Critical Language Study and Translation: the Case of Academic Discourse[1]

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Translators working with academic texts have perhaps more need than most of a critical distance with regards to the discourse they use. For in English, academic articles and dissertations, unlike self-consciously 'literary' works, generally purport to refer to some aspect of the outside world, and this implicit bid for 'factual' status has important implications for the whole process of textual (re-)construction. Failure to comply with the norms of the established discourse may effectively compromise the perceived truth value of the assertions made, ultimately undermining the academic standing of the author, and bringing consequences on the level of promotions, financing etc. Thus, many of the linguistic decisions made during the process of translation must surely be governed by the translators' sense of responsibility towards their clients, whose motives for requesting the service clearly pertain to a desire for academic recognition on the international stage.

English academic discourse has over the years gained such prestige that fluency in it is essentially a prerequisite such acceptance. The market is inundated with manuals and courses claiming to teach academic writing skills to undergraduates and foreign scholars, while papers presented in a style that strays too far from the accepted norms are rarely accepted for publication. Both situations reinforce the common Anglophone perception that there is only one acceptable way in which knowledge may be construed,

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a myth further perpetuated by the notorious monolingualism of English and American academics, many of whom only gain access to work by foreign scholars through translation.[i] Indeed, it may be only the translators working on the margins of the Anglo-American hegemony that are aware that there are in fact alternative ways of construing knowledge, a situation which endows them with a great deal of political and ethical responsibility.

Portugal is one example of a culture in which the norms governing the presentation of academic knowledge seem to differ markedly from those employed in the English-speaking world. A glance at Portuguese-language journals in the humanities, or at some of the academic texts produced in English by Portuguese scholars and students, reveals a style that has more affinities with literary writing than with what English speakers would usually expect from "academic" discourse: it is to a large extent non-analytical, uses language in a non-referential way, and frequently contains an abundance of figurative and ornamental features that would be frowned upon in English texts of the same kind. However, the very extent of the phenomenon and the value that is given to it in Lusophone culture belies any simplistic explanation that the Portuguese are just not taught systematically how to write. Instead it would appear that we are indeed in the presence of another discourse tradition operating under a wholly different set of norms, and this naturally has important implications for translators attempting to render such texts into English.

It is for this reason that I have made it my objective here to try to demonstrate that there are indeed quite different assumptions underlying the Portuguese and English discourses of the humanities, and then to discuss some of the options available to a translator trying to express the one in terms of the other. The approach used will be that known as Critical Language Study (CLS) or Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA),

developed in English by Fairclough, Kress, Hodge etc, in the wake of work done by French Post-Structuralists. This conceives discourse as a form of social practice and aims to "show up connections which may be hidden from people – such as [the] connections between language, power and ideology…" (Fairclough, 1989: 5); thus it is ideally suited for an enterprise of this kind.

In this paper, I will apply some of the tools developed in CLS to passages of English and Portuguese academic text in order to try to uncover the underlying ideologies and value systems of each. The two texts selected are felt to be representative of their respective cultures, in the sense that they generally comply with mainstream norms, and are parallel in that they are both about literature. In fact, both deal with Portuguese authors: Extract A is from an article published in the American journal *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* about Miguel Torga's short story collection, *Novos Contos da Montanha*; while Extract B, taken from the *Revista Portuguesa de Humanidades,* considers the essays of Eduardo Lourenço. Full references are given in the bibliography, with the extracts presented side by side in the Appendix.

Each will be considered in turn, following which a brief comparison will be made of the styles used. Finally, I will discuss how this impinges upon the practice and theory of translation.

1. *The English Text*

(Extract A. From "Living on the Edge: Borders and Taboos in Torga's *Novos Contos da Montanha*" by David Frier)

To anyone involved in the analysis or teaching of academic discourse, it is immediately obvious that this paragraph is constructed "by the book". That is to say, it closely

respects the norms promoted by the various manuals on the issue, not only on the level of structure and cohesion, but also as regards choice of grammatical forms and lexis.

