invisibility that had fed the elusiveness of this extraordinary character and his unbelievable undertaking, for up until a couple of years ago there were no published photographs of him.¹⁵ A valuable resource in the biography is the included sample of archival photographs that show Salas Subirat in different capacities: as a family man, an insurance agent, a public speaker, and as Joyce’s translator. The latter is also displayed in scans of his copy of *Ulysses*, which he annotated in pencil for his first translation and in ink for the revised edition, leaving traces of the process of his work. For example, Petersen notes that in the passage on Simbad the Sailor, Salas Subirat’s markings indicate an effort (and surrender) to translate a play on words. The reproduction of one of his edited manuscript pages appears superimposed on the cover of the book, completing its design.

Salas Subirat’s portrait that acts as the cover image is also included in the photographic section of the biography. It is a black and white picture that shows him as a young man, and Petersen’s epigraph places him on a trip in Montevideo, Uruguay. He appears to be on a ship, he is wearing a hat, and he seems to be holding a cigarette. For the book cover, the same image was however intervened. His suit and tie were colored in a blue and orange respectively that match the colors in the title, and the cigarette, replaced by a copy of his translation of *Ulysses*. This book featured a modernist illustration in the same chromatic spectrum, with the title *Ulises* in a large blue font and the name of the author, James Joyce, atop in orange. This design clearly served as inspiration for Petersen’s own book cover, which pays tribute to Salas Subirat’s by reproducing it, using the same colors, sizing, and placement for its title. The analogous pattern extends the parallels between the novel’s

¹⁵ Petersen, “José Salas Subirat”.

translator and its protagonist to Petersen's and Joyce's shared authorial intentions i.e., making the marginal central by telling the story of a common man, adding an extra layer of fictionalization to the narrative. Taken in 1926, according to Petersen's record, the photograph took place some twenty years before the publication of Salas Subirat's translation, which makes of the cover image not only a fake picture, but by holding his own book, an impossible one. The use of image-editing software questions how trustworthy easily falsifiable resources such as photographs can be in supporting the veracity of history and in validating its faithful reproduction, for "if the paratext is concerned with authorial mediation it is also open to the possibility of manipulation."¹⁶

Photography plays a key role in Bellatin's novel too. In fact, the book is a photo novella, with images composing half of the narrative. The "iconographic recuperation of Shiki Nagaoka's life"¹⁷ is adjudicated to Ximena Berecochea (a real photographer) and includes pictures of his family, places where he spent time at, items of clothing and kitchenware, books and salvaged manuscripts, as well as certain everyday objects he used to cope with his nasal deformity, such as a nose wringer, a hand mirror, and a special apparatus he used for writing "without being bothered by his nose."¹⁸ In the novel, Nagaoka is equally interested in literature as he is in photography. The latter stems from his translational approach to writing, including pictures in his texts that "instantly *reproduced* what the words and ideograms were so pressed to represent."¹⁹ After a convoluted writing career and stay at a monastery, he established a tiny photography kiosk where he spent the rest of his life selling and developing rolls of film. Only a few of his photographs that have been conserved show the image of Shiki Nagaoka, who systematically appears blurred or darkened, present yet invisible and indiscernible. This elusiveness offers a commentary on Bellatin's parodic use of photography. Destabilizing its documentary capacities, the real photographs that accompany the text, but are spuriously allotted to Bellatin's fictional character, contribute to his

¹⁶ Bushel, "Paratext or Imagetext?", 182.

¹⁷ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 46.

¹⁸ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 74.

¹⁹ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 15 (emphasis added).

experimental writing project on modes of literary representation that question the boundaries between fact and fiction.²⁰ One of the clearest pictures of Shiki Nagaoka is a portrait that shows him in profile. The photograph is however damaged, seemingly discolored by bleach, erasing his distinctive nose from the picture. The epigraph informs it was “*manipulated* by his sister Etsuko for the purposes of avoiding that the author be considered a fictional character.”²¹ This visual paratext, which was used as the cover in the Spanish original publication of Bellatin’s novel, once more challenges veritable forms of representation. Photography, like translation, can be tampered with and intervened, and resist the expectation of a faithful reproduction of an original. While the nose remains inaccessible in the Spanish cover, it appears front and center in the English version, in the form of a Japanese style illustration i.e., as an artistic, mediated representation. Reinforcing the upending of authorial hierarchies and testing the boundaries between fact and fiction once more, the image is a metaliterary reference to Shiki Nagaoka as a writer, who had “two large notebooks: one where he wrote his works of fiction, and another where he collected his memories. The latter had a drawing of a giant nose on its cover.”²²

Both Mario Bellatin and Lucas Petersen make use of a photographic archive, an authenticating and validating resource in biographical accounts. In their works, however, photography is used as a malleable medium serving a purpose beyond its traditional illustrative function. The photographs have been shown to support the veracity of their research while simultaneously aiding in the construction of their narratives as fiction.

Salas Subirat used the language of photography to account for what he believed to be the unrivaled genius of Joyce’s epic, i.e., its sense of simultaneity. According to the translator, the Joycean prose was able, like a camera lens (and unlike the human eye), to capture and focus on many images at the same time. This muddy analogy was part of Salas Subirat’s translator note, which prefaced the first two editions

²⁰ Brizuela, *Depois da fotografia*, 27.

²¹ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 68 (emphasis added).

²² Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 33.

of his translation, but was subsequently replaced by a more scholarly prologue by Jacques Mercanton. In his note, Salas Subirat expounds his translation strategies through multiple examples from the text, concluding that *Ulysses* did not present serious translation challenges. The claim responds not to a boastful display on part of the translator, but rather to his belief that there are as many possible translations as there are readings of any given text. Endeavoring to translate such a polyphonic work, Salas Subirat favored translation as the manipulation of a language that is flexible and pledged fidelity not to words, but to Joyce's ideas, steering clear of a literal approach. Some of his translation solutions were more successful than others and would receive a fair amount of criticism, but his exploits remain an achievement that gained him a well-deserved epithet. After surviving the accident that destroyed his third unpublished manuscript, a Venezuelan newspaper's headline announced: "Avión donde venía *el traductor de Ulises* cayó al mar frente a las playas de São Paulo" [Plane carrying *the translator of Ulysses* fell into the sea in front of the São Paulo beaches].²³

Yet while for many, Salas Subirat's worth lies in the titanic challenge of his translational enterprise, in Petersen's biography, it is not until the fourth of five parts that Salas Subirat's translation is discussed. The chapters devoted to the translation of *Ulysses* – arguably the very reason for the existence of Petersen's book – are postponed for some two hundred pages. The previous three parts may effectively be read as paratextual material that contextualizes Salas Subirat and allows readers to reconcile his persona to his version of Joyce's novel. Petersen redirects the attention from the translation to the translator by highlighting his other achievements: "Todo lo que antecede a estas líneas podría ser casi un prólogo para lo que significa Salas Subirat para la industria del seguro. Lo mismo si se reconstruyera su aporte pionero a la historia de la literatura de autoayuda en la Argentina" [Everything that precedes these lines could almost work as a prologue to what Salas Subirat has meant to the insurance industry. Likewise if we were to reconstruct his pioneering contribution to the history of self-

²³ Petersen, *El traductor*, 349 (emphasis added).

help literature in Argentina].²⁴ Throughout the book, Salas Subirat's persona is constructed as a curious learner, an enthusiastic entrepreneur, a simple man of eclectic interests who appreciated a challenge. He translated *Ulysses* because he wanted to read it, and Petersen's lengthy and detailed introduction to his life gives way to an understanding of the translator's task as Salas Subirat expressed it in his translator's note: translation as the most careful, attentive way of reading. Salas Subirat's resolution to translate Joyce in such a way is only paralleled by Petersen's determination to document his achievement, perhaps confirming, in the case of the translator just as in that of the biographer, that indeed "a writer necessarily identifies, both consciously and unconsciously, with the figure whose life he studies."²⁵

Understood as a commentary on the original, translations were considered to be part of its paratextual structure in Gérard Genette's theorization of paratexts. The development of translation studies as a discipline has since moved away from a conceptualization of translation as dependent on, and subservient to, an original. The translation of Mario Bellatin's novel serves here as a primary text that reads anew. This English version is introduced by David Shook's translator's preface. By making use of the traditional discursive practices expected of prefatorial materials, it successfully contributes to the fabrication of Shiki Nagaoka's character. Shook's text results in a creative authorial intervention that could work as another chapter in Bellatin's literary forgery. Moreover, it adds to the novel's thematic depiction of translating as writing, continuing to blur the boundaries between fact and fiction, original and translation, production and reproduction. Framing the reading of Bellatin's book, it is in fact Shook who characterizes it as a biographical account ("I am honored to have ushered Mario Bellatin's biography of the great Shiki Nagaoka") and hopes his translation will help tackle Nagaoka's detractors who believed his story to be "too incredible to be true."²⁶ A discussion by the translator of other available translations and copyright issues completes the preface and its illusion

²⁴ Petersen, *El traductor*, 325.

²⁵ Baron, "Psychological Dimensions of the Biographical Process", 5.

²⁶ Bellatin, *Shiki Nagaoka*, 5.

of veracity. Shook acts as an accomplice to Bellatin, who utilizes analogous literary antics including as paratexts a selected bibliography of apocryphal works by and about Shiki Nagaoka, forging his supposed authenticity and establishing his role as author.

The recent upsurge in the publication of academic works, memoirs and biographies, and literary fiction centered around translators has brought forth the importance of this figure in our current world while bringing to the fore its longstanding invisibility. The newly depiction of translators can challenge commonplace assumptions about their task, which results in tension between fact and fiction, reality and its representation. A comparable tension has occurred traditionally between an original and its translation, when the latter is expected to replicate the former. Taking a look at how the work of translators has been portrayed, whether in historiographical or fictional accounts, allows us to reimagine the translator's task. The destabilization of authorial hierarchies and the dislocation of discursive authority in *El traductor del Ulises* by Lucas Petersen and in *Shiki Nagaoka: Una nariz de ficción* by Mario Bellatin put forward an understanding of translation not in terms of faithful reproduction of an original but as a creative exercise imbued with agency. The biography of a translator with parallels to a work of fiction and a novel about a fictional translator that passes for the biography of a real one, both books make a productive use of the tension between reality and its literary rendering. Contributing to their thematic blurring of one and the other, their respective paratexts additionally and purposefully confound translating with writing. In Petersen's book, there is a deliberate effort to have Salas Subirat's biography cover image resemble that of his translation. The use of image-editing software to tamper with one of the biographer's archival finds questions photography's representational capabilities. In Bellatin's novel, real photographs that are falsely adjudicated contribute to his forging of a fictional biography, which passes for a real one precisely because it makes credible use of the expected paratextual materials of the genre. Another of such materials in its English version is the translator's preface, which simultaneously follows and defies the formal conventions of this paratext. While often paratexts will rely on authorial approval, they also help expand and situate works within a

larger literary industry, where editors and marketing departments play an important and decisive role. For example, *Shiki Nagaoka: A Nose for Fiction* will soon be rereleased by Deep Vellum Books with a new cover illustration and design, including this time the translator's name. As critical and literary works continue engaging in the visibilization of the translator, so too will their figure increasingly occupy spaces that had repeatedly omitted them. Tending to these paratextual structures illuminates the role the framing of these narratives can play in rethinking the translator's task in their biographical and fictional renderings.

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Caragh Barry

University of California Santa Barbara
ORCID 0000-0002-0511-7211
caragh@ucsb.edu

Gender and Translation Theory in Fiction: Andrés Neuman's *El viajero del siglo*

By deliberately choosing a female-identified translator character as one of the protagonists, Argentine author Andrés Neuman in his award-winning novel *El viajero del siglo* (2009) [Traveler of the Century] engages with often-overlooked aspects of translation that are central to feminist translation theory and those who work with gender and translation. This article examines this phenomenon as seen in Neuman's novel and focuses on the identity and portrayal of the character Sophie Gottlieb, who defies expectations set for translators in previous works of fiction. This unique portrayal of the translator-character through Sophie exemplifies three main trends in translation theory when explored through a gendered lens: the idea of translation as an expression of agency (Simon 1996; von Flotow 1997; Maier 1998); the metaphors of translation and the concept of production *versus* reproduction (Chamberlain 2012; Godayol 2013); and translation as collaborative, creative, and transformative (Littau 2000). By choosing to create an aristocratic female character in what would become modern-day Germany in the nineteenth century, Neuman both shows how women historically gained a form of agency through translation as well as defies previous expectations for what topics a translator character could be used to explore.

Keywords: translation; fiction; gender; metaphors; agency

Introduction

Despite the importance of more well-known works of what Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl refer to as “transfiction,”¹ which thoughtfully

¹ Kaindl and Spitzl, *Transfiction. Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction*. The term “transfiction” refers to works of fiction that heavily feature translation and translators as subjects.

consider many of the problems and paradoxes that translators must face when performing their work, many of these feature male translator protagonists and only offer a pessimistic portrayal of translation. These works often rely on negative, gendered tropes and showcase a tragic ending as one of the only possible outcomes for these characters. However, several more recently published novels like *El viajero del siglo* by Andrés Neuman are challenging these narrative outcomes. Many of these works feature female translator protagonists, and while they also lay bare the paradoxes and power struggles involved in the translation process, their final tone is decidedly more positive. Instead of the translator being doomed to voicelessness, a tragic death, or failure as a result of feeling the need to leave the profession, through these more recent characters and the concerted development of their identities in relation to their work as translators, these works promote an understanding of translation that is creative, communal as opposed to isolating, and individually and linguistically transformative.

As scholars of transfiction such as Rosemary Arrojo,² Kaindl and Spitzl,³ and Nitsa Ben-Ari⁴ have noted, translators are often portrayed in fiction as powerless, weak, wannabe writers subjected to the whims of the more powerful author. These portrayals often appear in gendered terms, where the weak, symbolically castrated translator is feminized, or he is portrayed as a treacherous womanizer, not to be emulated. As Lori Chamberlain demonstrates in her 1988 article “Gender and the Metaphors of Translation,” and Pilar Godayol confirmed in “Metaphors, Women and Translation: From *Les Belles Infidèles* to *La Frontera*,” for centuries gendered metaphors were applied to the practice of translation. These metaphors established parallel hierarchies between that of man to woman and author to translator; father to child and original to translation; as well as father/husband/protector to woman and translator to “virginal” original text. When the text itself is gendered as female, the translator (gendered as male in this case) is charged with bringing it into another language, but while doing so he must protect

² Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*.

³ Kaindl and Spitzl, *Transfiction*.

⁴ Ben-Ari, “Representations of Translators in Popular Culture”.

the text's "integrity," much like how in traditional patriarchal societies it was the duty of the father or brother to protect the chastity of his daughter/sister until she could be married and (re)produce *legitimate* offspring, recognizable as belonging to the father. In these metaphors, women are not given any agency (symbolic or otherwise), and are equated to the reader, who the translator seduces away from the author, or to the virginal text that must be protected at all costs. However, once the translator character is a woman, as is the case of Sophie Gottlieb in *El viajero del siglo*, the "traditional" gendered metaphors of translation no longer seem to apply. While these traditional metaphors outlined by Chamberlain and Godayol emphasize a negative connotation of being female and of being a translator, through characters like Sophie, we see how translation can be transformative, empowering, and a means to exercise individual agency. Sophie's character and the gendered metaphors employed throughout the novel exemplify three important trends in translation theory in relation to gender: translation as an expression of historical and political agency, the power and pervasiveness of gendered metaphor in translation, and translation as a collaborative, creative, pleasurable, and transformative endeavor. By including these three important trends, *El viajero del siglo* stands in stark contrast to other, previous works of transfiction that ultimately portray translators and translation in a negative light.⁵

***El viajero del siglo*: Political, historical, and individual agency through translation**

Refreshingly, Andrés Neuman's *El viajero del siglo* challenges these tropes about gender and translation in fiction by presenting important elements of feminist and gender studies in translation theory through the plot elements and metaphors employed throughout the novel. The first of these elements is a historical one that shows how, contrary to the portrayal of translation in previous writings where male translators are

⁵ See, for example, Julio Cortázar's "Carta a una señorita en París" and Rodolfo Walsh's "Nota al pie", in which the translator-protagonist dies by suicide, or Moacyr Scliar's "Nota ao pé da página", Italo Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, and Carlos Fuentes's "Las dos orillas", all of which feature a traitorous and unreliable translator, to name just a few notable examples.

notably feminized and stripped of their patriarchal authority as creative writers,⁶ translation has been a way for women to gain and exercise their agency as writers.

