

**CULTURE AND TRANSLATION:
 PATHS BEYOND BORDERS FOR IDENTITY AND HISTORY**

CULTURA E TRADUÇÃO:
 CAMINHOS ALÉM-FRONTEIRAS POR IDENTIDADE E HISTÓRIA

Gisele Giandoni Wolkoff

Professora do Departamento Multidisciplinar do Instituto de Ciências Humanas e Sociais da Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF)

Tania Wolkoff

Professora da Unifai - Centro Universitario Assunção

ABSTRACT: Can culture be translated? How can translations go beyond borders and transcreate into the centre and vice-versa? Transcreations have proved to redesign chaos as they represent cultures, allowing for new definitions of identity and belonging. In this paper, we shall examine the concept of transculturaliy in order to understand the role of cultural translation and literary translation, in particular. Furthermore, by looking into practical examples of translation and poetic transcreation, this work proposes some reflection upon the importance of translation in both (re)building culture in the digital era, and in establishing dialogues between nations and narrations (Homi BHABHA, 1990). In the end, it may be the case that the theme "world peace through languages"

Keywords: Transculturality; Identity; Nation; Narration; Translation

RESUMO: Identidades, nações e, por conseguinte, ajudam a construir narrativas? Será que possivelmente colaboram na redefinição de mundos periféricos socialmente em direção ao centro e vice-versa? Transcriações provaram ser capazes de rearranjar o caos a medida em que representam cultura, permitindo novas definições de cultura e identidade. Neste trabalho, observaremos o conceito de transculturalidade, a fim de compreender o papel da tradução cultural e literária, especificamente. Além disso, ao nos voltarmos para exemplos práticos de tradução e transcrição poética, este trabalho propõe uma reflexão sobre a importância da tradução tanto na (re)construção da cultura na era digital, quanto no estabelecimento de diálogos entre nações e narrações. Ao fim, pode ser que o tema "paz mundial pelas línguas" (pax mundi per línguas) seja reforçado pelas práticas transculturais.

Palavras-Chave: Transculturalidade; Identidade, Nação, Narração, Tradução

1 INTRODUÇÃO

On the 30th of March, 2018, we got off in Osaka, after a very long journey from Sao Paulo, Brazil with the promise of a wonderful year of visiting scholarship in Kyoto, Japan. About Japan and Asia had we learned over the years of my life in Sao Paulo, which is the with immigration waves that started in 1908, 110 years ago, and continued until the mid 1990's, when they inverted directions – from Brazil to Japan back, bringing the Japanese Japan (mainly, from Kobe) aimed at the ports of Santos (in the province of Sao Paulo) and sculpture in honour of the immigrants to the Americas and, mainly, to Brazil. As one can see, the inscription reads “Kobe Port Immigrants’ Memorial Sculpture”.

In the city of Sao Paulo, the Japanese community started inhabiting the area of the former Black slaves got their “freedom” by being killed mostly, for something they had area is full of commerce and trade of Japanese, Korean and Chinese goods and restaurants. And it is an Asian land of vivid cultural symbols (in the definition of Pierre BOURDIEU, author came out in English as *The Economy of Linguistic Exchange* and was translated into remarkable work, we hitherto emphasize his 1977 work, because in this book, *The Economy* more precisely, the dichotomy in the concepts of “langue” and “parole” (which would be material/symbolic, empirical/theoretical, objective/subjective, public/private might make a of the relationship between different forms of capital, an individual’s habitus and the field of working with literary translation and even Film studies and Interpretation, because it connects to the concept of translation as recreation – the translator/interpreter will do his/her job according to his habitus his field of action and the different forms of capital (namely, cultural, economic, social and symbolic).

