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Antony and Cleopatra into Brazilian Portuguese: Purposes and Procedures

The importance which translations of Shakespeare's work have had in the world-wide dissemination of his art and in the establishment of his central position in the Western canon has only begun to be recognised in the English-speaking academy. In fact, we still need to be reminded that Shakespeare wrote in a language that was far from hegemonic in Europe in the Renaissance and that, no doubt, to a great extent, the impact and influence of Shakespeare's dramatic poetry on the development of Western literature, i.e., beyond the limits of English literature, have been traced back to eighteenth-century continental culture, as Shakespeare's dramaturgy began to be produced not only in France but also in Germany – and in translation.[1] Perhaps in the wake of cultural studies, only in the past few years, Shakespeare in Translation as a research topic has truly caught the

[1] For critical commentary on Shakespeare in translation in Europe in general see *European Shakespeares*: *Translating Shakespeare in the Romantic Age*, by Dirk Delabastita and Lieven D'Hulst; for an account on "Festivals and Foreigners" see *English Shakespeares: Shakespeare on the English Stage in the 1990s*, by Peter Holland, chapter 9; in France, specifically, see Romy Heylen's, *Translation, Poetics, and the Stage: Six French Hamlets*, especially Chapter 1 (all three listed below under Bibliography); and in Brazil see Marcia do A. P. Martins' "*Hamlet* em Português: com a Palavra os Tradutores," Proceedings XXVII SENAPULLI-Jan./Feb. 1995 (unpublished).

attention of conference organisers, editors, and publishers, and the subject has gained status in Shakespeare Studies.

As might be expected, outside the English-speaking world, however, such interest is nothing new. In Brazil, for example, close attention to Shakespeare translation and adaptation goes back at least fifty years. In this essay, I start from two premises: (1) that translation of "classic" texts can be a form of what Goethe called rejuvenation (*Verjüngung*), and (2) that to recreate the original dramaturgy in an effective way, it is advisable, in the words of Susan Bassnett-McGuire, "to opt for naturalistic speech patterns in the target language which will inevitably belong to a particular time" – hence, the need for the "continued retranslation or updating of theatre texts, where patterns of speech are in continuous process of change" (1985: 89). And I propose that in the case of Shakespeare's dramaturgy the primary task – and challenge – of the translator is to render a text at once poetic, comprehensible, and speakable. Based on such premises and propositions, I am submitting purposes, procedures, and illustrations of choices I have made in my own annotated, verse translation of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* into Brazilian Portuguese.

In almost every case, translations of Shakespearean drama in Brazil, whether in verse or prose, have rendered texts that are often impenetrable in terms of lexical and syntactic sophistication, producing dismaying difficulty on page and stage. Surely, a translator need not naively simplify or domesticate Shakespeare, tidying up language that is coherently incoherent, for example, or explicating abstruse allusions etc.[2] Yet, if Brecht is right, and going to see a Shakespeare play need not be "an irredeemably elitist experience; for he is far more accessible to ordinary audiences in translation . . . than in the archaism and compression of the original English" (qtd. Heinemann 1985: 228), then, a translator will do a service to audience – and, who knows, to author – by rejuvenating, as it were, the text's language and rhetorical elements. Hence my admittedly ambitious purposes: identifying my target audience as comprised mainly of literature students, youngsters, and theatre people, in my translation I have attempted to produce a text that is at once literary, i.e., contrived and poetic, and that can also be spoken on stage and understood by a general audience; in other words, a text that is intellectually challenging without being supercilious, and linguistically up to date, without being unduly prosaic or simplified.

Before discussing procedures, however, I wish briefly to set down my view of literary translation. As I see it, literary translation is an artistic

[2] "Domestication" is a term used by Laurence Venuti in *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995) to describe and then criticise the translation strategy in which a see-through, fluent style is adopted to minimise the strangeness of the foreign text for target language readers (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1977: 43–44).

craft realised by one individual or a group of people localised in space and time; it is a hermeneutic **process** involving complex activities: reading, researching, writing, revising, and rewriting, ultimately, an act of interpretation and a retextualisation from one language into another. As such, the translation cannot be separated from the translator(s), and it will at the same time depend on and reflect the translators' poetics.