As Sherry Simon,⁷ Luise von Flotow,⁸ Susanne Stark,⁹ Christina Zwarg¹⁰ and other translation scholars have shown, translation has historically been an empowering activity for the (wealthy, white, aristocratic) women who were able to use it as a means of entry into the literary world. Because these women were supposedly just repeating the works of male authors in another language as opposed to writing their own pieces, it was considered more permissible. However, many women subversively used their translations to write introductions in which they expressed their pro-women views, advocated for women's writing, or simply dared to comment on the text itself. In this way, translation presented women with a sort of literary agency that had previously been denied to them. In Simon's groundbreaking work *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission*, she dedicates a chapter to analyzing how several different historical female translators have not only expressed their agency through translation but also left their mark on literary and cultural history. Simon argues that "translation has at times emerged as a strong form of expression for women – allowing them to enter the world of letters, to promote political causes and to engage in stimulating writing relationships."¹¹ While she acknowledges that the opposite argument could be made, that translation is constricting rather than liberating, the plethora of cited examples demonstrates that translation indeed could provide a literary outlet for women. For this reason, Simon explains the importance of studying their translations along with other writings and

⁶ See for instance Jorge Luis Borges's "Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*", Isaac Babel's "Guy de Maupassant", Jacques Gélât's *Le Traducteur*, etc., all of which feature weak, effeminate translators who are wannabe writers. For a metaphorical discussion on gender, the author as patriarchal authority, and how these relate to translation, see Lori Chamberlain's "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation."

⁷ Simon, *Gender in Translation*.

⁸ Von Flotow, *Translation and Gender*.

⁹ Stark, "Women and Translation in the Nineteenth Century".

¹⁰ Zwarg, "Feminism in Translation: Margaret Fuller's 'Tasso'".

¹¹ Simon, *Gender in Translation*, 39.

paratexts: “The productions of women translators are to be studied for what they can tell us about their intervention in cultural and intellectual movements of their times, and for the ways in which they themselves construe their gendered identities as relevant.”¹² Based on the translated texts themselves, several scholars tentatively began to speculate about the female translators’ lives and how their identities as women may have influenced their translation process. While this method of psychoanalytically analyzing the translations of historical women to hypothesize about their personal lives and opinions may be criticized for being too speculative for nonfiction, fiction can step in to explore the personal lives of these women where history and psychology cannot. In this way, transfiction that features female translators (*El viajero del siglo* in particular) is especially useful. Instead of picking apart translation products, these works provide a space to speculate on the private lives of these translators, as well as to demonstrate how the process of translation leads to a greater and increased expression of individual agency.

While the fact that Sophie Gottlieb in Andrés Neuman’s *El viajero del siglo* may fit the transfiction “stereotype” of an aristocratic woman who begins translating as a form of intellectual entertainment, her character differs from the earlier portrayals of translators in fiction in several ways. In the novel, Sophie is the daughter of a wealthy merchant in the fictional town of Wandernburgo (in modern-day Germany) and the hostess of Wandernburgo’s premiere salon. Setting the novel in Romantic Germany provides the perfect environment to examine translation in a positive, creative, and transformative light, as the German Romantics viewed translation as a means to add new genres to the repertoire of the German language and therefore form a new, nationalistic canon. As a wealthy, aristocratic woman, Sophie is therefore able to use translation to express her personal and political agency. She is able to participate as a translator in the political process of nation-building and related canon-forming that was the backbone of the intellectual experiments behind the formation of the German

¹² *Gender in Translation*, 42.

nation-state in the nineteenth century.¹³ In contrast to other prevalent notions of translation that thought of translation as a lack or a degradation of the original text, the German Romantics had a positive understanding that effectively cemented the importance of translation as an integral part of German culture. As Antoine Berman notes, there was “a tradition in which translation henceforth, and up to the present century, has been considered an integral part of cultural existence and, furthermore, as a constitutive moment of Germanity (*Deutschheit*).”¹⁴ In this era, translation had an air or mutuality¹⁵, and there was an emphasis on “play”: “It can be said that, to a certain extent, Romantic translation seeks to *play* with languages and their literatures, to make them ‘fall into’ one another at all levels.”¹⁶ Both of these ideas were a far cry from the previous hierarchies between authors and translators, and essentially elevated translation to the level of cultural production.

From the moment the reader encounters Sophie it is apparent that, while not totally unheard of for the time,¹⁷ she has rather progressive views for the nineteenth century on the public role and rights of women. In her position as hostess, Sophie often expresses and argues in support of her views that women should be allowed a more active role in political life, and she maintains that this role can be gained through “subversiones privadas”¹⁸. Sophie defends these political activities, citing Mary Wollstonecraft and Friedrich Schleiermacher, to whom she frequently refers.¹⁹ Sophie even seems to foreshadow her own,

¹³ Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign*. For a detailed analysis of the importance of translation and how translation theory was shaped in Romantic Germany, see Antoine Berman’s 1992 *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*.

¹⁴ *The Experience of the Foreign*, 11.

¹⁵ Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign*, 64.

¹⁶ Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign*, 15 (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Stark, “Women and Translation in the Nineteenth Century.” Stark points out that, despite Virginia Woolf’s insistence on the need to kill “The Angel in the Home,” women who translated and produced important work in the nineteenth century despite gender roles of the time were much more common than previously thought.

¹⁸ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 80.

¹⁹ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 195-196. Friedrich Schleiermacher, the Prussian theologian and philosopher who at times promoted ideas friendly to a feminist

independent future when she discusses the freedom to choose to be happy that she would like to see in fictional female characters:

Amiga mía [...] le confieso que tanta tragedia femenina me alarma. Los cronistas y los lectores aman a las heroínas, pero las aman muertas. Y las pobres van de aquí para allá con la obligación de inmolarse. ¿No podríamos tener heroínas un poco más felices?²⁰

All these moments and character traits serve as a baseline to set the stage for Sophie's future personal growth and increased confidence through her journey with translation. Despite these progressive proclivities, Sophie is not as independent as she would like to be. Hans comments more than once on the fact that despite her apparent worldliness, Sophie has never left Wandernburgo. Additionally, for most of the novel she is engaged to Rudi Wilderhaus, a wealthy member of the Wandernburgo elite. Since her father's businesses are not faring well, he supervises and pressures his daughter into marriage with Rudi so that she may live comfortably. In order to ensure that she goes through with the marriage and that Sophie maintains her honor before the wedding, she is chaperoned and followed by the servants who work for her father, and there are numerous situations in which she cannot speak directly or freely. As a result, Sophie frequently complains about the restrictions that the Church and society place upon her as a woman.

Right from the moment Sophie begins to translate, the positive ideas of translation at the forefront of German Romantic thought and methodology are present in the *Zeitgeist* of the novel, and lead to an almost immediate transformation in Sophie. Already a confident character in expressing her beliefs, she becomes even more sure of herself as she progresses:

Sophie le formuló a Hans tres o cuatro *tímidas* objeciones que él encontró asombrosamente atinadas. [...] Se pusieron manos a la obra y, a pesar de que

agenda, and is well known in the field of translation studies for his foundational 1813 lecture "Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens" ("On the Different Methods of Translating").

²⁰ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 172.

Sophie insistía en que el inglés no era su fuerte, Hans se quedó prendado de la facilidad con que ella reordenaba las frases, alternaba los adjetivos o se atrevía con licencias razonables: parecía una niña *jugando* con objetos *que manejaba a su antojo*. Viendo la *avidez* con que Sophie releía los textos, su *deleite* al detenerse en los pasajes difíciles o recitar en voz baja los versos, Hans tuvo una idea que lo llenó de deseo y entusiasmo.²¹

Sophie's timid, tentative beginnings soon give way to a confident and playful mastery. As the novel progresses, the reader sees more of how this process of translation leads to Sophie asserting herself even more and participating politically in the German Romantic process of nation and canon formation, inserting what von Flotow refers to as a "female frame"²² into the conversation. When it comes to choosing which authors to translate, Sophie more than once advocates for women writers and criticizes male writers who espouse misogynist views. Sophie advocates for including Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's sonnet "Al que ingrato me deja, busco amante", a poem that is both about and an expression of female agency, and contrasts the poem with Garcilaso de la Vega, about whom she remarks, "siempre con esa espantosa idea de fondo: te amo si te callas, eres perfecta porque apenas te conozco, ni falta que me hace."²³ The inclusion of Sor Juana's poem is particularly poignant because of Sor Juana's "feminized use of the discourses of courtly love, patronage and morality as a sign of subversive activity."²⁴ Sophie's insistence on translating and including female authors in her work with Hans demonstrates her attempts to contest the dominating male narrative of literature at the time. With the German Romantic understanding of translation as a way to bring new genres and literatures into the German canon, Sophie's translation of this poem and the inclusion of several female poets writing in German (including Jean Paul, Karoline von Günderrode, and Bettina von Arnim) marks the canonization of critical female voices in German literature. As Carol Maier explains in "Issues in the Practice of Translating Women's

²¹ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 294 (emphasis added).

²² Von Flotow, *Translation and Gender*, 74.

²³ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 362.

²⁴ Von Flotow, *Translation and Gender*, 69.

Fiction,” this selection process is a critical expression of agency. She notes:

[Translation as representing an author] can also prompt a sense of responsibility not unrelated to power, especially if one accepts performativity’s paradox and endeavours to exploit it, bearing in mind particularly that representation is inherent in translation, and not only in a theatrical context. For to translate an author is to represent that author in a new language and tradition, and such representation involves agency. [...] Not only do they decide which works they translate and how responsibly they carry out their translations, their understanding of gender-related issues (including their feelings about their own gender identifications as well) to a large extent determines an author’s appearance in another language.²⁵

Therefore, in this way, Sor Juana and Garcilaso de la Vega would then be brought into German literature through a lens that is keen on the equal representation of women. Sophie’s repeated and increasing insistence on including female voices in her translation and editing work with Hans demonstrates an increased confidence in Sophie to advocate for more female representation and participation in German cultural and political life, as well as the desire to include these women in the creation of the new, Romantic German nation- and canon-building processes. These translations effectively become Sophie’s “subversiones privadas”.

By the end of the novel, the reader can see how these experiences of translation allowed Sophie to express her agency personally, sexually, culturally, and politically. Despite some of Sophie’s hesitancy about being a woman translator and her frustration regarding the societal restrictions placed on her as a woman, these experiences of expressing her agency translate into personal growth. Sophie ultimately ends up alone, unlike the typical fairytale heroines or angel/mother of the home. As she explains in her last conversation with Hans, “Pero eso, dijo él, también es tu vida: traducir, escribir, ¿no? Esos, contestó ella, sólo son mis sueños. [...] Con gesto desolado pero firme, Sophie contestó: Es mejor no seguir

²⁵ Maier, “Issues in the Practice of Translating Women’s Fiction”, 103-104.

a nadie, ¿no te parece?”²⁶ Rather than leaving with him to translate, she knows that she must stake out her own path based on her principles. For this reason Sophie finally leaves Wandernburgo alone for the first time in her life, presumably to travel and to translate, as the reader last encounters her following the wind that takes a three page-long detour through Wandernburgo: “[S]e marcha del camino del puente donde ahora Sophie, de pie con dos maletas, sujetándose el tocado para que no se le vuele, espera la llegada del próximo carruaje, dos maletas llenas de ropa, papeles y dudas.”²⁷ Through this entire process of expressing political, personal, and sexual agency through translation, Sophie is able to practice what she preaches and live as an independent woman, and the reader is offered a positive, non-tragic ending for Sophie.

Revisiting and reimagining the gendered metaphors of translation

Beyond the elements of the plot that explicitly demonstrate a change in how translators are portrayed and how they express their agency, *El viajero del siglo* is also unique in how it revisits and reimagines the metaphors commonly used to describe translation, particularly the most commonly used metaphors having to do with gender. In her article “Metaphors, Women and Translation”, Pilar Godayol takes on the task of categorizing and describing the various types of metaphors historically employed in translation discourse. Godayol dubs the oldest and longest phase of metaphors “The First Age or *les belles infidèles* (the age of sexist and androcentric sexual metaphors).”²⁸ Because of its age and duration, it comes as no surprise that these sexist, gendered metaphors would also appear in transfiction. In *El viajero del siglo*, the reader repeatedly encounters two such commonly used metaphors from the First Age with the motif of faithfulness or fidelity, as well as the supposedly hierarchical concepts of production vs. reproduction. In her famous essay “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation,” Lori Chamberlain describes the more common use of these metaphors

²⁶ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 516.

²⁷ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 531.

²⁸ Godayol, “Metaphors, Women and Translation”, 99.

throughout historical discourse as one that equates men and authors with the superior function of “production,” and women and translators with the inferior “reproduction”.²⁹ On fidelity, Chamberlain explains:

The sexualization of translation appears perhaps most familiarly in the tag *les belles infidèles* – like women, the adage goes, translations should be either beautiful or faithful. [...] [W]hat gives it the appearance of truth is that it has captured a cultural complicity between the issues of fidelity in translation and in marriage. For *les belles infidèles*, fidelity is defined by an implicit contract between translation (as woman) and original (as husband, father, or author). However, the infamous “double standard” operates here as it might have in traditional marriages: the “unfaithful” wife/translation is publicly tried for crimes the husband/original is by law incapable of committing.³⁰

As in earlier discourse on translation and fidelity, this burden of remaining “faithful” in *El viajero del siglo* has been primarily placed on the female protagonist. (Although one could argue that Hans could also be considered a *traduttore traditore*.) Much of the novel’s plot has to do with the fact that Sophie is quite literally being unfaithful to her fiancé, Rudi. Fidelity comes to the forefront when Hans and Sophie begin their relationship and Hans is suspect of Sophie’s actions. In the salons where Sophie, Hans, and Rudi are present, Sophie is first described through Hans’s (male) perspective:

Para los enredados sentimientos de Hans, los viernes Sophie era dos mujeres. Una, la deliciosa cómplice con quien intercambiaba fugaces murmullos. Otra, la que el espejo duplicaba, era la anfitriona impecable y dueña de sus secretos que no eludía las atenciones de Rudi ni evitaba corresponderlas.³¹

Here, Sophie is described as two-faced and duplicitous, literally as being two different women. However, the novel does not stick with this stereotypical characterization of Sophie as the dubious, untrustworthy

²⁹ “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation”, 254.

³⁰ “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation”, 255.

³¹ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 167.

woman/translator for long. The narration suddenly shifts to explain the more nuanced situation from Sophie's perspective:

Este comportamiento, que tan contradictorio le resultaba a él, era para Sophie el único modo digno de mantener la coherencia: Hans era su amigo, probablemente ya el más íntimo de todos, y no pensaba renunciar a la corriente entre ellos, a ese hormigueo que tanto la deleitaba y al que, ¡faltaría más!, tenía y seguiría teniendo derecho fuera cual fuese su estado civil; pero Rudi iba a ser su esposo, viviría con él a partir de octubre y no estaba dispuesta a despertar sus celos ni a fingir irresponsablemente que no tenían el importante compromiso que tenían.³²

The narrator then continues to explain Sophie's relationships and relative position with regards to all the men in her life, as well as her personal attitudes towards marriage which, again, are much more skeptical than the fairytale, happily-ever-after variety. In this way, the reader sees that rather than being a seemingly inexplicable fickle duplicitousness in Sophie, Sophie's behavior is the result of the nuanced and complex situation in which she finds herself. It prompts the reader to question the idea of "faithfulness" and to wonder: faithful to whom or to what? In terms of her personal life, is being faithful to her promise of marriage to Rudi the only valid definition of "fidelity"? What about being faithful to her emotions and desires? Her dreams? Is "faithfulness," in any sense of the word, even possible? In the end, the truth of this reality of the nuanced nature of love and fidelity is explained once Sophie reveals her true relationship with Hans to Rudi, and there is catharsis rather than rancor:

Ella había caminado durante meses sobre una cuerda floja y, como era previsible, había terminado cayéndose. Pero ahora podía mirar a Rudi sin ningún fingimiento. Y empezaba a notar que había más fortaleza en su sinceridad de mujer infiel que en la indignación rabiosa de su prometido.³³

Despite the fact that she is a "fallen" woman according to the quote, Sophie is comforted by the truth of her infidelity, rather than

³² Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 167.