In fact, growing up in the 1970's in Sao Paulo meant having at least one friend or acquaintance whose family had come from Japan. It also meant admiring the Asian organization and capacity of resilience. We learned in school how quickly Japan had developed itself after the second World War, how high-tech it had become, specially, since the 1980's and how brightly educated have always been Japanese kids. Our dream was to do as well as the Japanese kids in school: study harder than they studied, get the best places in the top universities, just like them...because that was what the whole hard-working

students' competition was all about. For whichever university there was an opening, we'd have to overpass many Japanese students in Brazil. Moreover, Japan's cultural symbols were all there, around us: food, music from the island of Okinawa (which we always immediately connected to the whole of Japan, little knowing that Okinawa is so culturally different from the other parts of Japan). Therefore, the whole picture about Japanese life was all fascinating and enticed most of the young people throughout the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's, particularly in the southern part of Brazil. Later, after the 1990's, the Oriental religions' fad started, so the symbolic order of allurements shifted from the image of crazy high-tech hubs to swift, calm lakes and buddhist recreations of Namasté.

As we report on our own translation of how Eastern cultures were depicted by us and most of our generational friends back in Brazil, the only Portuguese speaking country in Latin America, we also try and depict here some meaning of translation and cultural translation and how both terms appear in dimensions that are subjective, individual and, also, collective, public.

Indeed, what we attempt at here to show how translation applies to the individual and subjective realms of our beings, that is, we are all translators: every time we speak, we translate ourselves. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky clearly points out to this concept of speakers as translators in what was first published in English as *Thought and Language* in 1986. As most of his other bibliography here, Vygotsky establishes a theory of cognitive development in children and in it, he reminds us that which we speak is the product of our thought on language, the individual translation of personal perceptions of the environment around us, the chemistry of our bodies also translated in that which we are able to speak within the context in which we belong. Ultimately, by arranging the words the way we do, as we speak, we reveal the syntax that is within our conscious and lexical capacities, we translate thought that is put into all the chemistry that enables our voice to come out in more or less coherent ways. And many are the times in which we finish some talk with the feeling that "- oh, well, this wasn't exactly what I wanted to say" or "- this is not really what I meant to convey". These sentences utter our "untranslatabilities". That is, words are never able to convey the meaning of our thoughts. They are never enough or they are never good enough for all that is in our thoughts. Therefore, we can have two attitudes: "there are things that are impossible to be

translated”/ “there are untranslatable words/ideas/thoughts, untranslatable meanings conveyed” or “everything is translatable. The question surrounding critical translators then, is how to make “untranslatable” (and untranslatable between inverted commas) texts less so? Or in the case of interpreters, how to make untranslatable situations less so? Or, yet, how to translate from one context into another? For example, how can I say “saudade” if according to common sense, this word only exists in the Portuguese language (and it means something close to “the feeling of longing for someone or something that will only come back as memory”). The word goes back to the concept of “Sebastianism” which is a term that was historically applied to Don Sebastian I, who reigned Portugal and the Algarves from 1557 to 1578, disappeared in the battle of Alcacer Quibir and left his people moaning for his return, so that the decline of the Portuguese society would end because of his influence and attitude. But thanks to archives, and memory, history and social recreation, we can still constantly keep track of the usages of the appointed term.

Or yet, how can we make a Portuguese language speaker understand that “yoroshiku onegaishimasu” in Japanese can mean “thank you” or “please” or even “thank you for your consideration in moving further...”? These simple words, expressions and even longer phrases that involve national values (according to the nations’ narrations) such as omotenachi, monoawarê, or wabi-sabi can be taken as “untranslatable” values or as of quick simple interpretation and translation. For example, “omotenachi”, worldly known as “Japanese hospitality”, involving the concept of altruism, making the other, the visitor feel good without expecting anything in return. However, when cultural icons of the language of departure are far from those of the language of arrival, the interpretation and/or translation Kyoto which reads makoto ni katte nagara, ebi no sousage seizou no tame toubun no ainda am deeply sorry." And it can in a very summarized form be read as “sorry we are closed”. selfish” associated to the need for preparing some specific food for the restaurant and it sausage”. In the first detail (“I am sorry, I am too selfish”) the self-imposing quality of existing but as part of a group. In the second detail, having a literal understanding of sausage food “lost in translation”, but that can be understood as sausage with vegetables and shrimp thought – which is in itself a very funny expression in the English language.