Turning to the procedures, basically, my translation followed a straightforward, three-phase process, namely, preliminary study, drafting, and revising. The preliminary study entailed the analysis of Shakespeare's other Roman plays, the compilation of a research bibliography, the contrastive study of a sample of translations of Shakespeare's plays into Portuguese, and decisions regarding the copy-text to be used for the translation and the ancillary editions for the annotation. Predictably so, the result of the bibliographic research was intimidating and encouraging. Intimidating because, although a relatively recent field of inquiry, Shakespeare in Translation begins to collect a bulky bibliography. Encouraging, because I could verify that surely the problems of Shakespearean lexicography, translation, and annotation had been tackled by many before me, even in my own cultural and linguistic context.[3]

After compiling the bibliography, I proceeded with a contrastive study of the work of ten translators, examining a total of twelve translations of Shakespeare's plays, spanning from the mid 1950s to the early 1990s. I examined *Hamleto* (by Carlos Alberto Nunes), *Antônio e Clepatra* (two different translations, one by Nunes, and one by Cunha Medeiros with Oscar Mendes), *Júlio César* (two different translations, one by Carlos Lacerda, and one by Margarida Rauen), *A Comédia dos Erros* and *O Mercador de Veneza* (by Barbara Heliodora), *Romeu e Julieta* and *Otelo* (by Onestaldo de Pennafort), *A Noite de Reis ou O Que Quiserem* (by Sérgio Flaksman), and *Macbeth* (two different translations, one by Manuel Bandeira, and one by Geir Campos). This is hardly the place to attempt any particularised appraisal of twelve different translations of Shakespeare, and my express aim here is to discuss one specific translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It will suffice to say that, essentially, my goal during what I have called preliminary study was to get a sense of how various translators had dealt with a number of practical issues, for example, the prosody, especially in regard to the original blank verse, the number of verse lines in original versus translation, the handling of metrical patterns and metrical substitution,

[3] The bibliographic research was started in Brazil, under the aegis of the Centro de Estudos Shakespeareanos, headquartered at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, in Belo Horizonte, and completed, subsequently, at the Shakespeare Institute, in Stratford-upon-Avon. I would like to acknowledge The British Council, CNPq, and Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, whose support enabled me to implement the translation project.

the couplets, songs, alliteration and rhyme etc.; also, I wanted to see whether translators were giving the prose any discriminating attention; moreover, I was concerned with textual problems, such as lexical choices, linguistic updating, use of forms of address, and syntactic applications, such as verb mood, tense, etc. Finally, I looked at whatever annotation was present, be it in terms of prefaces, footnotes, or end notes.

In general, albeit with variable degree of success, the unrhymed iambic pentameter of the original blank verse has been rendered into heroic decasyllables (consensually the closest Portuguese metrical equivalent to the English ten-syllable pentameter), with main stresses, preferably, on the sixth and tenth syllables. In the verse translations I examined, with a few exceptions, whatever is in verse in the original is maintained in verse in translation, the same criterion applying to the prose. Several translators have attempted to preserve the couplets which in Shakespearean drama often conclude scenes (the 1965 *Júlio César* being one exception), and a few have tried to reproduce euphonies in assonance and alliteration.