³³ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 513.

the impossibility of maintaining a traditional notion of “faithfulness” to any of the men in her life.

The explanation for Sophie’s apparent treacherousness and “infidelity” is important in unveiling the nuances inherent to any complex situation. More importantly, however, these nuances parallel the complex nature of the translator’s relationships and responsibilities, as well as the impossibility of maintaining “faithfulness” to the original text in the sense of complete equivalence from one language to another. Just as how a flesh and blood translator must juggle responsibilities toward the author they are translating, responsibilities to their readers in the target language, responsibilities towards the text itself, towards the original and target cultures, towards the publisher, etc., Sophie must adjust her behavior in light of her situation with each other character. Both situations reveal to the reader that the definition of “faithfulness” – either in the case of romantic relationships or translation – is not as neatly demarcated as previously thought or depicted.

Additionally, the novel itself consistently reminds the reader that Sophie is constantly thinking about her situation and the various nuances of fidelity, especially for women: even the works she chooses to include in Hans and Sophie’s writings and translations feature this theme. Of all the works that are mentioned and quoted in translation within the novel, Sophie suggests two that emphasize and highlight the nuances of fidelity in love and translation. The first is the aforementioned “Al que ingrato me deja, busco amante,” a sonnet that also emphasizes the complicated and nuanced position of a female speaker when it comes to love. The second is “Ob ich Dich liebe, weiß ich nicht,” a poem written by Bettina von Arnim that deals with the uncertainty of whether the poetic voice is truly in love, and ends with the lines:

Si es fiel tu niña, no sé.
Aunque ella ruega a los cielos
que tu amor nunca esté lejos,
si es fiel tu niña, no sé.³⁴

³⁴ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 403. Translated into Spanish in the novel by the author, this translation notably seems to emphasize the female voice in the poem.

Much like the fact that the actual task of translation cannot involve an impossible, blind and total “faithfulness” to the author of the original text, or even to the idea of the original text itself, translation is necessarily a task of mediating various, and oftentimes competing, factors: the linguistic possibilities available to the translator in the target language, the needs of the publisher, the desire to maintain some type of “equivalence” with the original, the adventurousness of the reader, the cultural contexts and histories of both texts, etc. By demonstrating nuance through Sophie’s situation and the recurring motif of fidelity in these translated works, the idea of faithfulness itself is questioned, and the hierarchical dichotomy between original/translation and man/woman as described by Chamberlain and Godayol is upended. The novel even addresses the issue directly during a debate about translation when Hans explains:

[C]reo que esa fidelidad es una paradoja [...], quiero decir, en el fondo es una paradoja, porque en el mismo instante en que aparece en escena otro texto la fidelidad es inalcanzable, el poema ya es distinto, se ha convertido en otro. [...] Tal como la entiendo, una traducción no se compone de una voz de autoridad y otra voz que la obedece, es más bien un encuentro entre dos voluntades literarias.³⁵

Therefore, as Hans explains it, translation (and by extension romantic relationships) should not involve a relationship of domination and subjugation, but rather one of an equal partnership.

Pleasure and present over production vs. reproduction

In addition to demonstrating the invalidity of the male/female author/translator hierarchical dichotomy, the novel also upends the gender/sexual hierarchy of production vs. reproduction through the sex as translation metaphor. Rather than placing the emphasis on the lack or loss that is inherent in translation, or worse yet, equating translation to a masculine, penetrative, violent, and exploitative activity as George Steiner³⁶ and other theorists have done, *El viajero del siglo* takes a

³⁵ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 316-317.

³⁶ Steiner, *After Babel*.

different approach. Along with her cultural and political contributions in *El viajero del siglo*, Sophie also flouts the reader's expectations of an aristocratic woman's sexuality and demonstrates individual agency through her sexual liberty and experience. Unlike the typical "angel of the house" or "virgin" stereotypes attributed to women (and especially aristocratic ones) Hans (and the reader alike) seems surprised at her assertiveness, authority, and strength:

Pensó en la honestidad casi brutal de los instintos de Sophie, en su inesperada fuerza física. Al contrario de lo que él había supuesto, ella no se limitaba a recostarse lánguidamente y dejar que él tomara decisiones: saciaba su deseo con la naturalidad de un jarro que se vuelca.³⁷

This sexual aspect of the novel is significant not only for its exploration of language and intercourse, in all the senses of the word, but also to intimately demonstrate translation as a joyful, collaborative, and connective activity. This extended metaphor underscores the idea of translation as "play" rather than an isolating and destructive activity as previously seen in other works of transfiction.

While the ways in which *El viajero del siglo* employs sex as an extended metaphor to discuss translation still remain in what Godayol refers to as the "Derridian 'double bind' (the age in which Derrida presents a model of metaphor which, despite using sexual language, defends the woman and translation)",³⁸ as Littau points out this more feminist metaphor promotes thinking about translation and its inevitable impossibility of equivalence in terms of the Derridean "undecidability": "[U]ndecidability then is not conceived in terms of a loss, but a potentially unstoppable gain."³⁹ By constantly intertwining sex and translation, the novel emphasizes a positive portrayal of both: that of play, mutual pleasure, collaboration, and potential gain. As the novel first describes Sophie and Hans's sexual and working relationships:

³⁷ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 292.

³⁸ Godayol, "Metaphors, Women and Translation", 99.

³⁹ Littau, "Pandora's Tongues", 26.

Hans y Sophie pasaban de los libros al catre y del catre a los libros, buscándose en las palabras y leyéndose los cuerpos. Así, sin proponérselo, fueron alcanzando un idioma común, reescribiendo lo que leían, traduciéndose mutuamente. Cuanto más trabajaban juntos más se daban cuenta de lo parecidos que eran el amor y la traducción, entender a una persona y trasladar un texto, volver a decir un poema en una lengua distinta y ponerle palabras a lo que sentía el otro. Ambas misiones se presentaban tan felices como incompletas: siempre quedaban dudas, palabras por cambiar, matices incomprensidos. Ellos también eran conscientes de la imposibilidad de lograr la transparencia como amantes y como traductores. Diferencias culturales, políticas, biográficas, sexuales actuaban como filtro. Cuanto más intentaban mediar en ellas mayores se volvían los peligros, los obstáculos, las malinterpretaciones. Pero al mismo tiempo los puentes entre las lenguas, entre ellos mismos, se volvían más anchos. [...] Y aunque Sophie que ningún temblor, ningún poema podía traducirse con otras palabras, porque aquella totalidad era inalcanzable, lo único que deseaba al terminar era empezar de nuevo.⁴⁰

While the previous quote realistically acknowledges the imperfections and impossibilities inherent in translation, as well as the differences that are always present and impossible to overcome when working on translating a text or in an interpersonal relationship, the conclusion is not that translation is futile, quite the opposite, in fact. By ending with the image of widening cultural and interpersonal bridges as well as the excitement of starting fresh with a new translation or making love again, Neuman emphasizes the importance of connection, excitement, and enthusiasm in both translation and sex, not focusing on loss or indecision, but on infinite possibilities.

A key scene in the novel that ties together these themes of translation, fidelity, sex, and production vs. reproduction occurs when Hans and Sophie engage in sexual intercourse while Sophie is menstruating. The issues of gender and biological sex are at the forefront as Sophie complains, “Por un lado me siento, o en teoría me sé, más mujer que nunca. Pero por otro lado esto me interrumpe, limita mi plenitud.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 301-302.

⁴¹ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 416.

She wants to make love with Hans, she wants to be independent, but her biology and her social position limit her. However, Sophie also begins to question these natural laws, these “mandates” seemingly given by nature when she thinks to herself, “Difícil ser sincera cuando la naturaleza te da una orden y la conciencia otra. ¿Pero es realmente una orden? ¿O es una maravillosa posibilidad que tengo el privilegio de rechazar?”⁴² Immediately in the next paragraph, the reader sees Sophie asking Hans to not pull out, as a way to not only reject the “command” from Mother Nature to not have sex while menstruating, but to also reject the “biological” hierarchy of production *vs.* reproduction. As a woman, and metaphorically as a translator, her traditional role is to reproduce, to passively provide “legitimate” offspring to the husband/father/author. Yet menstruation, with its related taboos associated with blood and death, cannot be the site of creation or procreation. The novel upends the associations of gender and production *vs.* reproduction with translation when it describes:

De pronto le pareció natural y profundamente verdadero: ahora, cuando él se volcara en su interior, quedarían unidos por el mutuo deseo de *no* fecundar, de liberar juntos un placer que nacía y moría entero en su propia duración. Si el pasado es una especie de padre [...], el auténtico hijo vendría a ser ese presente absoluto, no el futuro.⁴³

As the narration emphasizes, the goal here is specifically to *not* impregnate Sophie, not to reproduce, but to unite the two of them in an authentic, pure present filled with mutual pleasure. There is no male author/father figure, just two translators (“dos voluntades literarias”) whose focus is not on the “legitimacy” of the offspring, but the pleasure of translation, the pleasure of sex, the pleasure of wordplay, the pleasure of the present text. In this way, the hierarchy of production *vs.* reproduction is rendered irrelevant, as the translator is seen not as a vessel for reproducing a “legitimate” text, but an agent with the

⁴² Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 416.

⁴³ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 417.

freedom to take pleasure in the process of wordplay without concerning themselves with the so-called faithfulness of the “product”.

This scene is also significant because it shows Sophie’s desire not to completely reject all things considered feminine, but rather her rejection of the idea of an imposed mandate on her life because of her biological sex. After Hans and Sophie finish, she once again emphasizes the issue of “reproduction” when she expresses her fears surrounding pregnancy. She draws a clear distinction between wanting to have children and not wanting to be a mother. Aside from the physical worries that come with pregnancy, she also wonders “¿Se puede ser una chica egoísta y una madre generosa?, ¿cómo haces cuando te gustaría ser las dos cosas?”⁴⁴ Seemingly, Sophie wants to reject the “mandate” of all that comes with the archetype of motherhood, where motherhood means rejecting herself and dedicating her life to her children and her family, maintaining the legitimate family line for the father. Metaphorically extended to the realm of translation, this preoccupation again exposes the impossibility of being a truly “faithful” translator, a “mother figure”⁴⁵ that is tasked with bringing the legitimate translation into the world and to nurture it, but never to interfere with it or leave her mark. Like a good mother, the translator must be selfless, and her own creativity should not be visible in the translation, only the father’s genius and artistry. When Sophie muses about whether it is possible to be both selfish and a generous mother, it once again reveals the impossible situation traditionally placed on both women and translators.

Sophie then emphasizes her desire to reject this biological/social mandate imposed on her as a woman a third time when she begins to criticize Kant. Sophie complains, “Según Kant, dijo Sophie, asesinar a un hijo bastardo es menos grave que una infidelidad,”⁴⁶ again bringing up the motif of infidelity and imposing the moral and emotional burden of society’s standards on women. Sophie criticizes Kant’s main emphasis on duty and the categorical imperative by rejecting this standard, rejecting the idea of needing to be a mother, needing to be a faithful

⁴⁴ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 417.

⁴⁵ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 114.

⁴⁶ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 417.

woman/translator. While Kant's ideas and teachings on morality were intended to be about freedom, for women they are quite the opposite. In the case of killing the bastard child, they are controlling and deadly: "Y así nuestra moral, señor culo bonito, se vuelve lo contrario de la vida. Nos enseñan una moral para restringir nuestra vida, no para comprenderla."⁴⁷ Sophie is against these standards and mandates, which is partially why she uses her newfound agency and authority to defend her "illegitimate offspring": the texts that she translates together with Hans. In this way, the novel criticizes these restrictions placed on women as well as questions the hierarchy of author/translator man/woman. Through the extended metaphor of translation as sex and Sophie's character, the novel ultimately places the emphasis on mutual play, pleasure, and possibility rather than on a lack or on a concern for posterity.

Conclusion

While Andrés Neuman's *El viajero del siglo* is remarkable in several aspects, it is particularly noteworthy because it breaks new ground in transfiction, bringing to life several important themes and discussions previously confined to translators' and academics' circles. Translation and the fidelity of translators are not as cut and dry as one might first assume. As we have seen, by taking the old association of translators and women and translation as an act of romantic love, Neuman pushes the reader to question the traditional hierarchies of man and woman, author and translator by showing us two equal partners engaged in a pleasurable activity that is about the joy of the moment, rather than the faithfulness or legitimacy of the offspring/text. By using the nuanced position of Sophie in particular, the reader can see the parallels between her romantic and social position and the position of a translator, thereby better understanding some of the complexities of translation. Of particular concern to feminist theories of translation and theories relating to gender and translation, through Sophie's political participation in the process of German nation- and canon-building the reader is exposed to how translation can become a way to express agency and involve

⁴⁷ Neuman, *El viajero del siglo*, 418.

female voices in the conversation, rather than as a way of perpetuating the secondary or lower status of women. *El viajero del siglo* is unique in its extensive, careful, and nuanced portrayal of translators, and particularly of women-identifying translators. The novel demonstrates to readers that translators are more than just solitary, secondary, wannabe writers. *El viajero del siglo* lovingly portrays translation as the nuanced, complex, satisfying, and enjoyable activity it is.

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Marta Pacheco Pinto

University of Lisbon

ORCID 0000-0002-2043-619X

mpinto@letras.ulisboa.pt

When the Translator Ends Up in the Water: A Case Study of Three Fictional Finales

This article addresses three fictional stories that cast translators in a similar finale, that of relief in the water. The water as these translators' final destination is examined in relation to Yōko Tawada's short story "Saint George and the Translator" (2007 [1993]), Yōko Ogawa's novel *Hotel Iris* (2010 [1996]), and João Reis's novella *The Translator's Bride* (2019 [2015]). The question to be discussed from a comparative perspective and close reading approach is why these fictionalized translators end up throwing themselves into the water and what is entailed in this choice of liquidity. Contrary to translators who got into history, the translators around which these storylines revolve are nameless (anonymous) translators going through dysfunctional romantic relationships and struggling with the uncertainties and lack of recognition that pervade the translation profession. The different nuances in meaning of the water motif (symbolizing either purification or redemption, inspiration or destruction) is interrogated on two levels: the fictional translators' self-perception and will to self-assertion; and their professed ethics and the violence that is to a certain extent inherent to them. The narrative figurations of these issues, which inform translator agency, show that these translators are or feel excluded in/from society, which entails their exclusion in/from history. Attention is given particularly to translators' inability to cope with the responsibility of translation, and how – paradoxical as it might be – they assert their individual agency by denying their own translational agency. Ultimately, the analysis substantiates Rosemary Arrojo's claim of "the impossibility of being in[/]visible" (*Fictional Representations*, 32).

Keywords: fictional translators; agency; in/visibility; water motif; liquidity

Introduction

In John Crowley's *The Translator*, when the Russian poet Innokenti Isayevich Falin disappears in the early 1960s, uncertainty arises as to the role of his American translator, Kit Malone (herself a poet), in the dissemination of Falin's poetry. The roles of author and translator, creation and re-production slowly reverse to the point of it being claimed that "it was he [Falin] who was truly the translator."¹ This suddenly turned translator, whose body was never found, purportedly died in a car accident that threw his convertible off a bridge:

There were plans for a full search of the river, but the authorities said that the rapid flow resulting from the downstream gates being opened could have carried a body very far. Police recovered items from the river that they said might have been discarded by a man trying to swim ashore: an overcoat, an empty briefcase, shoes. [...] There was the picture of the convertible being drawn up out of the river [...].²

The river operates here as the alibi of a death that enables a body to vanish without trace and frees Falin from any persecution for double agency at a time marked by the tension of the Cuban missile crisis.

Both the translator's (supposed) tragic ending and this blurred author-translator figuration are among the common finales and power relations depicted in fictional representations of translators. These fictions have become more noticeable in literature since the 1990s,³ a logical outcome of the sociocultural transformations brought along by increasing globalization processes and human mobility. In like manner, research in this subfield of translation – or translator⁴ – studies

¹ Crowley, *The Translator*, 279.

