



THE AIMS AND THE STORIES OF THE BRAZILIAN TRANSLATION CLUB

ANA CLÁUDIA SURIANI DA SILVA

The Brazilian Translation Club (BTC) was created to fulfil two objectives: in addition to providing a platform for disseminating contemporary Brazilian literature in the UK, it aims to promote and value collaborative translation both as a pedagogical tool and as a bridge between the students and the community.

At University College London (UCL), translation is a compulsory component of the language curriculum. We dedicate an average of two contact hours per week to teaching and practising the translation of literary and non-literary texts into and from English. Translation has a key role in our courses because students need it as much as reading, writing, listening and speaking in their learning and future careers. Firstly, its use in the classroom favours the development of a series of skills, such as reflecting on the meaning of words within a context, a greater awareness of linguistic differences, and it encourages students to take risks (ROMANELLI, 2009; ATKINSON, 1993). According to Gaballo (2009), collaborative translation is particularly important in translators' training since it enables them to reflect from different perspectives and consider the alternative solutions proposed by colleagues. Secondly, translation promotes the development of intercultural competence (GABALLO, 2009; HURTADO-ALBIR and GOMES, 2020; SALOMÃO, 2020). Translation activities require, therefore, not only language ability but also an understanding of culture and otherness. Finally, students become aware of translators' role as mediators between cultures and that any intercultural communication involves translation (KATAN, 2014).

At UCL, we can offer opportunities for collaborative translation between students, teachers and external partners because the university promotes Community Engaged Learning (CEL), a form of experiential learning that allows: 1) students to apply their theoretical knowledge to practice, develop transferable skills and become more life-ready; 2) academics to open their classroom to the community and try out more creative teaching methodologies; and 3) external partners to further their mission and goals, which results in the creation of positive social impact (UCL WEBSITE).

The Brazilian Translation Club is the second collaborative educational project that I have developed at UCL. In 2018, I created, in partnership with Dr. Paula Tavares Pinto (Unesp, Rio Preto), the Portuguese Virtual Language Exchange, a collaborative online learning programme that promotes linguistic and cultural exchange between Portuguese language students of UCL and English language students of Unesp. This initiative follows current trends in education aimed at fostering virtual mobility and internationalisation.



Like the Brazilian Translation Club, the activities proposed for each interaction always include a translation exercise to develop the students' bilingual and intercultural skills (SILVA and TAVARES, 2020).

The Brazilian Translation Club expands and enriches the collaborative translation activities developed at UCL. It creates a bridge between our students, members of the Lusophone community in England, translators and writers. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the online workshops allowed enthusiasts of Brazilian literature, students of Portuguese and English, writers and translators living in different parts of the world to join and enrich the discussion about the linguistic and cultural challenges presented by texts, so diverse in terms of structure, theme, style and linguistic register. The participation of Nara Vidal, Ana Maria Machado, Clodie Vasli, Eltânia André, Décio Zylbersztajn, Carla Bessa and Jacques Fux in the workshops expanded the discussion into the field of literary creation, reinforcing our view that literary translation presupposes reading and interpretation and that dialogue between authors and their mediators is always very fruitful.

Nara Vidal selected thirteen texts by a mix of renowned authors and newcomers, not yet translated into English, from the Capitolina Books catalogue. I suggested that we include the short story "Tratantes" by Ana Maria Machado, given that it is part of the syllabus of my modules PORT0010 Short Fiction and the Making of Modern Brazil and PORT0011 Advanced Translation From and Into Portuguese. In a way, the structure of the Brazilian Translation Club workshops, and consequently of this special issue of *Qorpus*, draws from my students' collective translation experience with the short story "Tratantes". First, they prepare the translation of the chosen passage. During the workshop, we discuss the multiple readings and interpretations of the text, the narrative elements, the linguistic and intercultural issues of the translation, and the translation target audience and editing process. Subsequently, students submit their translations and a commentary on the translation of no more than 1000 words to be assessed individually.

Our initial plan was to offer fourteen workshops over approximately two years and to publish the commentaries, translations and original texts at the end of the project. We ended up offering a fifteenth workshop in partnership with UCL Grand Challenges, Escritório Modelo de Tradução Ana Cristina César, UERJ, and the Festa Literária das Periferias (FLUP), in which we worked on Augusto Dias' "O Homem Amarelo" and Sylvia Arcuri's "Cortejo milenar" in translation by Victor Meadowcroft (LUDEMIR and SALLES, 2019). These two short stories do not feature in this publication because they are part of a broader project, which involved, among other activities, Elton Uliana and Nati Russo translating Slam poems by Bixarte, Auritha Tabajara and ZZ for the FLUP 2020 Slam Cúir.