In terms of lexis, I verified, as mentioned above, that most translations are invested with an archaic diction that can be impenetrable to many a member of a reading audience, let alone a theatre audience.[4] The Brazilian *Hamleto* done in the 1960s is exemplary. One stumbles on words such as "*compita*," "*partasana*," "*esposrio*," "*gusano*," "*prosápia*," "*bisbria*"; on phrases such as "*sábia tristura*," "*imo peito*," "*pessoas pichosas*," "*coração amolgável*"; on verbs such as "*concitar*," "*acoimar*," "*deblaterar*." In a prose translation of *Antony and Cleopatra* published in 1969, the Brazilian reader is deterred by nouns such as "*cloaca*," "*ademanes*," and verbs such as "*baloiçar*," "*vergastar*." And in a verse translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, a Brazilian reader or playgoer is balked by nouns such as "*nitrido*," "*catadupas*," "*patuscadas*," "*élitros*," "*menoscabo*"; adjectives such as "*cauta*," "*fanada*," "*exalçado*," "*endefluxado*"; and verbs such as "*aprestar*," "*sopesar*," "*forjicar*," "*azorragar*," "*tatalar*," "*obnubilar*." One can imagine the difficulty which this sort of abstruse lexicon poses, again, on page and stage.

On the other hand, at least one translation has produced a text that is almost totally accessible, not only on the lexical and rhetorical levels but going to the extent of eliminating or explicating allusions, mythological, literary, or otherwise. I am referring to a 1991 *Júlio César*, in Brazilian

[4] I am reminded of Eugene Nida's words in the opening address of a Translation Conference held at the University of Liverpool in September 1995, as he criticised the use of obsolete diction in Bible translation: "If it [the translated text] sounds old-fashioned, some people will think it is closer to the original." In the same address, Nida added that some readers feel intellectually reassured if they can understand a difficult text. Obviously, I have not translated *Antony and Cleopatra* for such readers.

Portuguese, by Margarida Rauen, whose main purpose was to render a text that could be comfortably delivered in performance and readily accessible to a general audience in an immense open-air space (Pedreira Paulo Leminski, Curitiba, Brazil). In that translation, the reference to Erebus in 2.1, for example, is simply replaced by the phrase "*trevas mais profundas*"; in 3.1, the allusion to "Ate" is removed, in favour of "*deusa da discrdia*"; and in 5.1, the allusion to "Epicurus" disappears, substituted for "*um materialista.*" Rauen's work is, perhaps, more akin to what Delabastita and D'Hulst have called "stage version," a later stage in the translation process (9).[5] Purists cringed, but the translation did communicate well on the stage and the production was well received.

As to critical commentary and annotation, virtually all translations I studied are prefaced by an essay providing dramatic context and discussing the translated play's main thematic issues. Some translations also include a biographic sketch on Shakespeare, a table with the closest possible consensual chronology of the plays, and an essay discussing the particular translator's guiding principles, with illustrations of problems and solutions. Footnotes are virtually non-existent (to many a publisher's delight, I dare say), and most annotation, no matter how extensive and detailed (and in the case of a 1965 Brazilian translation of *Romeo and Juliet*, and a 1995 new edition of *Otelo*, for example, taking up several pages), tends to appear in the form of end notes.

The final stage within what I am calling preliminary study had to do with the selection of a copy-text, as it were, for the translation itself, as well as the texts that would provide the main grounds for the annotation. I am aware of the debate regarding the use (for some, the misuse) of the so-called conflated modern editions of Shakespeare as bases for production, study, translation etc., especially in the case of multiple-text plays, whose textual authority is subject to controversy. *Antony and Cleopatra*, however, is not a multiple-text play; as is known, the play was first published in any form in the Folio of 1623, with a textual history that is arguably uneventful. At any rate, there was no need to privilege an early edition. After examining various modern texts, I selected *The Arden Shakespeare*, second edition, by M. R. Ridley (1954; rpt. several times), basically because the annotation and the critical commentary were consistently helpful, especially in terms of sharpening my awareness of localised subtleties of Shakespeare's verbal textures. I have adapted for translation studies James Thorpe's notion in *Principles of Textual Criticism* (1971) regarding the selection and rigorous following of a single copy-text in literary editing, and have stuck closely to Ridley's text, even when disagreeing with his

[5] See also Patrice Pavis's notion of "dramaturgical concretization" (1992: 139).