² Crowley, *The Translator*, 267-268.

³ The first works then produced include: Jon Thiem. "The Translator as Hero in Postmodern Fiction", *Translation & Literature*, 4, no. 2, 1995, 207-218; Else Vieira. "(In)visibilidades na tradução: troca de olhares teóricos e ficcionais", *Com Textos*, 6, 1995, 50-68.

⁴ See Andrew Chesterman. "The Name and Nature of Translator Studies", *Hermes – Journal of Language and Communication Studies*, 42, 2009, 13-22.

has been more profuse since the turn of the twenty-first century,⁵ producing a wealth of critical reflection on a compelling corpus of fictional representations. The growing visibility of translators as fiction characters has enriched the metaphors of translation and has contributed to our rethinking not only the limits of fiction and translation but also translators' roles and (self-)perceptions in general, as well as translation ethics, theory, and even history.

While this literature has mostly served the interests of translation theory,⁶ the images on which it elaborates cannot be examined outside the frame of translation history. Significantly, fictions of translators constitute public discourses on and perceptions of these agents, and can therefore be legitimately studied as sources for examining their agency across time and space. Furthermore, translators' statements and perceptions, competence and performance are inevitably embedded in socio-historical structures, be they real or fictional.

There is, however, one natural structure or element that is "indifferent to human manipulation"⁷ and which now and then binds together the fate of fictional translators, which is that of water. The symbolism of the water is scrutinized here in connection to the translator figure of three fictional stories in an attempt to clarify their agency,⁸ and it will be equated with one of the most significant *topoi* of the history of translation: translators' invisibility.⁹ The different nuances in meaning of the water motif will be interrogated at two levels: the fictional translators' self-perceptions and will to self-assertion; and their professed ethics as a system of "values and moral principles that should guide our notions of right and wrong

⁵ Delabastita, "Fictional Representations", 189.

⁶ See, for instance, Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*; see also Kaindl, "The Remaking of the Translator's Reality", 162.

⁷ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 111.

⁸ I follow Kinnunen and Koskinen's definition of agency, "as the 'willingness and ability to act'. [...] First, *willingness* describes a particular internal state and disposition. This state is linked to consciousness, reflectivity and intentionality, and it is not without some moral or ethical undertones. This first aspect is largely individualistic and psychological by nature. Second, *ability* relates the concept of agency to constraints and issues of power(lessness), highlighting the intrinsic relation between agency and power" ("Introduction", 6).

⁹ Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility*.

and, thus, discipline our conduct.”¹⁰ The water as translators’ final destination will be examined in relation to Yōko Tawada’s short story “Saint George and the Translator” (2007 [1993]), Yōko Ogawa’s novel *Hotel Iris* (2010 [1996]), and João Reis’s novella *The Translator’s Bride* (2019 [2015]), which has never been the subject of academic study. The question to be discussed from a comparative perspective and close reading approach is why those fictionalized translators end up throwing themselves into the water and what is implied in this gesture. By casting translators in a similar finale, the stories selected for analysis ultimately substantiate Rosemary Arrojo’s claim of “the impossibility of being invisible,”¹¹ which challenges the aforementioned *topoi* of the history of translation.

In order to examine the functioning of the water as these translators’ grand finale, each fiction will be addressed in terms of the conflicts leading to the water resolution, which will be linked to translators’ pathos and ethics. With this in mind, the article is organized as follows: the first part briefly examines the water as a (leit)motif in literature and in translation studies; the second part of the article provides a comparative introduction to the stories so as to present their plots; the third part focuses on each selected story from the viewpoint of the workings and implications of the water motif. The article concludes about translators’ inability to cope with in/visibility and their exclusion from history.

Water as symbol

In Banana Yoshimoto’s *N.P.*, the narrator confesses to have “tried translating some [stories] of *N.P.* [...] It felt like walking out into the ocean with your clothes on, the waves pounding into your body, and swimming out toward the horizon, with nothing holding you back.”¹² The ocean metaphor to explain what the character experiences when translating is tantamount to a physically enduring struggle with unpredictable effects, yet a struggle in which the translator is free to opt for any course of (creative) action. Water as a natural and liquid component of the human

¹⁰ Van Wyke, “Translation and Ethics”, 548.

¹¹ Arrojo, *Fictional Translators*, 32.

¹² Yoshimoto, *N.P.*, 24.

body is a major constituent of all living matter, without which life would be impossible. In the arts, literature in particular, water has been associated with (re)birth and, by extension, with fertility, regeneration and transformation or purification, redemption and return to a primeval state.¹³ These have, at least, been identified as the main metaphors of water,¹⁴ which also reverberate in the stories under scrutiny.

The water also has its place in the discourse of translation studies. In 2012, Michael Cronin apparently reframed translation not as a clichéd bridge but instead as “a river that runs from bank to bank, evading rocks, travelling far and wide and connecting people on a deep under-surface level.”¹⁵ This observation tallies with his view of translators as fluid beings who “are perpetually unquiet in that they must be perpetually on the move.”¹⁶ It was Zygmunt Bauman who first described modernity as “liquid”, liquidity or fluidity highlighting the unstable feature of modern life that is more than ever under constant change.¹⁷ Kaindl perceives in Bauman’s concept “the dissolution of social and territorial networks that previously provided people with a rather fixed frame of reference for their life decisions”.¹⁸ Translators, for their part, seem to have always lived in liquidity. Their relationship to space and time evolves according to technological progress and is inextricable from their identity; their frames of reference shift with each new text or culture for translation. To cite Kaindl, translators have been living in liquidity, at the very least because they are not bound to fixed cultural or spatial barriers, due to the precarity of their profession, the provisional nature of translations, the need to meet with tight deadlines, often with low pay and low public recognition.

A defining feature of translators’ identity, liquidity as symbolized by the water that some fictional translators elect as their destination

¹³ See, for example, Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 79; Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, 374.

¹⁴ Chevalier and Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, 374.

¹⁵ Elnamouy, “The Flowing River of Translation”.

¹⁶ Cronin, *Translation and Globalization*, 105.

¹⁷ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

¹⁸ Kaindl, “Going Fictional!”, 2.

constitutes the article's object of analysis. Water is fluid, and fluidity is linked to instability and the inability to rest on stable ground or a fixed – and visible – place.

The stories

It is perhaps too obvious to state that “it is the author of fictional works who controls the destiny of translator-characters.”¹⁹ On this matter, it is worth noting that Yōko Tawada is an award-winning writer who emerged in the literary field in the 1990s; she writes both in Japanese and German and has also translated professionally, mostly as an interpreter. By contrast, Yōko Ogawa, who has been publishing since 1988, is not known to have practised translation, but certainly is a reader of translations. João Reis is professionally a translator from Nordic languages (particularly Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and Icelandic) into Portuguese and began his literary career as an author in 2015, precisely with his novella *The Translator's Bride* that he self-translated into English in 2019. In his case, it is the translator-turned-author who controls the destiny of his peers in fiction.

Contrary to flesh-and-blood translators who got into history – such as St. Jerome, La Malinche, or British orientalist Sir Richard Burton, to name but a few – the translators around whom the selected storylines revolve are nameless figures going through dysfunctional romantic relationships and struggling with the uncertainties and lack of recognition that pervade their profession. Deprived of a name, these displaced translators are symbolically denied existence, lacking an individual identity. The water grand finale confirms this denial; yet on a more figurative level it could be equated with the baptismal waters that would endow the baptized individual with an identity.

In addition to being anonymous, the main characters of the selected stories fit into the stereotype of the solitary translator, who lives and labours in solitude. Tawada's fiction features a female translator who narrates her self-isolation in the Canary Islands as a flight from too much sociability that could prevent her from completing her two-page translation; as she openly acknowledges, “[b]oth translation and

¹⁹ Wakabayashi, “Representations of Translators”, 96.

thinking are things you must do on your own so I believe in the end I'm essentially always alone."²⁰ Ogawa's translator, also Japanese, lives on an island off a Japanese coastal town. This piece of land represents a workplace without worldly distractions that could jeopardize the translator's productivity or concentration²¹ and is simultaneously a site of protection or refuge, where the translator can give free rein to his sexually deviant practices and enter into a Lolita-like relationship without any onlookers. His self-isolation mirrors his lack of human affection and social skills and renders him "a regular lunatic"²² – or outsider – in the eyes of the mainlanders. Reis's wretched translator loathes all things around him and has just been abandoned by his so-called bride Helena. The plot takes place in the period following the First World War and in an unnamed but coastal city. This translator ultimately blames his unstable, precarious, and poorly paid job for Helena's abandonment, the task of translation representing the incompatibility between the translator's dreams of self-sustenance or free will and real-life dysphoria. Whereas this translator is led to entertain the hope of making a living from literary translation, which is ultimately denied to him, the other translators long to make their way into the literary field – by completing for the first time a translation from beginning to end (Tawada) or having their first translated novel published (Ogawa).

The narrator of "Saint George and the Translator" struggles with her constant procrastination, indeed postponement, of the translation task that arouses allergic reactions of itchiness, her skin irritation reading as a somatization of the difficulties associated with translating, which causes her anxiety. In *Hotel Iris*, the translator does not perceive himself as "a real translator", meaning "the sort a publisher would commission to do a novel."²³ While the translator is prejudiced against non-literary translation, which is the one he lives off, the higher status of literary translation represents the opportunity to remove him from that second-rate existence.

²⁰ Tawada, "Saint George and the Translator", 136.

²¹ Wakabayashi, "Representations of Translators", 158.

²² Ogawa, *Hotel Iris*, 33.

²³ Ogawa, *Hotel Iris*, 24.

Topographically, the island as the translator's natural ambience is in keeping with the trope of the solitary translator. All these fictional translators live in liminal spaces surrounded by or next to the seawater, which conflates inspiration with menace.

Story 1: Yōko Tawada's "Saint George and the Translator"

In time I would reach an expanse of sand. If I didn't stop I'd reach the sea which would be another dead end. Hemmed in on each side by seawall and lodging houses I'd be unable to flee in any direction except forward straight into the sea. I probably wouldn't choose this though seeing how I could only swim a distance of twenty-five meters. If not into the water then where else could I escape? I wouldn't know until the ocean loomed before my eyes. How much further was it? Far away or really quite near? With these and many other questions on my mind I ran on down the slope. (175)²⁴

The many questions this translator has in her mind tally with her view of translation: "Translation is a process of making choices. That's why I didn't want to complete this one. Nor did I want to give up in the middle so I continued to slog on as usual" (141). On the one hand, slogging on seems to characterize her translational performance. On the other, the translator runs down the slope towards the seawater to escape the male warrior figure of St. George, who prevents her from posting off her translation and, therefore, from accomplishing her task: "Up to now I still hadn't ever finished translating a story. Some obstacle along the way always hindered me and I'd end up asking my friend Ei to translate the rest. [...] For once I'd like to translate a story by myself" (139-140). The text the translator feels pressured to translate on her own consists of a rewriting of the legend of St. George and the dragon, in which, as the translator moves forward in her task, she becomes more and more entangled. Rather than a physical obstacle, St. George serves as a psychological deterrent or enactment of the translator's dread of completing a translation, which echoes translation's never finished

²⁴ Henceforth page numbers referring to the story under discussion will be provided directly in the body of the text.

nature – as Philip E. Lewis put it, “the form of failure – incompleteness, distortion, infidelity – that is the inescapable lot of the translator.”²⁵

The haste of the translator at the end of the story is symptomatic of her bodily reaction to, and rejection of translation throughout the narrative: “The author’s breathing became labored and her every gasp sounded like the beginning of a question I’d have trouble answering and *made my heart jump*. Before long I too *was panting* and could only hear my own short breaths” (132; emphasis added). Associated with this physiological side-effect – i.e., the translator’s breathing difficulty in reading the source text – is the material configuration of the narrative vis-à-vis that of the translated text that is graphically displayed in italics: the narrator’s testimony lacks commas, which adds to readers’ own difficulty in breathing/pausing, whereas her translation abounds in commas.²⁶ The lack of commas can be equated with the lack of artifice, that is, the avoidance of distractions that the translator seeks in the island. As for the copious use of commas in the translation, not only does it render the translation fragmentary – a word-for-word and phrase-for-phrase translation – but it is also a compensation strategy for pausing and thus breathing, which the water can put at risk. The narrator’s translation is ultimately as “desiccated” as the island (118) and dry as the “narrow belt” of “[h]ardened lava flow[ing] by the [translator’s] house” (116), a belt where she pictures herself walking side by side with the female author of the text she is translating.²⁷ The author remarks that “[i]f there was water here there would be no path [...] Water would render it not a path but a river” (131-132): the translator seems to be in need of the author to guide her and endow her with some sort of inspiration or creativity. Running towards the fertile

²⁵ “The Measure of Translation Effects”, 225.

²⁶ Chantal Wright has rightly noted that Tawada’s characters tend towards “superficial and flawed ‘translations’” (“Yoko Tawada’s Exophonic Texts”, 13).

²⁷ The translator’s reading experience of the source text is, however, dry itself: “[T]hese groups of letters were like grains of sun-baked sand that won’t stick to your skin so you couldn’t start reading them as if you were slipping your arms through the sleeves of a coat. Reading this ‘story’ was like walking around wearing sand” (113).

sea would provide her with the water her translation lacks to be able to flow as the sea does.

From the outset her translation is condemned to failure as all her previous translations were: “University professors occasionally criticize my work [...] like to point out my mistakes and dismiss my style as ‘translationese’²⁸ while complaining my Japanese is wrong or my use of Chinese characters strange” (121). The criticism scorning her work renders her necessarily visible. Aside from lacking the skills to carry out a fluent translation, the translator will likely not get paid for her task: “Even if I did finish I probably wouldn’t get paid and furthermore the magazine specializing in literature in translation where I was planning to publish the piece had been in the red so long my friends were afraid it would fold before anyone received royalties for the next issue” (119). These words echo Bauman’s liquid modernity; according to the philosopher, “[o]nce the employment of labour has become short-term and precarious, having been stripped of firm (let alone guaranteed) prospects and therefore more episodic, [...] there is little chance for mutual loyalty and commitment to sprout and take root.”²⁹ Translators’ unstable life and lack of symbolic and economic recognition may explain why George, the name of both the dragon’s slayer and the translator’s boyfriend, abhors her profession and her flawed translations as much as she, after all, despises him (125).

Being surrounded by water and trapped in an island, the translator has nowhere to run except to the seawater. This choice may not, however, be completely arbitrary. The translator believes that St. George dislikes water, apparently like herself: “Saint George would definitely be afraid of getting his feet wet. [...] [T]hose boots he wore must’ve sparkled from the massive amounts of oil he rubbed into them to keep water out” (129). The translator declares that “I hate to swim” (110) and “I fear both water and sand. I’m afraid of George and I’m afraid of work”

²⁸ Yōko Tawada herself would like her literature to be read as translationese, for it makes manifest the presence of the foreign language. Tawada states this in her participation in the roundtable *Lightning in a Bottle: A Case Study of Publishing Literary Translation* on August 4, 2020 (<https://howlround.com/happenings/lightning-bottle-case-study-publishing-literary-translation>).

²⁹ *Liquid Modernity*, 148.

(152), her final running into the water resulting *prima facie* from an act of despair that could ultimately repair her translation's dryness. By contrast, she loves cacti, "because they have no leaves and don't need water and besides they're not very useful" (127). Perhaps the translator perceives herself as a useless cactus who at the end needs to be supplied with water, the source of inspiration and creativity that she lacks. As Cirlot put it:

Immersion in water signifies a return to the preformal state, with a sense of death and annihilation on the one hand, but of rebirth and regeneration on the other, since immersion intensifies the life-force. [...] [W]ater stands as a mediator between life and death, with a two-way positive and negative flow of creation and destruction.³⁰

It should come as no surprise to find that as the translator draws closer to translating the last words of the text, her urge for water increases. Once the task is completed, she "ran into the kitchen and drank glass after glass of tap water" (160), as if water compensates for the physical effort translation demands. Nevertheless, the translator also sustains that "[i]f the writing feels like pebbles falling down then you know it's a translation" (147). This fragmentary view of translation³¹ rejects the water element, which indeed her translation lacks. Either serving as glue or washing the pebbles away, the water simultaneously represents creation and destruction, inspiration/creativity and disruption.