Going back to the examples of cultural exchange, we must say that China (and Shanghai, in particular) has always been the leitmotif of Brazilian imagination in childhood three nights (and 4 days) in the Brazilian beach's sand in summertime: the summertime's end of day...to which the reply is always "China! More precisely, Shanghai". poets. surrounding Chinese immigrants in Brazilian lands which started in 1814 with the arrival of Rio de Janeiro, at the time, capital of the country, for the Royal Botanical Garden. Along the XIX and XX centuries, these immigrants substituted the Black slaves in agricultural work and also, later, in establishing businesses and commerce in the city of Sao Paulo and other areas.

The song "Lig Lig Lig Lé" by Adriana Calcanhoto, in her album "Adriana Partimpim", thoroughly dedicated to children, adapts some of the images that surround the figure of the Chinese immigrant in Brazilian lands. The first one being that of the sound of Chinese language to western ears, in the onomatopoea that presents the sound of the steps that light Chinese people make as they walk, "lig lig lig lé", and "on tip toes" (as it is literally put) but it is also an onomatopoea that is close to "lelé", the Portuguese vernacular for "crazy man". The sound also creates the image of the very thin man, thus, eating little, depicted in the line "The Chinese man eats only once a month." Moreover, "Shanghai" and "butterfly" are explicit references, with no need to further the details; yet, the line "with his brunette" is a reference to the brown, mixed Black or dark Brazilian lady represented by the character of Gabriela in the famous Jorge Amado's 1958 novel *Gabriela Cravo e Canela* who is the stereotype of the Brazilian woman and her sensuality.

Along six centuries, the rich, multicultural exchange in Brazil has accounted for its population is made of immigrants from Europe (mainly, Portugal who colonized Brazil, but and the indigeneous populations, such as the Indian peoples in the Amazon. Foreign people keep the country unified, in spite of it being the only one in Latin America which speaks communication and the capacity to constantly reinvent realities as according to the region, Certainly, the radio, and later in the 1960's till very recently, television have played which we refer here implies the mixture of ethnicities, whose most acknowledged image is that of the Brazilian woman such as Gabriela.

Jorge Amado, the much prized writer and author of *Gabriela*, with his wife Zélia Gattai, also a writer of less prestige, yet a highly important reference for the immigrant communities

in Sao Paulo, particularly the Italian one, with their Literature and Translation processes that came with their works to the world are some of Brazil's Modern voices of cultural translation, because they transfused (to apply here Haroldo de Campos's theory of transcreation) images of Brazil into the symbolic order of stereotypes, reinforcing them, yet transtating fragments of our culture to the world. Some of the most famous interpretations of Amado's story appeared as television adaptation both in 1975 and in 2012. In fact, Jorge Amado's famous representation of the Brazilian woman is a translation of the stereotype of ethnicities and how it gets transported in the imagery of sensuality and difference. Some of the comparative Translation Studies looking into translations of Jorge Amado's novels have already pointed out that his translations into Russian have suppressed much of the sensuality and erotic passages by simply erasing them, "forgetting" about them in the Russian context and, therefore, in the translation of the book into Russian. How is the imagination in Russia regarding sensuality? How can it get transposed into the Russian context? (Darmaros, 2018). The works proposed by Marina Darmaros bring up some political understanding associated to the translational choices at stake. Our investigation lies in the understanding of the construction of national images, icons and memory by means of translation.

In the case of the aforementioned song, one clear linguistic difficulty in transcreating it into English is the line "fez a sua fé" which literally means "he kept his faith" (even though the verb "fazer" which in this line is in the simple past and refers to he third person singular "to make"; however "to make one's faith" fails to create proper meaning in English. Yet "to keep one's faith" ("fazer a sua fé" in Portuguese) means "to believe", "to play the lottery", "to trust one's life into something". So the "decided to settle" version of it ("fez a sua fé") in English diminishes the sense of faith, of belief. Or does "deciding to settle" imply "having faith in the future", "believing in one's life"? This is the kind of question that surrounds the minds of translators who are aware of the dangers of making choices – and these "dangers" are exclusions. Every choice implies a series of exclusions. According to the Brazilian poet Cecília Meirelles in her poem "ou isto, ou aquilo", which means "either this, or that", choices are made of exclusions. Translators can never have both options – or can we?