interventions. My main ancillary texts for study and critical annotation have been the *Yale Facsimile of the First Folio* (1954), prepared by Helge Kokeritz; *The Riverside Shakespeare* (1974), edited by G. Blakemore Evans; *The New Penguin Shakespeare* (1977), edited by Emrys Jones; and *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (1990), by David Bevington.[6]

After completing the preliminary study, I started working on a first draft of the translation itself. I maintained the original prose sections as prose and rendered the blank verse into decasyllables, with stresses, again, preferably – but not predictably, I hope – on the sixth and tenth syllables. The original couplets were recreated into approximations of "*dísticos*," as, for example, at the end of 4.11, when Antony consoles himself with Cleopatra, after having fled the battle in her pursuit:

> Some wine within there, and our viands! Fortune knows,
> We scorn her most, when most she offers blows.

Which I have rendered:

> *Vinho e víveres, vamos! Sabe a sorte*
> *Quanto mais nos golpeia, tão mais fortes.*

To produce a translation that is lexically up-to-date and understandable, I have attempted to work with a vocabulary that might establish a register that is accessible without being over-simple or pedestrian in moments of corresponding elevated rhetoric in the original. I have sought to trail a *via media* between unnecessary literary sophistication and archaism, on the one side, and undue trivialisation on the other. Thus, those words such as "*cloaca*" (sty), "*ademanes*" (posture), "*trânsfuga*" (fugitive), "*vergastar*" (to whip), which very likely halted Brazilian readers and playgoers in the 1969 afore mentioned translation of *Antony and Cleopatra*, in this *Antônio e Clepatra* for the 1990s have been made somewhat familiar, respectively, "*pocilga*," "*jeito*," "*fujão*," and "*açoitar*."[7]

[6] Michael Neill's World's Classics edition for Oxford University Press, published in 1994, was not available to me at the time I was working on the translation. And John Wilders's, the third Arden *Antony and Cleopatra* (the first being R. H. Case's in 1906), came out in March of 1995, when the translation was being examined by the three readers involved in the project. I have not had a chance to account for Wilders's work but none of the reviews I have read considers his text ground-breaking. Frank Kermode, for instance, writing for the *Independent* (18.3.95), qualifies Wilders's intervention as "conservative." In this essay, all quotations from *Antony and Cleopatra* refer to Jones's New Penguin edition.

[7] For a discussion in regard to the need of "every later generation of editors, translators, critics, etc." to "rewrite" or "reinvent their own Shakespeare" see Delabastita and D'Hulst (1993: 9–21). Susan Bassnett (1991: 111) argues that the average life span of a translated theatre text is 25 years.

Likewise, nouns such as "*nitrido*" (neigh), "*patuscadas*" (drinking), "*élitros*" (shards), "*menoscabo*" (contemning), "*catadupas*" (tears), offputting in the Brazilian *Antônio e Clepatra* I also mentioned earlier, have been made comprehensible, respectively, "*relincho*," "*bebidas*," "*asas*," "*menosprezo*," "*lágrimas*." Following the same principle, the abstruse "*fanada*" (withered) is translated as the recognisable "*murcha*," and unfamiliar verbs, such as "*aprestar*" (to give), "*sopesar*" (to weigh) "*tatalar* [*asas*]" (to clap on [wings]), and "*obnubilar*" (to darken), have been made comprehensible, respectively, as "*oferecer*," "*pesar*," "*bater* [*asas*]," and "*obscurecer*."

To advance the academic import of the project and to aid the explication of the play to interested theatre people, I have included critical commentary and annotation. There is a Preface, written by Marlene Santos, a Brazilian colleague, placing *Antony and Cleopatra* critically and thematically within Shakespeare's canon in general and within the Roman plays in particular, and a typical Translator's Introduction. There are about 360 end notes, addressing problems of text, context, interpretation, and translation.