Although the title of the short story's English translation pre-empts the fact that the translator is in the position of the dragon, and hence the prey and victim of St. George, this role only becomes clear as the plot unfolds. In this respect, we cannot fail to note the translator's need to blacken the letter "O" in the source text, which stands for the word "victims", so as to be able to proceed with her translation:

³⁰ *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 365.

³¹ See Kaindl's discussion of this story in the light of Walter Benjamin's translation theory: "Of Dragons and Translators: Foreignness as a Principle of Life. Yoko Tawada's 'St. George and the Translator'." Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl (eds.), *Transfiction*, 87-102.

The word for “victims” began with an “O.” I noticed there were “Os” scattered across the first page. Or perhaps it would be better to say that the page was full of holes eaten away by the letter “O.” There was a wall behind formed by the white page so I couldn’t see inside and the harder I looked the more it seemed I’d never break through. I colored the insides of all the “O’s” black with my fountain pen and felt a slight sense of relief. (113)

The translator inflicts a wound on the O letter, visually rendering it close to the shape commonly attributed to an island. Since the O letter also stands for sacrifice – “I drew two lines through the word ‘victim’ and wrote ‘sacrifice’ instead” (114) – the island, and translation as well, becomes both the place of sacrifice and of the victim, as the finale reinforces. To translate implies inflicting a wound on the source language, that is, violating the so-called original, therefore translating entails its destruction or death.³²

When the translator rushes to the post office to mail the translation, she puts on red felt shoes since hers “were soaking wet [...]. But how had I gotten my feet wet? I didn’t have any memory of a river that wasn’t dried up. On this island I haven’t even seen a riverbed with water in it” (161-162). The lack of a logical explanation for finding her shoes wet, when in the beginning of the narrative they bear dry pebbles (144), like the ones she considers to define the nature of translation, insinuates that either inspiration has finally lurked behind her or that it has left her. Her forced choice of shoes further serves as an omen that the translator will get her feet wet. The several obstacles she counters on her way to the post office are all personified by the St. George figure from which she desperately escapes, to the point of climbing out a window to land “in a sort of garbage dump [...]. Among soggy pieces of cardboard

³² See João Ferreira Duarte’s “Translation as Murder.” Sebastiana Fadda and Maria João Almeida (eds.), *Rastos luminosos em palcos do tempo*, 269-276. Lisboa: Centro de Estudos de Teatro, 2018. Margaret Mitsutani, the American translator of Tawada’s story, clarifies in her afterword that creation and destruction go hand in hand in the text: “The Chinese character for ‘creation’ can also mean ‘wound.’ When Duden’s *wunde* is translated into Japanese, it takes on an extra layer of meaning – to wound is also to create. And if writing itself began as an act of scratching figures, ‘creating wounds’, then translation is the process of inscribing those wounds into a foreign language” (“Translator’s Afterword”, 183).

at the cusp of complete disintegration rolls of brown wrapping paper were still dry and crisp” (173). When this happens, she inadvertently loses the translation manuscript, thereby becoming definitely trapped in St. George’s story: “The envelope was gone. What I was holding in my hand was not the envelope but a piece of wet carpet. I must have dropped the envelope in the trash heap and picked up this useless rag instead” (174). Metonymically as useless as this piece of rag, her translation would, however, have gained in being as “wet” as this rag.³³ The magazine’s editor even advised her against using a fountain pen when handwriting her translation, a piece of advice that she ignored: “‘You mustn’t under any circumstances use a refillable ink pen,’ the editor had said over the phone. ‘Why not? I’ll send the manuscript airmail you know so it won’t fall in the water’” (161). The water around the island – menacing the translator and her translation – poses the threat of the dematerialization of translation. In the end, it is the dematerialization of the translator through the water that is suggested.

In pragmatic terms, the water constitutes itself as the ultimate shelter or place of rescue for the translator. St. George, embodying the translator’s own doubts about her translational performance, forces her to choose the realm of water, which can symbolize redemption or, on the contrary, punishment for its absence in the translation. Either way, it can be construed as the translator’s wish for invisibility and her inability to cope, on the one hand, with the responsibility translation entails (hence her reluctance to complete translations) and, on the other, with the visibility granted by her performance/ethics. In representing the impossible in/visibility of the failed translator, the water that her translation lacks denies her the possibility of self-assertion and agency.

³³ The floor at the post office was “soaked. Dirty scraps of paper floated in the scattered puddles of muddy water” (173). At some point, the translator fears that her skin may be floating on the water as well, as if her metamorphosis had come through. Although the expected metamorphosis would be into a dragon, can the muddy water symbolize the failed metamorphosis into a fulfilled translator?

Story 2: Yōko Ogawa's *Hotel Iris*

The translator tripped over an ashtray. The man from the coffee stand caught him, pinning his arms in back, but he managed to shake free and ran toward the bow of the boat. The scene played out in silence.

Just as they were about to catch him, he leapt into the sea. Without a word of farewell or even a smile in my direction, he threw his leg over the rail, curled in a ball, and fell. There was a splash [...]. (161)

Contrary to Tawada's and Reis's stories, this first-person narrative is not told from the perspective of the translator figure, but instead from that of Mari, a Japanese teenager who undergoes an initiatory rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood, from innocence and naivety to perversion and deviation at the skilful hands of the "past middle age" translator (4). Mari is the only named character together with the heroine of the Russian novel that the translator is "[b]y coincidence" translating (20), a novel whose title or author's name is never disclosed. The heroine is called Marie and "falls in love with her riding master, and their love is the most sublime and intense in all the world" (23). Like Marie's master in the fiction inside the fiction so will the translator become Mari's instructor into embracing "a new kind of pain" (53), that of sadomasochism. It is as if only what is original, uncorrupted like Marie – before falling in love with her riding master – and Mari – until she meets the translator – could bear a name. These two diegetic levels intermingle with one another throughout the novel.

Mari gets involved not only with a nameless translator with whose distinctive voice of command she becomes obsessed, but also with his nameless and, by contrast, voiceless nephew, who cannot speak because he does not have a tongue. The nephew appears and disappears unexpectedly in parallel with his own uncle, who vanishes by committing suicide in the sea. His instinctive jumping in search of an escape reads as a confession of guilt. No mention is made to any potential effort at keeping himself afloat, and his gesture exposes his inability to deal with the responsibility over the damage inflicted on Mari's body just as he dreads the moments when he completes his translations. Echoing the fear of Tawada's female translator, this translator confesses that:

“When I finish a job, I take the boat to town to mail it off – it might be a pamphlet advertising pills made from sturgeon fat... [...] I buy a stamp and drop it in the box. The envelope makes just the slightest sound as it falls, and at that moment a terrible fear comes over me. [...] It’s not a matter of being sad or lonely. [...] No one will mourn me, or even so much as notice that I’m gone. No one will look for me, except perhaps the sturgeon pill company wanting to pay my translation fee – and they would give up soon, over such a paltry sum as translators are paid.” (65)

The completion of a translation amounts to going back to anonymity and invisibility, a state of non-existence. Except for his clients, no one would notice his absence. This way, he needs translating to feel needed and to endow himself with a non-fluid existence. His wish to author a literary translation is sensed as the ultimate form of consecration, i.e., of gaining a public name.

The translator’s anagnorisis of his faults happens when the couple is on the boat traversing the sea from the translator’s home island, and Mari’s mother, escorted by policemen, cries out her name from the shore. The loud voices and gazes of onlookers that fall upon the couple bring about the translator’s sudden visibility, which entails assuming responsibility for his liaison with Mari. The translator is as trapped as Tawada’s translator was and as the mouse caught in a small trap placed in the pantry where Mari was punished with a riding crop – “He [the translator] whipped my flesh in the crowded pantry [...]. The whip played these notes on my body, contracting the organs or bones concealed beneath the skin” (152). The mouse eventually drowns “in a bucket of water. It floated on the surface, curled in a ball” (153), just like the translator “threw his leg over the rail, curled in a ball, and fell” (161) into the sea.

The couple’s relationship embodies the same Eros/Thanatos tension that characterizes the love affair of the Russian heroine and blurs the line between translation and fiction. Mari undergoes the same physical violence the Marie character in translation suffered at the hands of her husband, who finding out she was pregnant by the riding master “strips her naked, plunges her into the frigid lake, and then forces her to take a medicine to induce miscarriage” (101). This intertwining of violence, sex and translation summarizes the tone of the novel.

As the translator models Mari closer to, or in equivalence with the Russian original, a novel that he declares he is translating for his “own amusement” (25) – to borrow Arrojo’s words, “in the pursuit of some form of textual mastery”³⁴ or self-fulfilment – he symbolically condemns the original to destruction by recreating his own version or original through violence. First, the sexual violence against Mari is committed with her consent and cooperation, similarly to an original that offers itself to be translated and to a certain extent violated by the target language. From victim to perpetrator, Mari gains agency by taking pleasure from pain. Second, the abusive relationship Mari entertains with the translator obscures her role as either original or translation. Could the translator be writing his translation on Mari’s body, hence turned into a copy or double of the Russian Marie? Incidentally, Mari has doubts about the translator’s progress on paper: “I had no idea whether he’d made any progress on the translation. It seemed as though more pages of the book had been turned, but the page in the notebook always looked the same” (93). Could the translator be shaping Mari as his original instead?

After the translator’s death, no traces are found of his craft or of the Russian novel, which confirms that he was not, in effect, “a real translator” (24). These absences subvert the relationship between author/translator and original/translation by refashioning the translator as author and Mari as the original: “I did ask the police to look for the translation of the novel about Marie, but they were never able to locate it. All they found were endless rolls of film filled with pictures of me” (164). The only material evidence left is Mari’s physical scars that were sculpted³⁵ on her with the translator’s hands:

The doctors examined every inch of me, checking each little bruise and scrape and recording it on my chart. They discovered that my head was covered with countless tiny cuts that must have been from the blades of the scissors. [...] I simply told them that I had no memory of anything that had happened. They assumed this was the result of the shock. (162-163)

³⁴ *Fictional Translators*, 4.

³⁵ This word choice is not arbitrary, in that as a small child Mari was victim of a sculptor who nearly raped her (16).

The trade of which this translator left traces was his trade as a sadomasochist. Mari as translation or original is either way in an inferior and submissive position to the male translator/creator's whims and commands. She willingly submits to his masochistic desires to the point of claiming that "I wanted to be Marie" and longing to be dragged by her hair and drowned by the translator (124), just as the Russian heroine was abused by her husband. Despite the beauty the translator finds in this novelistic torture (101), Marie is not shown to have experienced pleasure in her own abuse. Contrary to the Russian novel, it is the translator who drowns at the end. His fall seems less attributable to shame than to an inability to cope with the visibility of his actions or ethics.

Whether the translator is creating through Mari his own original or his translation, his craft, of which Mari is the sole witness, implies the destruction, corruption, and violation of female originality/purity. This translator's agency echoes that of Tawada's protagonist, insofar as translating is conceived in terms of inflicting wounds on the original. The water resolution can potentially wash away and redeem this abusive agency, yet condemns the translator to the invisibility and eternal anonymity of which he was afraid. As the translator's fright at becoming visible suggests, he was not prepared to deal with visibility either. The translator's precipitous choice echoes another event the translator had witnessed ten years before of a boy who had fallen off the excursion boat (88-89). Unlike the child's body that was never found, his innocence and purity having dissolved in the water without trace, the translator's body was retrieved three days later. Unlike the child whose name his mother called, the translator's name cannot be called, because he does not have one.

In sum, *Hotel Iris* embodies a metafictional paradox: translation corrupts the original just as the original lends itself to be fouled, and just as Mari offers herself to be shaped by the translator, who would tailor her to a certain idea of female originality with Mari finding pleasure in that violation. In like manner, any original would find pleasure in being translated and, thereby, elevated. In the end, fiction reproduces – translates – fiction. Translation is often described as bridge-building between cultural shores, and the translator is the mediator who

endeavours to get a message safely from one shore to another;³⁶ this translator's intentional drowning metaphorically and metonymically implies the failure of translation.

Story 3: João Reis's *The Translator's Bride*

I walk away, leaving behind the garlic lady, she's standing at the streetcar stop wearing my hat, only it's not my hat anymore, I'm going on a trip, Helena is somewhere on the blue patch on the map, I look back one last time and start running [...], the seamen are watching me, I don't stop running, I run even faster, reach the end of the pier, jump into the water, the blue dark green gray water, I hear a woman's scream and men shouting words into the wind [...]. (117)

This passage from the closing paragraph of Reis's novella depicts the translator rushing towards what seems to be a precipice, suggesting a suicide attempt in the water by which the translator ends his existential crisis. From the outset the reader is confronted not only with the character's frenzy as conveyed by a fast and asyndetic narrative pace, but also with the presence of the water – the seawater that took his bride Helena away and the rainwater that accompanies the character's movements since she left him and mirrors his state of mind: "My return trip is gloomy, rain falls relentlessly" (9). The character wonders why:

[W]e strive to be someone, to live, work, own a house, eat, be a writer, a translator, and for what purpose?, we all die sooner or later, the world doesn't stop spinning, we only postpone the inevitable, why are we compelled to fight for our survival?, if she was here with me it would be worth it, however, she's not, it's a calamity. (63)

In view of the translator's lament, exacerbated by the grief of Helena's departure, his jumping into the water anticipates the inevitability of

³⁶ On the bridge and other metaphors of translation see: James St. André. "Metaphors of Translation and Representations of the Translational Act as Solitary versus Collaborative", *Translation Studies*, 10, no. 3, 2017, 282-295. Anecdotically, in German *Übersetzen* "means both translating and crossing waters" (Renate Resch. "Translating the Past, Negotiating the Self." Klaus Kaindl and Karlheinz Spitzl [eds.], *Transfiction*, 269).

death and his giving up on surviving. Considering Dirk Delabastita's categorization proposal of translators' fictional representations, the main character of *The Translator's Bride* would accordingly symbolize "ordinary people simply going about their everyday business, trying to preserve their moral integrity."³⁷ In this vein, the translator, who inhabits an "obscure and musty little room" (17-18) in a boarding house, embodies a strained relation between his worldview or ambition and his lack of faith in society.

The denouement is pre-empted by the translator's declaration that "those who live here for a long time end up rotting, we're alive on the outside though dead inside, absolutely putrid, it would be better if we all united and threw ourselves into the river, we would be washed out to sea, we'd lose ourselves in its depths, rid the world of such aberrations, we destroy everything, are parasites" (73). The shift from the indefinite "those who" to the inclusive pronoun "we" of whom the translator is part reinforces the low esteem in which the translator holds himself. Throughout the novel, the translator repeatedly states that "I'm a mere/only/just a translator" (37, 52, 108), the adverb implying that he is powerless; he has no authority or decision-making: "I'm a translator, I am what I do and am nobody, a name on a piece of paper" (93). The translator lacks confidence in himself as a man and as a translator who barely earns a living, while the water straightforwardly represents an exit from an insecure existence.

In the light of the liquid modernity metaphor, the water resolution may stand for two types of inability: the inability to cope with emotional change and the inability to cope with stifling socioeconomic structures and narrow mindsets. On this matter, the translator announces at some point that he despises neutrality, "people cannot be neutral, a friend of mine cannot caress my hand and kiss my enemy, laugh when they mock me, this is my true belief, maybe I'm wrong, neutral people are the most dangerous" (50). First, translators are often expected to act as neutral conduits, a metaphor that recalls the water element, a conduit itself of life or death. Second, this translator is not neutral: "I'm an idiot, [...] why do I have convictions that lead me to failure?, I wish I

³⁷ "Fictional Representations", 192.

could be social with everyone, be a neutral person” (61). The rejection of neutrality unveils a deeper conflict, one between a professional code of ethics (neutrality) and life or art (non-neutrality). On the one hand, the translator describes himself as “a serious man, I do not soil my mouth with frivolities” (55); on the other, he divides the world into “two kinds of people, the intellectualized and the illiterate, there’s no middle ground, I suffocate here” (58). In spite of editors fulfilling an important task in the service of literacy and literary education, the translator despises this class of pretentious intellectuals. He perceives them as men without words commenting “on books based on their author and not the content itself” (59), forcing changes to translations of books they have never read (105), and cherishing a view of literature that he considers shallow, clichéd, and superficial. Yet, the translator confesses having rendered frivolities himself – apropos his translation of the first volume of the literary series *Battle*, he declares that “the book is teeming with banalities and disgraceful situations, it does nothing to enrich literature, but a man has to earn a living” (38). His aesthetical judgment of art conflicts with his practical need to survive and with his heightened consciousness of the lack of an intellectual ambience where he could give free rein to his translational creativity.