However well planned a literary event is, its success depends fundamentally on the quality of the works. The texts selected for the workshops represent the diversity of contemporary Brazilian short fiction. First of all, they show that contemporary Brazilian literature has not left behind the rural world; life in the small cities, towns and indigenous communities that developed along the rivers of Brazil's interior. Tokowisa, the hero of "O espírito *aboni* das coisas", by Itamar Vieira Júnior, is an indigenous person of the Jarawara people, whose territory is located in the region of the Middle Purús River. The memorialist prose of "Sombras sobre o rio", by Ronaldo Cagiano, recollects the drowning of the narrator's brother in the Pomba River, Cataguases, Minas Gerais. The rivers, with their fish and legends, and the stilt houses in Manaus give Gothic tones to Juliana Diniz's short story "Perpétua". Xico Sá's "O striptease moral da pelada" revolves around a football game in Juazeiro do Norte and a *pelada* among friends in Barbalha, Ceará.

Geographical, social and racial representativeness comes hand in hand with the literary representation of regional and social linguistic variations. Discursive solutions for the representation of the spoken language and regional linguistic variations are essential to achieve one of the main functions of fiction, which is, according to Antonio Candido, "nos dar um conhecimento mais completo, mais coerente do que o conhecimento decepcionante e fragmentário que temos dos seres. Mais ainda: de poder comunicar-nos este conhecimento" [to give us a more complete and coherent knowledge than the disappointing and fragmentary knowledge we have of human beings. Even more important is that it communicates this knowledge to us] (CANDIDO, 1972, p.64). In order to achieve "adesão afetiva e intelectual do leitor" [affective and intellectual adherence of the reader] (CANDIDO, 1972, p.54), Carla Bessa, for example, in "Aí eu fiquei sem esse filho", creates the illusion of a theatrical performance by turning the monologue's grammatically incorrect syntax and punctuation (from the point of view of the educated norm) into a complex and dramatic diction. Itamar Vieira Júnior, in turn, invents a new syntactic construction. He includes in the text words from the Jarawara language alongside their Portuguese synonym and emphasises them with italics. What is interesting is that the Tupi words assimilated into Portuguese, such as *igarapé* and *mandioca* are not italicised. With these graphic and syntactic resources, the author draws our attention to the linguistic wealth of the Amazon and to the fact that the indigenous heritage in Brazilian culture is naturalised, taken for granted. Indigenous languages, such as Tupi, are woven so tightly into the Portuguese linguistic fabric that we forget that Brazilian Portuguese is the product of a long (and violent) colonial history.

In some short stories, such as Nara Vidal's "Amanda" and Décio Zylbersztajn's "O benfeitor de Santa Clara", the historical tension between the rural and the urban, the archaic and the modern, composes the background of the protagonists' personal dramas. In other stories, we cannot always specify the city or region where the action takes place. This is the case of Ana Maria Machado's "Tratantes" and Clodie Vasli's



“A mão que nos abençoa”. Nevertheless, the absence of a specific location does not diminish the realism of the narrative. On the contrary: it allows it to acquire a Brazilian, tropical, or even a universal dimension.

Secondly, within this diversity of texts, there is a strong strand of women’s stories. “Fome”, “Amanda”, “Tratantes”, “Memória de mulher”, “Aí eu fiquei sem esse filho” and “Perpétua” provide us with a collection of behaviours, performativities (BUTLER, 1988) and worldviews of women in the first or third person. The teacher’s sexual behaviour in Sérgio Tavares’ “Fome” threatens strict societal and gender norms because she is granted full agency to describe her sexual acts. In “Amanda”, the voice is given to a shy country girl who chooses to remain silent (or who perhaps has been silenced by the same societal and gender norms) to carry on with her motherly duties, even when she suffers domestic violence. “Tratantes” explores the coming of old age and women’s role as guardians of the family memories passed down from generation to generation. In “Memória de mulher”, by Eltânia André, the narrator constructs her own identity: “Começava a entender que eu era mulher e o que era ser mulher no mundo habitado por homens como o tio” [I was beginning to understand both that I was a woman and what it was like to be a woman in a world inhabited by men like Uncle]. The gender identity in “Memória de mulher” applies to all women who suffer violence directly or indirectly in Brazil and worldwide. As Judith Butler explains, gender norms and identities vary widely throughout historical periods and between cultures (BUTLER, 1988). In “Aí fiquei sem esse filho”, Carla Bessa dramatises the trauma of the double loss of the character’s son, first when he was kidnapped as a baby and later when he was shot dead at home. Finally, in “Perpétua”, Juliana Diniz kills Miguel in order to tell the story from the point of view of Perpétua, an immigrant of the magnitude of Macabéa in Clarice Lispector’s *A hora da estrela* [The Hour of the Star], who tries to understand Manaus and life in the forest from the perspective of a north-eastern girl (LISPECTOR, 1977).