At this point, I would like to discuss some specific textual examples. Surely, any translation strategy, be it conscious or unconscious, needs to be consistent with itself and with the overall purpose of the translation. The notion of translatability presupposes a strategy regarding just what to do with "untranslatable" language, language which if translated literally becomes meaningless. If one wants to produce a text that is comprehensible – and meaningful – to a given audience, at a given point in place and time, one has to beware of idiomatic expressions, for instance. These, as we know, cannot be translated literally. Accordingly, I have attempted to retextualise them in translation in the form of expressions which, in my own understanding, approximate the meaning of the original and make sense to the Brazilian audience.

At 1.2. for example, exchanging jests with Iras while a Soothsayer seriously forecasts her future, Charmian teases the man, duly in prose:

> Nay, if an oily palm be not a fruitful prognostication, I cannot scratch mine ear.

Charmian's playful discourse can be preserved in Brazilian Portuguese by means of a colloquial expression close in meaning:

> *Ora, se palma da mão úmida não for indício de fertilidade, eu não me chamo Charmian.*

Likewise, when in 2.2. Antony confesses to Octavia that he has earned the reputation of being dissolute, he says: "I have not kept my square." Again,

a literal translation would be meaningless. "*Nem sempre andei na linha*" is an option that at once seems to convey the sense of the original expression and to promote the translation's demotic tone here.

No doubt, wordplay and puns pose crucial problems to any translator of Shakespeare's works. The importance of wordplay and puns in Shakespeare (or in literature of the English Renaissance in general, for that matter) cannot be overstated – neither can the difficulty in translating these rhetorical devices. Admittedly, I have often enough come across "untranslatable" wordplay in which one sense had to be privileged over others in translation. Consider, for instance, the exchange between the Soothsayer and Charmian, again, in 1.2. Replying seriously to Charmian's banter, the Soothsayer foreshadows: "You shall be yet fairer than you are." Here, besides the obvious senses of "beautiful" or "buxom," Onions (96) and Ridley (10) attest "fair," "noble," "virtuous." In the light of Charmian's bravery in Act 5, the Soothsayer's prediction is tragically fulfilled. Unable to find a single word in Brazilian Portuguese that might at once convey the senses of beauty and nobleness, I chose the most immediate, literal sense – *carnuda*. The wordplay, I am afraid, vanishes from the text, being relegated to an end note that might suggest the line's subtext to an actor in performance.

Similarly, how could one possibly preserve in translation Enobarbus's play with the sexual connotations which the verb "to die" had in Elizabethan English? Again in 1.2., in a prose speech addressed to Antony, Enobarbus makes five indirect references to the sexual act, once more disclosing his own views regarding Cleopatra's sensuality. I have resorted to "*esvair-se*" and "*acabar-se*," in the attempt to preserve the innuendo, but the Portuguese or Brazilian translator is left with single-layered notions, *morrer* or *morte* (to die, death). However, given the Elizabethan senses of to "die," in this instance, the sexual overtones can only be fully conveyed in a note – even to an English speaking audience. Again, the expectation is that the contents of the note might empower a given situation of enunciation (Pavis 1992: 136–137).

Yet, sometimes a translator is pleasantly surprised. Language that is considered virtually untranslatable, in practice, can become surprisingly translatable. At rare times, it becomes possible to reproduce puns. In 4.7., for example, Antony comes up with Scarus, who in spite of his severe wounds is predicting victory.

> Thou bleed'st apace,

says Antony. To which Scarus replies,

> I had a wound here that was like a T,
> But now 'tis made an H.

with an obvious play on H and *ache*, at the time probably pronounced alike. In translation, I have substituted A for H, thus rendering the lines:

Este corte aqui parecia um T,
Agora forma um A.

The play involving the sound of a given letter and the association of that sound with an interjection expressing pain is thus reproduced. Again, in 4.14., after comparing himself to numerous indistinct and shadowy bodies, a despondent Antony complains about Cleopatra:

. . . she, Eros, has
Pack'd cards with Caesar, and false-play'd my glory
Unto an enemy's triumph.