Well, maybe, in the case of transcreations, we are definitely happier with wider possibilities. What does it mean to talk about "wider options/possibilities"? Let us tell you

about the day in which we had to translate the poem “Distances” by the poet Eavan Boland for an Irish Studies event promoted by the Embassy of Ireland in Brazil. The poem refers to the city of Carrickfergus which is now famous because of the also worldly known Game of Thrones series. Most of the episodes in it were filmed there, in Carrickfergus, which is a city in the north of Northern Ireland, after Belfast. The truth is that before Game of Thrones arrived in Brazil probably almost no one had ever heard of Carrickfergus there. So for a few moments we struggled with the thought that this poem in Portuguese would make little sense as it referred to a place that is so full of meanings in the Irish imagery historically: a place where the architecture of castles meet the sea and give way to dreams of new life possibilities, a kind of run-away to paradise, as explicated in the poem that became a song by another Irish poet, Louis MacNeice, “I wish I was in Carrickfergus”. The transposition of the images that surrounded the city of Carrickfergus in the Irish literary history and songs took us back to the famous, Modernist poem “I am going to go to Pasárgada” (“Vou-me embora pra Pasárgada”) by the Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira. In this poem, all the poet’s dreams and fantasies are made possible in Pasargada, which really existed in old Persia and turned out to be the city of dreams for many Brazilian and Portuguese people, in a similar way as that of Carrickfergus. Therefore, we opted for translating Carrickfergus into Pasargada, with a footnote, because maybe the bilingual readers of the material where this translation would appear would find it strange that Carrickfergus turned out to be Pasargada in Portuguese. After all, is it not the translator’s choice to reappropriate words in contexts as to recreate the ideas in the text of departure into viable ideas in the text of arrival? Our rhetorical question explains our later choice, Pasárgada for Carrickfergus, after the criticized and changed translation had been published in *Cadernos de Literatura em Tradução*. It is a journal published by the Interdepartamental Centre for Translation Studies (CITRAT) at the University of Sao Paulo. Our colleague editor found it a bit “too much” of a recreation and, at the time, we accepted her opinion. Yet, later, for the embassy’s request, we kept our choice for Pasárgada.

The change promoted by the “time the translated poem spent in the drawer” (as we often say regarding creations and translations) and which we now here report has implications regarding the concept of cultural translation. Roman Jakobson in 1971 already admitted that translators reword texts, that is, the job of translators is that of “rewording”. By opposing to [Revista Fontes Documentais. Aracaju. v. 03, Edição Especial: MEDINFOR VINTE VINTE, p. 743-752, 2020 – ISSN 2595-9778](#)

the Saussurrean view of language (langue x parole again) he states that: “the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further alternative sign” (JAKOBSON, 1971: 261).

Moreover, Boris Buden, in his introduction to the article “Translation Studies Forum: cultural translation” published in June, 2009, reminds us that the term cultural translation has political meanings, as well as that it has been used in a range of disciplines and in different ways: “translation is a cultural and political phenomenon, which provides the specific context of what we today call cultural translation.’ which makes of the translator’s task a social and political one, connected to the matter of nation-building. After all, this matters for anyone dealing with archives, memory, identity, and heritage.

So the stereotypes recreated in the song by Adriana Calcanhoto, as well as the stereotypes present in the works by Jorge Amado, signal to political positionings that have been used in the construction of national values. And that when read abroad, or in their international translations/recreations, they are transformed into representative icons that are usually far from marks caused by their echoes in their native land. The aforementioned case of Gabriela is one of them. Seen as predicative of most Brazilian women, her character as portrayed in the novel in Portuguese downgrades the role of women in society, at the same time that it reproduces stereotypes of social class difference in the country. To make matters worse, Jorge Amado has gained international recognition for his allegedly active participation in the Brazilian Communist Party. Certainly, the term multiculturalism can be applied for both cases (of social and national representations of stereotypes) and it has been so. However, we must also bring up another of Boris Buden’s reminder: “the concept of cultural translation can be generally understood and applied in the service of both the contradictory paradigms of postmodern theory and postmodern political visions: essentialist multiculturalism and its counterpart, deconstructionism.”