Thirdly, across stories, the short story’s apparent paradox emerges as the underlying force behind the manipulation of time, space and narrative techniques in each text. Julio Cortázar defines the nature of the story, by comparing it with photography,

“como um aparente paradoxo: o de recortar um fragmento da realidade, fixando-lhe determinados limites, mas de tal modo que esse recorte atue como uma explosão que abra de par em par uma realidade muito mais ampla, como uma visão dinâmica que transcende espiritualmente o campo abrangido pela câmera”

[as an apparent paradox: it cuts out a fragment of reality, fixing certain limits to it, but in such a way that this cut acts as an explosion that opens up a much wider reality, like a dynamic vision that spiritually transcends the field covered by the camera] (CORTÁZAR, 2011, p.151).



The abovementioned stories of women masterfully explore this feature of the short story. Their authors use different formal resources to capture an entire life in a few pages or minutes of reading. For example, Carla Bessa's short story graphically emulates the script of a play, subverts the punctuation and syntax of the Portuguese cultured norm to attribute dramatic diction to the character's speech. Nara Vidal resorts to a spatial element to encapsulate time, that is, the lift that appears at the beginning and end of the narrative. Ana Maria Machado uses wordplay: a pun repeated throughout the story.

The short story's paradox does not apply only to stories about women. It is also present in "O benfeitor de Santa Clara", "Sombras sobre o rio" and even in Alê Motta's flash fiction. Décio Zylbersztajn divides the story into frames and uses various other narrative techniques to explore different stimuli, to create expectations in the reader, and to expand the text's symbolism. Ronaldo Cagiano uses intertextuality. He includes an epigraph, quotes and alludes to poems about other rivers and Greek mythology throughout the story, which, in addition to blending poetry and prose, transforms his memorialist account into an elegy for the death of the narrator's brother and an ode to literary and mythological rivers. In "Órfãos" and "A porta fechada", Alê Motta uses short, direct and impersonal phrases, such as those in "Poema tirado de uma notícia de jornal", by Manuel Bandeira, which in a crescendo reach the poetic and surprise the reader with either an anti-climactic or surreal outcome (BANDEIRA, 1930).

As we can see, the same narrative technique can be employed to create unity of effect and expand the symbolism of the text. As Ricardo Piglia writes, a short story always tells two stories: "A arte do contista consiste em saber cifrar a história 2 nos interstícios da história 1. Um relato visível esconde um relato secreto, narrado de um modo elíptico e fragmentário" [The storyteller's art consists of knowing how to encode story 2 in the interstices of story 1. A visible story hides a secret story, narrated in an elliptical and fragmentary way] (PIGLIA, 2004, p.89-90). "O benfeitor de Santa Clara", for example, is a story at once about the freedom that the hero achieves with the death of his father and the end of the dictatorship, about patriarchy, and the mystery of the female character.

Finally, the texts of this anthology show us how difficult it is to define the short story and how blurry genre boundaries are. The most emblematic example is perhaps that of "Autor ou Aquele que plagia a outra dor". Jacques Fux's text came to my hands without any bibliographical information or paratexts, that is, devoid of its author-function (FOUCAULT, 1991). The text opened up to me like a stream of consciousness. I thought that the *cronista* was Jacques Fux himself, who expressed his questionings and certainties of auto-fiction. The use of a stylised stream of consciousness – rich in literary references – seemed to be very suitable for constructing a metafictional text about auto-fiction.