Several commentators recognise in "triumph", besides the obvious sense, wordplay involving the trump card, or triumph, as it was originally called. I have thus rendered the lines:

Ela, Eros, em conluio com o César,
Manipulou as cartas e entregou
Minha glria ao triunfo do inimigo.

If we consider that the closeness in the sound and meaning of *triumph* and *trump* carry over to *triunfo* and *trunfo*, we have here a rare case in which wordplay can be reproduced as is.

Earlier on, at 1.5., trying to while away the tedium of Antony's absence, Cleopatra teases Mardian, the eunuch. Answering her call, Mardian asks:

What's your highness pleasure?

Cleopatra replies,

. . .I take no pleasure
In aught an eunuch has. . . .

and goes on to ask point blank:

Hast thou affections?[8]

The eunuch timorously says,

Yes, gracious madam.

And Cleopatra asks,

Indeed?

[8] In Elizabethan English, *affections* is nearer to 'passions' or 'desires' than today's sense (Onions 1986: 5).

Mardian's answer discloses his awareness of the *double entendre*:

> Not in deed, madam; for I can do nothing
> But what indeed is honest to be done.

Playing with the innuendo suggested in the expression *de fato* (in fact) and the word *ato* (act), I have attempted to preserve Cleopatra's punning:

> CLEO. . . . *conheces o desejo?*
> MARD. *Sim, gentil senhora.*
> CLEO. *De fato?*
> MARD. *De fato, não senhora, nenhum ato*
> *Posso cometer que não seja casto.*

What is important to stress is that wordplay needs to be preserved, be it by direct translation (however rarely possible), or by what some translation theorists call "compensation" (Hervey and Higgins 1992: 248).

Figures of speech also need to be carried over in translation. To this extent, I wish to point out yet one solution which I think has turned out to be unexpectedly felicitous. This has to do with an ingenious and memorable anthimeria Shakespeare creates for Cleopatra at an important moment in 5.2. (the play's last and longest scene). After hearing from Dolabella that Octavius indeed plans to deport her and her children to Rome within three days, Cleopatra, turning to Iras, describes the indignities to which she and her companions will be subjected in Rome. Comedians will make sport of her and Antony, ridiculing their relationship; as she sees it, Antony will be presented as drunk, and she will see

> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy [her] greatness
> I' the posture of a whore.[9]

The elastic turning of noun into verb is rhetorically vehement in expressing Cleopatra's despair for words to describe the abhorred possibility of her leading Octavius's triumphant march into Rome, a possibility which her reiterated "resolution" will indeed preclude. Both aesthetically and thematically, the anthimeria is crucial and has to carry over in translation:

> *...eu verei algum guri-*
> *Clepatra, aos guinchos, meninando*
> *A minha grandeza com ar de puta.*

Here a brief note acknowledges Shakespeare's liberal use of language and explains the practice of boys playing female roles on the Elizabethan stage.

[9] For an in-depth study of the passage see Phyllis Rackin's article listed under bibliography below.

The last step in my translation process was, perhaps, the longest and would require an essay of its own: revising and writing the final draft. And at this stage, more than at any other, I depended on collaboration. My three readers – Aimara Resende (State University of Minas Gerais), John Milton (University of São Paulo), and Leonor Scliar-Cabral (Federal University of Santa Catarina) – have made a number of inspired suggestions and clever corrections, both in form and content, for which I am grateful and forever indebted. Altogether, the translation was three years in the making. And after I had forwarded the final draft to the publisher, looking back, I, once again, was able to attest that a painstaking, conscientious, step-by-step process in translation is indispensable. Far be it from my intention to mythicize translation as a blood-sweat-and-tears activity; yet, considering my previous experience in other literary translations, and in producing now an annotated *Antônio e Clepatra* that aims at literariness without being snobbish, at textual rejuvenation and speakability, there can be no short cuts: every step of the way counts. And I now firmly believe that lexical updating does not necessarily entail loss; in fact, by removing some of the linguistic obstacles to comprehenion, I think that I have rendered Shakespeare's "Brazilian Portuguese" accessible and contemporary.

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