Aside from symbolizing the character’s social displacement and remedy for an emotional break up and aesthetic disillusionment, the water finale also subscribes to his rebellion against neutrality whereby the conflict between art and ethics is resolved. The finale can rather be construed as the affirmation of the translator’s agency and non-neutrality in the denial of further agency; the translator confides his life as a social parasite to the cleansing water that took his Helena away from him, and which alone can take him back to her. Kaindl argues that translators’ embodiment of “existential conflicts and contradictions” may be:

[R]ooted in the ambivalent characteristics ascribed to them and their work in the course of history: They are invisible and ubiquitous, subordinate and powerful, faithful and dubious, oppressed and uncontrollable, and they can enable or prevent communication – in other words, they are changeable, oscillating beings that are hard to grasp because they are constantly in motion [...].³⁸

³⁸ “Going Fictional!”, 9.

The finale confirms, to use the scholar's words,³⁹ the loss of a connection with a fixed geographical location and the embrace of fluidity that characterizes translators.

Depicting two days of the translator's life, the story roughly ends at the point where it starts. It opens with the translator's return trip from the pier where he bade farewell to his purported bride and during which he lost his hat, and along with it his apparent honour and respectability. It ends with a one-way ticket towards the river connection to the blue ocean at the same pier where his emotional mourning began and where he regains his lost hat, which he, however, hands over back to the woman who had held on to it. When the translator jumps into the water, he becomes visible to "someone [who] throws a lifebuoy" and to "a crowd [that] gathers on the pier" (117). This circularity shows that he is as trapped as Tawada's and Ogawa's translators; unlike these translators, he is not trapped in a text he is translating but in a life that offers no affective, cultural, or economic comfort.

Like Helen of Troy, his Helena embodies an ideal of beauty, love, and perfection. Nothing is said about the translator's life before Helena's departure and no one, except for the translator, seems to acknowledge her existence. Without her, the translator is doomed to failure. Hence equated as perfection or utopia, indeed a source of inspiration, Helena can be perceived as a kind of original – or originality – that has abandoned the translator or liquified "somewhere on the blue patch on the map". And what is a translator without his original? Likewise, what is an original without a translator? Just as in *Hotel Iris*, here the original – the translator's bride – springs into existence through the translator. By denying his own life, the translator exerts his agency in refusing to live in a world without an original.

Translation, as Delabastita reminds us, is "a master metaphor epitomizing our present human condition in a globalized and centreless context, evoking the human search for a sense of self and belonging in a puzzling world full of change and difference."⁴⁰ João Reis's character embodies translation as the expression of his frustrated human

³⁹ "Going Fictional!", 3.

⁴⁰ "Fictional Representations", 192.

condition which he seems to either resist or on the contrary give in to by dissolving into the unstable waters that underline his search for, or defeat in, finding a sense of self.

Concluding: why do these translators end up in the water?

In the early 1990s, in surveying translators' representations in Quebecois literature, Jean Delisle⁴¹ remarked that suicide and madness are seldom a matter of discussion; recently, Arrojo has addressed the *topos* of the translator's suicide letter in her *Fictional Translators*. The topic here explored of seawater as a translator's destination draws attention to some writers' fascination with the fallen translator and his/her inability to cope with the responsibility of translation and/or the in/visibility it entails. Resuming Arrojo's words, the burden of the impossibility of being in/visible leads translators to find the solution of relief in the water.

The three fictions depict a dysphoric view of translators who, paradoxical as it might be, exercise their individual agency by rejecting their own translational agency. Their opting for water results from a sense of disorientation, the water becoming a site of escape and repose. In "Saint George and the Translator", escaping is an attempt at becoming invisible in the predator's eyes; the translator's will to self-assertion as a competent translator leads her to self-effacement. In *Hotel Iris*, the translator becomes visible to the onlookers as their eyes are fixed on the boat where he is with Mari/translation-turned-original or original-turned-translation and cannot deal with the responsibility that visibility entails. In *The Translator's Bride*, the non-explicit drowning appeases the translator's restlessness and puts an end to his hectic life and sorrow as both a failed man and a failed translator.

Ultimately the water grants these translators the possibility of going back to invisibility, and it highlights at least two inherently human features of translators: their solitude and their mortality. As flesh-and-blood figures, these anonymous translators are or feel excluded in/from society, which entails their exclusion in/from history. As Chevalier and Gheerbrant put it, "[l]'eau efface l'histoire, car elle rétablit l'être dans

⁴¹ "Suicide et folie", 14-15.

un état nouveau.”⁴² Whether that new state is death or rebirth, the water resolution prevents marginal and nameless fictional translators from being part of history.

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⁴² *Dictionnaire des symboles*, 377.

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RECENSÕES
BOOK REVIEWS

Elisa Rossi

Universidade de Lisboa
erossi@edu.ulisboa.pt

Buffoni, Franco. *Con il testo a fronte. Indagine sul tradurre e l'essere tradotti*. Novara: Interlinea, 2016. 318 pp. ISBN 978-88-6857-070-5

Em 2016 foi publicada, pela editora Interlinea, a segunda edição de *Con il testo a fronte. Indagine sul tradurre e l'essere tradotti*, do crítico e poeta Franco Buffoni. Trata-se da edição ampliada de um volume que, a partir de 2007 na sua primeira edição, ganhou um interesse que se mantém até aos dias de hoje, por duas razões principais: em primeiro lugar, pela relevância do seu autor no âmbito crítico-literário dos estudos de tradução em Itália, Franco Buffoni; em segundo lugar, pela originalidade da proposta, tanto no plano do conteúdo como da arquitectura interna.

Franco Buffoni pode ser definido como um intelectual polivalente, sobretudo pela profunda consciência do repertório literário de que se ocupa e pela versatilidade que caracteriza o seu percurso. Paralelamente à sua experiência como académico, crítico e poeta, especializou-se como tradutor e estudioso da tradução, a partir da organização do colóquio *La traduzione del testo poetico*, na Universidade de Bergamo em 1988, e da publicação do primeiro número da revista semestral *Testo a Fronte*, da qual é director, em 1989. À revista, ainda hoje activa, pertencem também duas séries, uma ensaística, “I saggi di Testo a fronte”, e outra de literatura em tradução, “I testi di Testo a fronte”, onde são publicados livros de poesia estrangeira traduzida.

Esta dupla vertente da tradução, teórica e prática, encontra-se sempre interligada ao longo de *Con il testo a fronte*, mas é também salientada pela presença implícita de duas secções internas. A primeira, entre os capítulos 1 e 4, em que, já pelos títulos (“Perché si parla di traduttologia?”; “George Steiner e l’atto creativo rivissuto”; “Ritmologia: una scienza con tre anime”; “Lingue traduzione e conoscenza”), se percebe o

carácter mais teórico da reflexão; a segunda, a partir do capítulo 5, “Imenso Rabelais”, que consiste em casos específicos e concretos, a que se aplicam os conceitos introduzidos nos primeiros capítulos. Nesta segunda parte, composta por 29 capítulos, com um mínimo de duas páginas (“Ritraduzioni?”) e um máximo de 20 (“Seamus Heaney tradotto e traduttore”), encontramos uma breve secção interna, que vai do capítulo 32 ao capítulo 34, dedicada especificamente ao relato de várias experiências literárias de amigos e mestres que se cruzaram no seu percurso literário com Franco Buffoni.

Na primeira parte, aquela onde a reflexão teórica é prevalente, coexistem diferentes objectivos. Inicialmente, é delineada uma história recente dos estudos de tradução, com foco particular na tradução literária, começando pela publicação, em 1963, de *Les Problèmes théoriques de la traduction* de Georges Mounin, volume que merece a designação de “manual europeu”, mas cuja “concepção rigorosamente estruturalista da literatura” é avaliada negativamente, na opinião de Buffoni, pela imposição de normas científicas ao acto de tradução (7). O momento decisivo para que aconteça “a primeira grande rebelião internacional contra os dogmatismos da linguística teórica” (7) reside, para o estudioso, na publicação de *After Babel*, de George Steiner, em 1975. O mérito de Steiner consiste principalmente no reconhecimento da autonomia do texto em tradução e da sua componente criativa; Buffoni não deixa de sublinhar que as mesmas ambições se encontravam expostas no volume de Gianfranco Folena, *Volgarizzare e tradurre*, de 1973, não citado por Steiner e ainda hoje pouco (re)conhecido. Com efeito, o objectivo de Buffoni é destacar os maiores expoentes da crítica de tradução a nível europeu, como é o caso de Steiner, mas também reconhecer a especificidade da tradição italiana. O apreço pelos estudos de Steiner é tema principal no segundo capítulo, onde emerge, além da importância das questões levantadas na segunda edição de *After Babel* (1992), a gratidão humana por o mestre ter aceitado, em 1988, juntar-se ao conselho científico da revista *Testo a Fronte*.

Outras etapas fundamentais para a progressiva libertação da tradução do domínio científico da linguística são, na opinião de Buffoni, a publicação de *Umeni prekladu* do estruturalista de Praga Jiří Levý, em 1963, e a obra de Friedmar Apel, *Literarische Übersetzung* (1983).

Apel critica a obra de Levý – injustamente, segundo Buffoni, por não ter em conta a sua contextualização – porque, apesar de reconhecer a autonomia do fenómeno da tradução, correria o risco de querer adoptar regras fixas. De Apel à escola neo-fenomenológica italiana, dentro da qual Buffoni se reconhece, o passo é breve: o objectivo é afastar-se de qualquer tipo de polarização que pretenda definir *o que é* a arte e, simultaneamente, introduzir conceitos que ajudem a estudar *como é* a arte. Mais especificamente, os conceitos propostos por Buffoni – alguns retomados por outros estudiosos, outros introduzidos por ele mesmo – são cinco.

O primeiro conceito, elaborado por Apel, é definido como o “movimento da linguagem”, consistindo na aceitação de que os textos mudam o seu significado ao longo do tempo através da evolução semântica das suas palavras, permitindo afastar-se da ideia da fixação ao denominado “original” e possibilitando uma consideração de paridade com a respectiva tradução.

O segundo conceito, o de *avant-texte*, permite repensar o mesmo “movimento da linguagem”, mas em direcção contrária, ao passado: avaliar os materiais anteriores à publicação de um texto ajuda a adquirir uma visão aberta e “em progresso” da criação literária.

O terceiro conceito, a “intertextualidade”, entendido na acepção de Julia Kristeva de “absorção e transformação” de outros textos dentro do novo texto (1967), está em consonância com o quarto conceito, o de “poética”. Se a perspectiva intertextual permite estabelecer uma relação dialógica, e não hierárquica, entre o original e a tradução, o conceito de “poética” permite o estudo deste encontro. Na opinião de Luciano Anceschi retomada por Buffoni, a poética reúne a perspectiva teórica e consciente dos autores sobre as suas escolhas criativas; o encontro intertextual poderia ser visto como um encontro entre poéticas, entre “dois momentos constitutivos, dois processos, não dois resultados imóveis e parados” (18).

Por fim, o conceito de “ritmo” – abordado num capítulo à parte, o terceiro – é analisado através das diversas escolas da chamada “ritmologia”; entre as várias perspectivas existentes, Buffoni destaca a proposta de Henri Meschonnic que, investigando o conceito de ritmo pré-platónico, o define não como uma alternância descontínua entre

tempos, mas como “organização do movimento da palavra através de um sujeito” (29).

Os cinco conceitos apresentados têm o mérito de produzir um efeito de reverberação, ampliando a reflexão sobre a tradução literária, sem, todavia, perder o foco do problema. O mesmo efeito reflecte-se na segunda parte do volume, onde, à luz das propostas teóricas levantadas, são indagadas possíveis e distintivas formas de entender a relação entre poesia e tradução. Emergem assim as mais diversas tipologias de encontro: em maior medida encontram-se análises de traduções, dos clássicos antigos, como Catulo e Eurípides (cap. 18), passando por autores renascentistas, como François Rabelais (cap. 5) ou William Shakespeare (cap. 6), até aos contemporâneos, como Giacomo Leopardi (cap. 9), Emily Dickinson (cap. 13), W.B. Yeats (cap. 14) ou Samuel Beckett e James Joyce (cap. 16) – só para citar alguns. A leitura de Buffoni distingue-se pela atenção linguística dada ao texto traduzido, analisado com a mesma importância de um texto original; o autor procura perceber as razões que justificam as escolhas de tradução, mas também faz apreciações qualitativas, destacando as versões que, no seu entender, têm conseguido alcançar o esperado “encontro entre poéticas”. Neste sentido, é dada particular atenção também ao aspecto estilístico, numa perspectiva histórica, tanto do autor como do tradutor.

Um outro ponto de vista é oferecido nos capítulos em que Buffoni relata as suas próprias experiências como tradutor de Byron (cap. 10), de J.H. Prynne (cap. 25) ou de Seamus Heaney (cap. 26). A escolha de incluir as suas traduções parece corresponder a uma espécie de competição literária que, segundo o próprio, pode trazer benefícios vários: o autor alterna o seu papel de crítico com o papel de escritor, envolvendo-se activamente na busca pela tradução última, a mais apropriada.

No que concerne às leituras críticas, os capítulos desta segunda parte não se limitam ao estudo das traduções, incluindo também diálogos sob a forma de reescrita, imitação ou outro tipo de revisitação do texto de partida. Apresentam-se casos particulares, como o da “tradução inscrita” de Josif Brodskij, que escreve em russo já consciente do trabalho de autotradução para o inglês (cap. 28); ou de Emanuel Carnevali, poeta italiano que emigra para os Estados Unidos e que consegue, nos seus

textos, criar uma língua em que italiano e inglês parecem fundir-se (cap. 15); ou, ainda, o exemplo do soneto de John Keats sobre a tradução da *Odisseia* de Chapman, uma reflexão em verso sobre o papel de intermediação que a tradução desempenha entre culturas e épocas diferentes.

Deste modo, através de diversas e numerosas configurações, é progressivamente delineada uma complexa fenomenologia da relação entre textos, autores e sistemas linguísticos, em que as traduções representam uma das expressões possíveis de interação. Esta intenção torna-se explícita na contínua recuperação dos cinco conceitos, que retornam de forma não sistematizada, mas com uma constância que permite elucidar vários casos concretos. Um exemplo emblemático está contido no capítulo “Ritraducendo Seamus Heaney”, onde o autor destaca as diferenças entre a primeira e a segunda versões da tradução do poema *North*, por ele redigidas em 1987 e em 1995, respectivamente. Neste intervalo de tempo, tanto o acesso aos documentos do *avant-texte* como a mudança da própria “poética” do tradutor determinam interpretações diferentes do mesmo texto.

Outro elemento que emerge do relato destas experiências é a atenção à contextualização da tradução literária no mundo editorial. Buffoni, em virtude da sua actividade editorial, tem a capacidade de descrever com rigor as circunstâncias específicas que caracterizam o mercado da tradução. Por exemplo, no capítulo 31, reflecte sobre a verdadeira utilidade de traduzir de novo um texto anteriormente traduzido para a mesma língua de chegada. Esta escolha editorial será, muitas vezes, precipitada e ambiciosa, por descartar à partida trabalhos já existentes, realizados com maior tempo e esforço. No mesmo sentido, no capítulo 19, é reproduzida uma troca epistolar entre o autor e Andrea Zanzotto, em que se refere o risco de, na literatura europeia, desaparecer completamente o *testo a fronte* nas edições de poesia.

A última característica destacável deste volume é a escolha de um estilo concreto e conciso, que, apesar da especificidade técnica da linguagem, torna o texto acessível a qualquer leitor interessado em adquirir uma maior proximidade com os estudos de tradução.