During his workshop, Jacques Fux told us that his book *Antiterapias*, in which “Autor ou Aquele que plagia a outra dor” was published, was labelled as a novel in the first edition (FUX, 2012) and, in the second, as a collection of short stories (FUX, 2014). Be it a short story, a chapter of a novel, or a *crônica* (I did read it as *crônica*), it has permanently joined the list of canonical metafictional texts, such as those about the *crônica*, by Machado de Assis, Clarice Lispector, Afonso Romano Sant’Anna and Rubem Braga.

The role of translation is essential for the dissemination of Brazilian literature and its insertion in world literature. In general, Brazilian authors must first be recognised within Brazil to be then translated. Many of the authors of this anthology have been awarded important literary prizes since the creation of BTC. Nara Vidal’s *Sorte* won the 2019 Oceanos Award. Carla Bessa’s *Urubus* won the Jabuti Award 2020 for best short story anthology. Itamar Vieira Júnior’s novel *Torto arado* won the Leya Award 2018, and the Jabuti and Oceanos Awards 2020. I hope that this bilingual edition will also serve as an incentive for future translation projects of fictional works by our fourteen authors.

REFERENCES

- ATKINSON, David. *Teaching Monolingual Classes*. Essex: Longman, 1993.
- BANDEIRA, Manuel. *Libertinagem*. Rio de Janeiro: Irmãos Pongetti Editora, 1930.
- BUTLER, Judith. Performative acts and gender constitution: an essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. *Theatre Journal*. V. 40, n. 4, p.519–531, 1988. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893>. Accessed on: 10 Dec. 2020.
- CANDIDO, Antonio. A personagem do romance. In: CANDIDO, Antonio et al. *A personagem de ficção*. 11a edição. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1972, p.51-80.
- Community Engaged Learning Service (CELS). Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/research-based-education/3-students-make-connections-across-subjects-and-out-world/community-engaged>. Accessed on: 10 Dec. 2020.
- CORTÁZAR, Julio. Alguns aspectos do conto. In: CORTÁZAR, Julio. *Valise de cronópio*. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2006, p.147-163.
- FOUCAULT, Michel. What is an author? In: RABINOW, Paul (ed.) *The Foucault reader*. London: Penguin, 1991, p.101-120.
- FUX, Jacques. *Antiterapias*. Contos. 2ª edição. Belo Horizonte: Editora Scriptum, 2014.
- FUX, Jacques. *Antiterapias*. Romance. 1ª edição. Belo Horizonte: Editora Scriptum, 2012.
- GABALLO, Viviana. The umbilical cord cut: English as taught in translator-training programs. In: GABALLO, Viviana (ed.) *English in Translation Studies: Methodological Perspectives*. Macerata: Edizioni Università di Macerata, 2009, p. 41-64.
- HURTADO ALBIR, A.; GOMES, L. T.; DANTAS, M. P. Competência tradutória e formação por competências. *Cadernos de Tradução*. V. 40, n. 1, p.367-416, jan. 2020. Available at: <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/traducao/article/view/2175-7968.2020v40n1p367>. Accessed on: 06 out. 2020.



- KATAN, David. *Translating Cultures*. New York: Routledge, 2014.
- LISPECTOR, Clarice. *A hora da estrela*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1977.
- LUDEMIR, Julio and SALLES, Ecio (eds). *Contos para depois do ódio: Inspirados nas canções de Marcelo Yuka*. Rio de Janeiro: Mórula, 2020.
- PIGLIA, Ricardo. *Formas breves*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2004.
- ROMANELLI, S. O uso da tradução no ensino-aprendizagem das línguas estrangeiras. *Revista Horizontes de Linguística Aplicada*. V. 8, n. 2, p.200-219, 2009. Available at: <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/horizontesla/article/view/756>. Accessed on: 06 out. 2020.
- SALOMÃO, A.C.B. Intercâmbios virtuais e a internacionalização em casa: reflexões e implicações para a Linguística Aplicada. *Estudos Linguísticos*. V.49, n.1, p. 152-174, 2020. Available at: <https://revistas.gel.org.br/estudos-linguisticos/article/view/2469/1701>. Accessed on: 06 out. 2020.
- SILVA, Ana Cláudia Suriani da & PINTO, Paula Tavares. Virtual Language Exchange: a tradução como estratégia de aprendizagem de língua estrangeira entre alunos da Unesp e da UCL. In: SALOMÃO, A. C. B. & FREIRE JUNIOR, J. C. (eds.). *Perspectivas de internacionalização em casa: intercâmbio virtual por meio do Programa BRaVE-Unesp*. Brazil: Editora da Unesp, 2020, p.61-77.