Such idea finds echo in another excerpt from Homi Bhabha’s works (1990): “For deconstructivists a nation is never something given, persisting over time as an eternal essence that can be clearly distinguished for other nations (...)” Nation is narration. “ writes Bhabha in a clear opposition to the traditional idea of “fidelity”, which in the case of nation building, it is a patriotic virtue, a “cultivational tool”. For Bhabha, multiculturalism developed its own concept of cultural translation: intercultural translation. And from our current research

[Revista Fontes Documentais. Aracaju. v. 03, Edição Especial: MEDINFOR VINTE VINTE, p. 743-752, 2020 – ISSN 2595-9778](#)

projects we propose transculturalism which is a path going beyond the nation states, beyond the national literatures, and the idea of fidelity and making sense of recreation. From the latest project that dealt with three countries (Brazil, Ireland and Japan) we have many examples to observe. Yet, for the time being, we will only point out to the fact that such practices are possibilities towards authorizing spaces that are traditionally and historically less visible as producers of knowledge, as “authors of original texts” (as we would refer to in Translation Studies) in order to create the sense of new epistemologies (not necessarily of the south but of southern silent geographies). Therefore, these are paths that attempt to go beyond the traditional ways of looking at the world map, thus, establishing negotiation, which is the word employed by Homi Bhabha (in his 1994 text) as he talks about “cultural translation”, the third space, hybridity. Paul Bandia and John Milton look at the term in both the history of Translation, particularly, in the West, and in conflictual spaces today, such as the matter of agency in negotiating new national identities, that is, in matters to do with someone becoming German, for example. What are the questions required and what do such questions translate sociopolitically speaking? The issue of identity/identities or identification as defined by Stuart Hall is of great help in understanding the proposed reflections by Bandia and Milton. However, I want to finalize my talk with Michael Cronin’s perfect idea surrounding the task of translations and the role of translators. For Cronin, translation must be perceived as “an unproblematic transcoding process”. So, “translators must of necessity engage with the multidimensionality of texts, languages, cultures.”

At last, our understanding of Cronin’s idea is that translators must first of all face all texts as possible so that they succeed in the enterprise of non-conflictual contexts. Translations are ways of saying, possibilities, not impossibilities or silencing projects. So let us advance into new beliefs, new ways of speaking, and remapping our memories of nations.

REFERÊNCIAS

BHABHA, Homi. **The Location of culture**. London: Routledge, 1994.

BUDEN, Boris. **Translation Studies Forum: cultural translation**. Disponível em: <https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=pt-PT&sl=en&u=https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14781700.2010.496936&prev=search&pto=que>

CRONIN, Michael. Translation in the Digital Age. London: Routledge, 2013. DARMAROS, Marina. “Gabriela, cravo e canela” e o degelo soviético: o apagamento da primeira obra escrita por Amado após “Os subterrâneos da liberdade”. **Revista USP**. " Disponível em: <http://www.revistas.usp.br/teresa/article/view/146115>

JAKOBSON, Roman. **Linguística e Comunicação**. Trad. Izidoro Blikstein, José Paulo Paes. 8ª ed. São Paulo, SP: Editora Cultrix, 1975.

HALL, Stuart. **A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade**. tradução: Tomaz Tadeu da Silva e Guacira Lopes Louro. São Paulo: DP&A editora, 1998.

MILTON, J., BANDIA, P. Agents of Translation. John Benjamin’s Publishing, 2009. MORIN, Edgar. Introdução ao Pensamento Complexo. Porto Alegre, Ed.Sulina, 2011.

SILVA-REIS, D. ; MILTON, J. . **História da Tradução no Brasil**. TRANSLATIO , v. 12, p. 2-42, 2016.

TOOGE, Marly. **Patrono Da Amizade**: as traduções de obras brasileiras da Alfred A.Knopf em meados do século XX. , 6 Tradterm 17. Revistas USP.

VYGOTSKY, L.S. “Pensamento E Palavra” In: **Pensamento E Linguagem** (tradução: Jefferson Luiz Camargo). São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1993.

Recebido/ Received: 18/08/2020 Aceito/ Accepted: 09/09/2020 Publicado/ Published: 25/10/2020
--