No seu conjunto, a obra de Buffoni apresenta-se como uma publicação muito particular no âmbito da disciplina, ao ponto de se

auspiciar que, no futuro, possa ser conhecida em maior profundidade fora do mercado italiano. Por um lado, *Con il testo a fronte* delinea uma parcela da história da tradução literária, em todas as suas facetas – autores-tradutores, estilos, sistemas editoriais, contextos históricos e sociais, etc. –, oferecendo finalmente um panorama completo de um género – o da tradução – ainda hoje pouco reconhecido. Por outro lado, utilizando o prisma das traduções, emerge um percurso latente da literatura ocidental europeia e norte-americana “canónica”: seguindo as trajectórias da segunda vida dos textos é possível antever as luzes e as sombras do seu impacto nas diferentes culturas e perceber os seus mecanismos. Todavia, a tradução não adquire importância incondicionalmente, sendo também destacado o seu valor literário autónomo. A forma de Buffoni expor abertamente uma opinião sobre as traduções, assinalando os casos por si considerados, convida a uma percepção crítica e, por conseguinte, mais aprofundada dos textos. Ao mesmo tempo, a escolha de apresentar a perspectiva teórica através de uma linguagem acessível, e ao fornecer vários exemplos concretos, sob vários pontos de vista, possibilita uma maior apropriação do conteúdo por parte do leitor, que é implicitamente, mas constantemente, convidado a elaborar uma opinião pessoal sobre as traduções propostas.

Patrícia Passos de Sá

Universidade de Lisboa

patricia.passos.sa@gmail.com

Baetens, Jan e Domingo Sánchez-Mesa. *Frankenstein 1973-2020 (El Espíritu de la Colmena)*. Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2020. 94 pp. ISBN 978-84-338-6751-3

A influência do filme *El Espíritu de la Colmena*, de Víctor Erice (1973), continua bem presente no século XXI, tal como o ilustra a recente obra de Jan Baetens e Domingo Sánchez-Mesa, *Frankenstein 1973-2020 (El Espíritu de la Colmena)*, publicada pela editora da Universidade de Granada, em 2020. Segundo o posfácio da obra, os autores inspiraram-se em modelos anteriores, tais como *La Jetée* (1992), de Bruce Mau, edição em livro do filme de Chris Marker, do mesmo nome (1964). A obra de Baetens e Sánchez-Mesa nasce do desejo de homenagear o filme de Erice, caro a ambos os autores, traduzindo a sua narrativa cinematográfica para livro.

Os autores especializaram-se sobretudo em estudos teóricos de âmbito académico, mas a presente obra não se enquadra nessa linha: *Frankenstein 1973-2020 (El Espíritu de la Colmena)* é uma recolha poética, em francês e em espanhol, ilustrada por fotografias de cenas de *El Espíritu de la Colmena*, compiladas por Juanjo Balanguer. Os autores, também no posfácio, discorrem acerca da origem desta obra, referindo outro filme que, à primeira vista, nada tem que ver com o filme de Erice: *The Last Picture Show* (1971), de Peter Bogdanovich. De acordo com Baetens e Sánchez-Mesa, os filmes de Bogdanovich e Erice partilham a mesma melancolia, associada ao luto. Baetens cita a frase, em inglês, “Mourn, and then move on” [Faz o teu luto, e depois segue o teu caminho] (92), traduzindo-a, depois, para francês, enquanto Sánchez-Mesa menciona apenas a sua tradução em espanhol. Contudo, é a palavra “then”/“luego” [de seguida] que, segundo os autores, confere o sentido a toda a frase. Sem essa palavra, fica a faltar o espaço e tempo

entre passado e presente, objeto e sujeito, vazio e completude. Assim, concluem, o livro nasceu dessa palavra que anuncia a continuidade.

A obra de Baetens e Sánchez-Mesa está estruturada em sete capítulos, sendo estes precedidos por uma página de agradecimentos em que, em espanhol, é dito que o livro procura ser uma modesta homenagem à visão que Erice construiu, através de *El Espíritu de la Colmena*, e que continua a ser renovada perante novos espectadores desde a estreia do filme, em 1973 (7). O primeiro capítulo é constituído por um poema intitulado “Le Film”, seguido da sua versão em espanhol, “El film” [O filme], ambos antecidos por uma imagem do cartaz do filme de James Whale, *Frankenstein* (1931), projetado numa aldeia, o qual inicia o filme de Erice. Tal como em *El Espíritu de la Colmena*, é esse filme que dá o mote ao livro de Baetens e Sánchez-Mesa que, à semelhança do realizador, continuam a explorar a influência do monstro de Mary Shelley na cultura espanhola, enquanto símbolo de uma Espanha marginal, do pós-guerra civil, dos vencidos pelas tropas de Franco.¹

No segundo capítulo, surge, em primeiro lugar, o título do poema “Las estaciones” em espanhol, seguindo-se a sua tradução em francês (“Les Saisons” [As estações]). Tem como capa um desenho de uma criança e, na página seguinte, uma fotografia do filme de Erice, em que se vê uma mulher contemplando o bosque. O poema vai alternando, estrofe a estrofe, entre uma língua e outra, possibilitando uma viagem mais imediata entre as duas línguas. O poema termina com outra imagem, a de Ana, protagonista de *El Espíritu de la Colmena*, sentada no escritório do pai ausente e silencioso.

O terceiro capítulo inicia com outro desenho infantil, e a ordem dos poemas é invertida, surgindo a versão francesa em primeiro lugar: “Ce qu’Ana savait/Lo que Ana sabía” [O que Ana sabia]. Tal como o título sugere, esta secção do livro é dedicada a Ana, sendo os poemas, curtos, de sete estrofes, escritos do seu ponto de vista. Além disso, cada poema tem um título, em itálico, como forma de, por um lado, situar o leitor no contexto do filme e, por outro, trilhar o caminho que

¹ Isolina Ballesteros. “Las Niñas del cine español: la evasión infantil en ‘El Espíritu de La Colmena’, ‘El Sur’ y ‘Los Años Oscuros’”, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 49, n.º 2, 1996, 232-242. Acedido a 25 janeiro 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30203408>

Ana vai percorrendo, ao mesmo tempo que se concede acesso aos seus pensamentos. Assim, este capítulo pode ser interpretado como uma tradução daquilo que, no filme, é silencioso, evidenciado apenas através da imagem em movimento e das ações das personagens. Os poemas dão voz à curiosidade infantil e inocente de Ana, que não compreende os dilemas do mundo adulto, nem encontra resposta para as suas inquietações.

O quarto capítulo segue o modelo do anterior, alternando, estrofe a estrofe, entre o francês e o espanhol, desta vez colocando o texto escrito por Sánchez-Mesa em primeiro lugar: “La mesa, el jardín/La table, le jardin” [A mesa, o jardim]. À semelhança dos capítulos anteriores, é ilustrado por um desenho infantil, e os poemas são estruturados em quadras, revelando uma tendência para a diminuição do tamanho das estrofes ao longo da obra. Ademais, as quadras são intercaladas por imagens ilustrativas de alguns momentos do filme, imagens escuras, tanto repletas de gente, tais como a primeira e a última, fotografias do público que assiste à projeção de um filme, quanto vazias, como a imagem da casa de pedra, silenciosa e impenetrável, da família de Ana.

As fotografias surgem com mais frequência no capítulo seguinte, cujo título é, ironicamente, “Interdit de photographier/Proibido fotografar” [Proibido fotografar]. Tal como os capítulos anteriores, é encabeçado por um desenho de criança e, de seguida, surge uma sequência de quatro fotografias antes de se chegar ao poema. Este, por sua vez, é composto por dísticos, e a respetiva tradução aparece na página seguinte, não já estrofe a estrofe. As imagens, que abundam neste capítulo, em especial nas últimas páginas, traduzem aquilo que não é verbalizado. Na obra de Baetens e Sánchez-Mesa, sendo um produto sobretudo poético, não é possível replicar o silêncio do filme de Erice, mas, neste capítulo, observa-se uma mudança em relação aos anteriores, com um ritmo mais apressado e cortes na estrutura do poema. Não se escreve já na perspetiva de Ana, mas na perspetiva do que se pode considerar, ao mesmo tempo, o espírito que ela procura, o soldado que ela auxilia, e no qual encontra uma figura substitutiva do pai, e a figura paterna, nos momentos finais do poema. Esta interpretação ganha sustento pela sequência de imagens que termina esta secção, algumas das quais apresentam, precisamente, o pai da protagonista do filme.

O último capítulo é um soneto, intitulado justamente como tal – “Un soneto (la colmena, la vida que entra y sale)/Un sonnet (la ruche qui entre et sort)” [Um soneto (a colmeia, a vida que entra e sai)]. Se o livro parecia concretizar um afunilamento formal, encurtando cada vez mais a estrutura estrófica das composições, não surpreende que culmine numa forma poética clássica, uma *chave de ouro*, que resume os temas principais que têm vindo a ser tratados: a vida e a morte, a fantasia e a realidade, o passado e o presente. O último verso reproduz o final de um filme, escurecendo, com as palavras “Y fin/Et fin” [E fim] (87-88, v. 14). O posfácio encerra o livro, no qual os autores refletem acerca da origem deste projeto, já mencionada previamente.

Frankenstein 1973-2020, além de se inserir no campo da écfrase, é, também, uma obra exemplar de intermedialidade, sendo que se assiste ao cruzamento de artes – cinematográfica, narrativa, poética e fotográfica –, reunidas num só volume. Enquanto obra ecfrástica, descreve e trata uma outra obra artística – no caso, o filme de Erice. Além disso, a inclusão de signos visuais permite que se concretize, também, a tradução intersemiótica, conforme Roman Jakobson a define.² Deste modo, inova, simultaneamente, no sentido em que não é apenas uma descrição da narrativa cinematográfica em poesia, mas constitui, acima de tudo, uma tradução e interpretação do que fica subentendido no filme, por signos verbais e não verbais. Esta *tradução* não é um ato passivo ou oculto, como se tende a esperar, mas antes um ato criativo, que, apesar de não se afastar da obra original, ganha uma certa autonomia em relação ao filme. É certo que, como os autores afirmam, se trata de uma homenagem, mas não se fica por uma mera descrição ou transcrição: decifra, reescreve, analisa os momentos cruciais da narrativa fílmica, ao mesmo tempo que reflete acerca de questões de modo independente, tais como a relação entre a vida e a morte, a fugacidade do tempo e a fantasia de uma criança que tenta compreender a realidade que não lhe é explicada pelas figuras de autoridade. Assim, o livro oferece, como os autores referem na secção dos Agradecimentos, uma metamorfose da

² Roman Jakobson. “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation.” Reuben A. Brower (ed.), *On Translation*, 233. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959. <https://web.stanford.edu/~eckert/PDF/jakobson.pdf>

visão de Erice, reconhecendo que o seu filme continua a ser objeto de questionamento e inquietação em 2020.

No tocante ao papel da tradução, a obra é, também, paradigmática. Como foi anteriormente referido, a tradução não permanece oculta ou disfarçada; de facto, tendo em conta que a editora pertence à Universidade de Granada e a primeira parte do livro, os Agradecimentos, é escrita em espanhol, poder-se-ia considerar que o texto nessa língua corresponderia ao texto de partida. No entanto, o leitor rapidamente se apercebe de que não existe a supremacia de uma língua em relação a outra, o que se torna evidente pelo modo como os autores vão alternando, por vezes surgindo primeiro o poema em francês, outras vezes em espanhol, e até misturando as línguas, colocando a tradução de uma estrofe logo a seguir à enunciação da mesma noutra língua. Nesse sentido, na ótica dos estudos de tradução, é uma obra que coloca o tradutor na mesma posição de autor, o que, no caso, é verdadeiro, pois os autores são, também eles, tradutores um do outro. Sugere-se, portanto, como o mesmo pensamento pode ser interpretado em duas línguas e, por isso, em culturas diferentes. De facto, o último soneto é ilustrativo dessa paridade linguística, sendo que na primeira estrofe se lê: “Espíritu, ¿está ahí? ¿em qué lengua te llamo?/Esprit, est-tu là? En quelle langue t’appelle-je?” [Espírito, estás aí? Em que língua te chamo?] (87-88, v. 1). Uma interpretação é uma tradução e a éfrase também o é. A obra é a tradução de uma narrativa fílmica para uma narrativa poética e fotográfica, sendo esta última uma forma artística especialmente cara a Jan Baetens.³ Seja uma narrativa intrínseca à fotografia, ou fabricada pelo espetador, Baetens destaca tanto os novos modos de aplicar os conceitos de temporalidade e narratividade, quanto a formulação de leituras diferentes e criativas que esta forma artística permite.⁴ Por isso, afirma que, em certos casos, a narrativa fotográfica pode mesmo competir com a cinematográfica,⁵ representada nesta obra através do diálogo entre texto, sequência de imagens e filme.

³ Cf. Jan Baetens and Mieke Bleyen. “Photo Narrative, Sequential Photography, Photonovels.” Marina Grishakova and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds.), *Intermediality and Storytelling*, 165-182. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2010.

⁴ *Idem*, 178-181.

⁵ *Idem*, 166.

Em conclusão, *Frankenstein 1973-2020 (El Espíritu de la Colmena)* é uma interpretação inovadora e pioneira do filme de Erice, simultaneamente traduzindo a narrativa fílmica e acrescentando reflexões dos autores, em conformidade com o pensamento do filme original; ao mesmo tempo, espelha uma meditação continuada, que vai para além do ponto de partida, o que se torna claro pela evocação de Frankenstein no título. No filme, Frankenstein constitui uma metáfora para a curiosidade sem resposta de Ana e para a Espanha dos vencidos de Franco, como foi anteriormente explanado. Na obra poética, a criatura ganha relevo, enquanto metáfora das especulações que se vão tecendo acerca da vida e da morte, da fantasia e da realidade, do conhecimento e da inocência, evocando, ao mesmo tempo, aquela reflexão original sobre a *outra* Espanha. Daí o título da obra, colocando entre parênteses o filme de Erice, e realçando a figura de Frankenstein e todo o conjunto de significados a ela associados – o monstro enquanto símbolo das vítimas dos massacres franquistas, como se representa no filme de Erice na figura do fugitivo abatido, e o seu criador como paradigma do investigador desejoso de conhecer os mistérios da vida.

Nesse sentido, embora se pudesse considerar, inicialmente, que esta obra poética não passa de uma emulação da de Erice, consideramos justamente o oposto. *Frankenstein 1973-2020* interpreta e verbaliza o que no filme é implícito, potenciando novas reflexões acerca do tema numa viagem simultaneamente poética, imagética, linguística e intersemiótica. Por conseguinte, o volume de Baetens e Sánchez-Mesa ilustra a influência que *El Espíritu de la Colmena* e Frankenstein continuam a exercer sobre o público, sendo, até, ponto de partida para obras que desenvolvem os seus motivos em formas artísticas diferentes e que, por isso, enriquecem o seu legado.

Seren Üstündağ

University of Lisbon
seren@edu.ulisboa.pt

Wang, Guanglin. *Translating in Diasporic Literatures*. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. XVI, 144 pp. ISBN 978-981-13-6609-3

“When we translate from one language to another, we not only reinvent ourselves, but we free up the constrictions of our own language” (Brian Castro quoted in Wang, 88). In this quotation Brian Castro, one of the most prominent Australian writers, touches upon the fundamentals of comparative studies, world literature, and translation studies that are, in fact, intertwined under the influence of the literary market.

Moreover, it epitomizes the key issues of the book as quoted in the title: *Translation in Diasporic Literatures*. Guanglin Wang’s book brings translation, diaspora and literature together under the scope of Chinese diasporic literature, as well as through questions such as: What is the limit and function of translation? Is there anything that is not translatable? What is the relationship between source and target texts, root and route in the context of diasporic literatures? Not limited to these intricate questions, Wang makes the reader encounter the concept of “fluidity”, which counters the idea of solidity/fixity in language and interrogates binary oppositions throughout the complex dynamics of “roots and routes” in diasporic literature. The book’s title, however, may be misleading, as it suggests that the work focuses on translation in diasporic literature(s) in a broader sense, while Wang’s central interest lies, in fact, in Chinese diasporic literature in Australia.