The structure of the paragraph is illustrated visually in Fig.1. As can be seen, the paragraph opens with a Topic Sentence introducing the Theme (medium shading), which is then developed in the body of the paragraph, and concluded at the end with the lightly shaded section signalled by the linker "therefore". The same structure (frontal statement of Theme followed by Development) is also evident on the level of the intra-paragraph section; here, the topic sentences are highlighted through dark shading.

Fig.1. Extract A: Paragraph Structure

There is, of course, a significant role-reversal in this story, in the sense that Robalo, the guardian of the law, is portrayed as the outlaw, the character who is out of step with the rest of the community and who is unable to live within the law of the land (as opposed to the law of the State).

This point is reinforced by the references in the text to God. Firstly, as part of the narrator's preparation of the reader for the change in Robalo's outlook, he writes "o Diabo põe e Deus dispõe" (30), thus relativising the traditional roles of God and the Devil; and then, when Isabel, the criminal in the eyes of the patriarchal state, appeals to Robalo for mercy when he catches her crossing the border, she appeals to him as an "homem de Deus" (35).

These references deepen the significance of her plea to him: effectively by using these words, Isabel asks Robalo to abandon his previous self-appointed role of quasi-divine authority in favour of a recognition of their shared status as imperfect human beings, conscious of their own fallibility.

To be able to continue living in Fronteira, therefore, Robalo must reject the role which he originally accepted (symbolically that of the father) and submit himself instead to the will of the mother, that is, the land, as Lopes states: "…"

It is of course characteristic of modern English that thematic material comes in first position on all levels of the system. Linguists within the Systemic Functional School have given a great deal of time analysing this on the level of the clause (c.f.

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Halliday, 1994:37-64); but it is also evident on the level of the paragraph, section, and even the whole text, where the Introduction takes over the thematic role (see Fig.2). Thus, the structure is clearly hierarchical, with the paragraph, section and sentence effectively operating as microcosms of the text as a whole.

Fig. 2. Extract A: Text Structure

Introduction: *Theme of Borders and Boundaries*
Par. 1 – Title of Torga's work emphasises peripherality of communities depicted
Par. 2 - Importance of borders in region of Trás-os-Montes
Par.3 - Importance of borders and boundaries in these stories
Development:
A. Boundary between life and death
 "O Alma Grande" *(1 paragraph)*
B. Boundary between locals and outsiders
   i. "Fronteira" *(6 paragraphs)*
   ii. "A Confissão" *(1 paragraph)*
C.Transgression of community boundaries
   i. "O Regresso" *(3 paragraph)*
   ii. "O Leproso" *(4 paragraphs)*
   iii. "O Sésamo" *(6 paragraphs)*
Conclusion:
    Concept of borders and boundaries in this cycle may be
                    factual or psychological

If we look more closely at the extract under consideration here, we will see that Torga's story is being observed and analysed much as if it were a specimen of the exterior world under a microscope. In his topic sentence, the author claims to have found an example of a particular phenomenon in the narrative, which he then proceeds to justify through illustration. The language of his assertion also echoes scientific discourse: "There is of course a significant role-reversal". Here the existential process ("there is") functions as a bald assertion of fact, with no hedging or concessions to the observer's subjectivity, while the nominalization ("a significant role-reversal") activates a pre-existing category from the discourse of Literary Criticism, into which the present "specimen" will be slotted. (Incidentally, while a "role reversal" seems to be a self-evident category for those schooled in literary criticism in the English tradition, it may

not exist as a ready-made notion in other cultures, as becomes obvious as soon as we try to translate it).

Nominalizations of course play an important role in the construction of scientific discourse, and have been amply studied by Halliday and his associates in two volumes from the 1990s, *Writing Science* (Halliday & Martin, 1993) and *Reading Science* (Martin & Veel, 1998). Halliday (1993a; 1998) describes in considerable detail how these grammatical metaphors reconstrue primary experience by crystallizing processes into things, a transformation which not only enables dynamic events to be held still for observation and analysis, but which also has the secondary effect of transforming subjective experience into objective fact by effectively removing the observer from the scene.