The audience familiar with Wang’s work may notice that some of the chapters are the recollection of articles published in various journals from 2012 to 2018. The book consists of seven chapters out of which five are based on previously published articles. Most of those articles are on Brian Castro’s oeuvre, a fact which again stands in sharp contrast with the plurality advertised in the title. Also, as a technical detail that

comes from the “article” structure, every chapter has been designed as a journal article with abstracts and keywords. Those readers who cherish a conventional book format may find themselves perplexed or disappointed by this structure. Nevertheless, through its unique format, readers are also endowed with the reiteration of the theoretical framework and summaries of key concepts, which help to navigate the work.

The main idea around which chapters are organized is that of cultural translation. In addition, chapters are bound together via the discussion of the concepts of diasporic literature, translation, and world literature chiefly through Homi Bhabha, Walter Benjamin, and Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical approaches. However, it is not possible to observe diversity in geo-cultural space since the focus does not shift to any other spaces other than Australia.

In the “Introduction,” Wang explains his devotion to the topic of translation and cultural identities of Chinese diasporic writers. Besides theorizing key concepts (translation, world literature, diaspora, exile), Wang positions himself as a “translatability” defender throughout the book starting from the Introduction. Regarding the engagement with key concepts, two points seem to need clarification: firstly, Wang uses “cultural translation” as a leading frame in the book, yet he does not give a concrete definition of it, nor does he challenge it. Instead, he simply characterizes cultural translation as “a means whereby they [Chinese diasporans] survive” (40). Secondly, although Wang criticizes binary oppositions, he fails to detect the binarism contained in the source-target, root-route pairs that, according to him, are the basis of cultural translation.

By referring to Salman Rushdie’s famous quote “we are translated men” (38), Wang reaffirms his perspective on cultural translation as a product of exilic life and expands it to a fruitful creation of origin and host cultures, root and route. And yet, since it can also be seen as a “domesticated translation” as Harish Trivedi pinpoints in his “Translation Culture vs. Cultural Translation,” Wang’s work would have benefitted from discussing different perspectives on the concept.¹

¹ Harish Trivedi. “Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation.” Paul St-Pierre and Prafulla C. Kar (eds.), *In Translation – Reflections, Refractions, Transformations*, 277-289. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007.

For Wang, originality comes with motion – or translation: “A route, on the other hand, sets the localized community into motion and brings creativity and vitality” (5); “only by crossing the national borders can a nation maintain its nationality in the form of a pure language, which is embodied in all languages” (10). Likewise, for Wang, diasporic literature due to its multi-dimensional nature is creative and able to go beyond non-exilic or exilic literature. To him, Kafka’s, Beckett’s, and Joyce’s works are examples of fruitfulness that comes with exile (42). He criticizes western scholars such as Pascale Casanova or Emily Apter for being orientalist, adding that: “Perhaps they are afraid that the traditionally marginalized writers deprive them of their sense of superiority and literary power of discourse in *The World Republic of Letters*” (27).

The diversity in cultural translation that Wang celebrates is notwithstanding imbedded in the book itself: a Chinese academic writing in English and using western-based theoretical framework. That is to say that *Translation in Diasporic Literatures* seems to epitomize the very notion of its central message: cultural translation or diasporic literature brings diversity and/or widens the perspective of readers/writers and enhances creativity in literary products. Although Wang does not define his conception of diasporic literature, it is framed in the book as the set of literary products by Chinese descendant writers in Australia. In this sense, the book targets both Chinese critics and western scholars, in order to demonstrate the richness of this diasporic Chinese literature.

By emphasizing his stand as opposed to the idea of “incommensurability” (rejection of intercultural equivalence) and by defending the uniqueness of diasporic literatures, Wang shows his position: he puts forward a euphoric conception of translation. Wang defines the task of the translator as the capacity of conveying Chinese-Australian cultural identity to the Chinese reader “as mutually inclusive, both destructive and reconstructive, negative and positive, critical and creative” (17). One can claim that the mission Wang puts in front of the translator is to become an ambassador of culture in the name of multiculturalism in the homeland while from the exilic writer he expects him/her to be a translator/voice of the home who is outside of home.

The second chapter is the manifestation of the “translated man”: “[O]ne might say that author is dead, and the translator is born” (23). Regarding Roland Barthes’s “The Death of the Author” (1977), Wang presents the birth of translators through the “after life”² of a Chinese book in translation. The chapter focuses on the translator’s subjectivity and celebrates translation as “a medium for world literature,” “allowing us [readers] to cross borders,” and “challenging” the stories that we already know (28). Wang also highlights the idea that multilingualism creates “more windows” to look into and creates conditions for negotiation and “forming their own [multilingual] creations” (29). That overexuberant description of multilingualism appears to be blind towards certain layers of the world’s system. It must be considered that multiculturalism-multilingualism is also part of the postcolonial, immigrant and exilic experiences, and it is not always a positive experience to those people affected by it: it bears alienation, isolation and longing towards homeland and it may happen to avoid imprisonment/execution or political oppression (135).

For as much as Wang criticizes binary oppositions, it is hard to find a deconstructive approach or an alternative proposal for those oppositions in the book. According to him, Chinese culture, for example, is a counter-cultural capital that challenges western culture. Also, Chinese diasporic literature provides a fruitful dichotomy of origin and exile, and for Wang this is fundamental for creativity in diasporic literature. Likewise, in the third chapter, Wang exhibits Brian Castro’s *The Garden Book* (2005) as the hybrid product of such dichotomy.

In the fourth chapter, Wang operates with Benjaminian translation theory. The “broken vessel” is the critical metaphor for translation in this chapter. In this light, the translation is a new original, not a mimicry, yet – like a broken vase that was glued back together – it holds fragments of the authentic, primal work. The chapter concludes with an appreciation of a transcultural life filled with “brokenness”, a phenomenon of which, according to Wang, Brian Castro’s *Shanghai Dancing* (2003) is a good example.

² Walter Benjamin. “The Task of the Translator.” *Illuminations*, translated by Harry Zohn, 71. New York: Schocken Books, 2007.

The following chapter, in addition to considering the wholeness of a “broken vessel,” implies the productiveness that those “broken” parts can carry through Roman Jakobson’s concept of “intersemiotic translation” (74). According to Jakobson, intersemiotic translation is “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language”, and for Wang, this semiotic perspective “releases us from the prison house of language and poses a great challenge to logocentrism in the West where language is cherished above everything and dictates the traditional practice of translation” (74). Wang reminds us of the customary disregard of Chinese culture in the West which he attributes to the discrepancy between the Chinese writing system and the western alphabet, and he points out that: “Chinese language is quite rich as it includes both pictographic and ideographic elements” (80). Because the book incorporates images such as photos and postcards, some with Chinese characters on them, Wang considers *Shanghai Dancing* as an example of intersemiotic translation.

As is evident from the preceding chapters, the sixth one shows Wang once again objecting to the idea of untranslatability and relating the concept to the West’s “sense of incommensurability and binary oppositions” (107). In other words: Wang asserts that the notion of untranslatability is a product of a western way of thinking more than a theoretical issue. According to Wang, for example, considering the “sign or logos of the tribes” as “incomprehensible” and “untranslatable” is falling into the “scientism” trap. To further elaborate on this, Wang refers to the opening line of the Genesis – “in the beginning was the word” – and associates it with western culture in order show its limits: “In their mind, writing expresses serious thought while pictures are evanescent, and literature and philosophy deal with grand ideas while visual art is short lived and of little importance” (111). Wang escalates this perspective by describing untranslatability as a “linear mode of thinking” and adding that: “If Emily Apter argues for untranslatability, it is because the praise of fluency that has dominated the Anglo-American book market increases the hegemony and the concept of world literature dictated by the English curriculum and publishing industry, brought about by globalization” (118). While doing this, Wang mainly refers to Barbara Cassin’s *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (2014)

and Emily Apter's *The Translation Zone* (2005) and *Against World Literature* (2013) for a critique of untranslatability. According to Wang, translatability is the key to international communication, and debates on untranslatability only limit this communication and the creativity that comes along with translatability.

As a matter of fact, the sixth chapter displays richness in Chinese script and introduces an artistic work by B.K. Zora, *Encounter Series*, as a fruitful inspiration for intercultural encounter. The art of Zora, in Wang's view, is "a very good parody of the superiority of one language over the other or incommensurability between languages and cultures" (109). In *Encounter Series*, one can observe figures that combine Chinese characters with the English alphabet, which for Wang is a sign of intercultural creativity. In this chapter, yet again, Wang defines translation as a glamorous act, as he puts it, "a projection of a piece of literature into new possibilities" (116).

By looking at the chapters in general, it can be said that Wang's book gives both a broad view of translation studies and of world literature, as well as glances from postcolonial studies, whilst at the same time allowing the reader to focus on Chinese diasporic literature. For those readers who are interested in any of these areas of study, *Translation in Diasporic Literatures* promises a fluid and informative journey.

Ariadne Nunes

Universidade Nova de Lisboa

ariane@addition.org

**Meirim, Joana (coord.). *E a minha festa de homenagem. Ensaaios para Alexandre O'Neill*. Lisboa: Tinta da China, 2018. 262 pp.
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O livro segue-se ao *Colóquio do O'Neill. 30 anos + 1 mês*, pretendendo ambos responder “sem ironia” – como é salientado desde logo na introdução da organizadora Joana Meirim – à crónica de Alexandre O'Neill, publicada em 25 de Setembro de 1973, no jornal *A Capital*, com título idêntico à deste livro, e nele reproduzida em fac-símile. A ordem de apresentação das comunicações no referido colóquio é a seguida na edição dos textos, com a excepção do texto inaugural do volume, de Fernando J.B. Martinho, republicação de um ensaio impresso originariamente na *Colóquio/Letras* de Maio-Junho de 1987.

As duas iniciativas, livro e Colóquio, pretendem prestar homenagem a um poeta crítico e desconfiado face tanto à fama póstuma como à crítica literária. Fazem-no incitando à leitura de O'Neill, uma vez que, como afirma Graça Videira Lopes no seu ensaio, “escrever sobre um autor, ou ler o que outros escrevem, é também um excelente pretexto para reler a sua obra” (75). Sendo este volume de ensaios para Alexandre O'Neill uma obra de crítica literária, pressupõe a leitura do poeta, e responde ao apelo da crónica de O'Neill – “Lede tudo, sobretudo as obras...” –, em regra vista como expressão da desconfiança do poeta perante o “discurso *sobre*” (Lopes, 150) e a fama póstuma.

A posteridade e o papel da crítica são, no entanto, matéria de vários dos seus poemas e crónicas, como acaba por ser salientado pelo conjunto dos ensaios reunidos neste livro, em que cada um deles reflecte sobre aspectos ou temas específicos da obra de O'Neill: a relação com outros poetas (Pessoa, no ensaio de Fernando J. B. Martinho; Carlos Drummond de Andrade, José Cutileiro e Manuel Alegre, no ensaio de Clara Rocha);

a classificação de O'Neill como poeta surrealista, satírico, futurista ou concretista (cf. os ensaios de Fernando Cabral Martins, Carlos Nogueira, Graça Videira Lopes e Sara Lacerda Campino); a análise de diversas facetas da sua actividade – artista plástico, homem de teatro, tradutor, publicitário ou a vertente política da sua poesia – vejam-se os ensaios de Fernando Cabral Martins, Miguel-Pedro Quadrio, Alexandra Lopes, Miguel Tamen e Burghard Baltrusch; reflexões sobre o tópico da modéstia (Joana Meirim) e sobre a operacionalidade das ideias de violência e de signo para a poesia de O'Neill (Gustavo Rubim); ou a análise de poemas casuísticos, nos ensaios de Nuno Amado e Sebastião Belfort Cerqueira.

Apesar da diversidade temática, reconhece-se como fio condutor dos ensaios que compõem o livro o carácter auto-reflexivo da poesia de O'Neill, resultado da meta-poética implicada na reflexão sobre o papel da crítica e no problema da fama póstuma da poesia de O'Neill. É talvez por isso que os poemas citados se vão repetindo nos ensaios: títulos como “O revólver de trazer por casa”, “Autocrítica”, “caixadòclos”, “Saudação a João Cabral de Melo Neto”, “O lanterna-vermelha”, “Pequeno aviso do autor ao leitor” aparecem várias vezes ao longo do livro, contribuindo para uma ideia de unidade do volume.

Dois ensaios podem ser vistos como paradigmáticos da análise feita em *E a minha festa de homenagem? Ensaios para Alexandre O'Neill*. Por um lado, o de Carlos Nogueira, a propósito da sátira em O'Neill. Nele se destacam os temas característicos da poesia do autor – “Portugal, os portugueses e a língua portuguesa literária e oral”, “as grandes questões existenciais (o significado da vida, as relações interpessoais, a morte, a passagem do tempo)” (71) –, salientando-se, simultaneamente, que o problema maior com que se debate a sátira de O'Neill é a “busca da sua identidade e do seu significado”. Carlos Nogueira mostra que O'Neill se discute “autoreferencialmente”, tanto quanto à “metodologia pela qual define os sentidos da sua (des)proporção e da sua (des)medida enquanto expressão mental e expressão literária”, como aos “resultados no próprio eu e nos outros (no objeto satirizado e nos leitores)” (72). É, portanto, um ensaio que debate expressamente o carácter auto-reflexivo da poesia de O'Neill, identificando-o como a principal característica da sua obra poética.

Por outro lado, o ensaio de Miguel Tamen que se, como diz Joana Meirim na Introdução, “pode não falar muito da poesia de O'Neill” (16), é uma reflexão sobre o que é a poesia. Seguindo O'Neill, Tamen afirma que a poesia não pode ser um trabalho (no que se distingue da publicidade, actividade a que O'Neill se dedicava profissionalmente) e que o que a caracteriza “não é uma questão de linguagem” nem, por consequência, “de mensagem”. O ensaio de Tamen é, todo ele, a pretexto de O'Neill publicitário, uma reflexão teórica sobre o que é a poesia, para ser lido a par da reflexão meta-poética de O'Neill que nos é dada a ler nos outros ensaios.

O carácter da tradução como exercício de leitura que implica e, portanto, como expressão do próprio que traduz é salientado no ensaio de Alexandra Lopes “‘Gosto deles assim tão sem futuro’ – Apontamentos dispersos (e provisórios) sobre O'Neill tradutor”. A partir da leitura das crónicas de O'Neill, reunidas na colecção *Uma Coisa em forma de assim*, Lopes parte da dicotomia entre crítica e leitura que resulta da desconfiança que é identificada como de O'Neill relativamente à crítica literária, para afirmar a importância da leitura e de um relacionamento “amoroso” com o texto, a partir do próprio O'Neill (146). O carácter relacional da poesia, que se destina a ser lida, é salientado, questionando uma noção de originalidade, uma vez que qualquer criação implica também uma relação com todas as obras, designadamente literárias, que precederam o autor. Como não há criação sem filiação a antecedentes – o que permite a construção de “um cânone pessoal alternativo” (149) –, a originalidade por si não existe. As traduções de O'Neill são também exercícios de leitura, com o duplo objectivo de divulgar autores desconhecidos dos leitores portugueses da época e de identificar aqueles que passariam a fazer parte do seu cânone próprio. Assim, ler e dar a ler os outros implica ler-se a si e dar-se a ler a si. Ao traduzir, lê-se e dá-se a ler, sem a necessidade de uma explicação adicional, mas está-se sempre a dizer o texto traduzido de uma maneira diferente daquela que foi dita pelo autor originário. Nesta medida, digo eu, a crítica literária não será uma actividade assim tão distante.

Se “ler um poeta é melhor do que escrever sobre ele” (Lopes, 150), na medida em que ler sobre ele nos leva a lê-lo, não haverá melhor

homenagem nem resposta ao apelo de O'Neill do que dedicar-lhe um livro de estudos. Este tem ainda o mérito de terminar com um conjunto de poemas de Ramiro S. Osório que, como afirma Joana Meirim (18), “poderiam ser apócrifos de O'Neill”, remetem e incitam, também eles, à leitura de Alexandre O'Neill.