This process of "fact-creation" is continued by another kind of grammatical metaphor that has also been fundamental for the construction of the scientific worldview, namely the Passive (see Ding, 1998). Here the object under observation is shifted into subject position in the clause, which not only thrusts it into thematic focus but also further erases the observer, thereby removing any doubts that might remain about the truth value of the claim, and doing away with the need for any ethical responsibility. These two devices together, nominalisations and passives, thus present a picture of an objectively existing universe that is largely static and utterly unaffected by the subjectivity of the observer; this of course is the vision that has formed the basis of the scientific approach to knowledge.

In the extract we are observing here, the first two topic sentences contain passives ("is portrayed" and "is reinforced"), while the third, though strictly speaking not a passive, has a non-human actor, which gives it a similarly impersonal feel. The only reference to any authorial figure of the narrator is also significantly couched as a

nominalization. Therefore, the parts of this extract that represent critical discourse about Torga's work (essentially the topic sentences highlighted in Fig.1 with dark shading) are couched in a language very similar to that of the hard sciences. The rest of the text represents illustrations from the narrative under analysis, which also confirms the empirical nature of this research.

Finally, I would like to take a look at the Processes that are used in this text. These are presented in Fig. 3.

Fig. 3. Extract A: Processes

1) there *is* a significant role reversal	Existential
2) Robalo *is portrayed* as the outlaw = the narrator *portrays* R.	Material
3) who *is* out of step	Relational: Intensive
4) who *is* unable to live	Relational: Intensive
5) this point *is reinforced* = the narrator *reinforces* this point	Material
6) he (the narrator) *writes*	Material
7) *relativizing* the traditional roles = he (the narrator) *relativizes*	Material
8) Isabel *appeals* to Robalo for mercy	Verbal
9) he *catches* her crossing the street	Material
10) she *appeals* to him	Verbal
11) these references *deepen* the significance	Material
12) Isabel *asks* Robalo to abandon	Verbal
13) to be able to *continue living* in Fronteira = in order that he might *continue to live*	Material
14) Robalo must *reject* the role	Material
15) which he originally *accepted*	Material
16) he must *submit* himself	Material
TOTAL: 16 clauses	**10 Material; 3 Verbal; 2 Relational; 1 Existential**

[Key: <u>Shaded</u>: Processes from the Meta-narrative domain, i.e. those used for analysis of the narrative as object; <u>Unshaded</u>: Processes from the Narrative domain, i.e. examples quoted or paraphrased from the text under scrutiny]

As we might expect, the processes are mostly Material (that is to say, processes of "Doing" oriented to the external world) and those which are not are paraphrases of Torga's narrative, thus illustration rather than analysis. This confirms the "scientific" basis to this discourse, already provided by other textual and syntactic features.

Consequently, what we have here is an example of scientific discourse transposed to the domain of literary criticism. There is a clear division between observer and observed, with the focus firmly on the latter; and empirical methods are used to demonstrate the existence of the particular phenomenon in the "object" under scrutiny. The text thus provides a concrete illustration of the colonization of the humanities by the discourse of science in the English-speaking world, a process which has been described in considerable detail by Martin (1993a; 1993b) and Wignell (1998; forthcoming). This of course reflects the prestige attached to science in our culture, largely due to its associations with technology, industry and capitalism, the structures of power in the modern world.

2. *The Portuguese Text*

(Extract B: from "Rasura e Reinvenção do Trágico no Pensamento Português e Brasileiro. Do ensaísmo lúdico ao ensaísmo trágico" by Maria Helena Varela)

For those who read Portuguese, it is immediately obvious that, structurally, syntactically and lexically, this is a very different kind of discourse to that of Extract A and one which does not lend itself easily to translation into English. One of the clearest points of difference is the degree of abstraction manifest in this text on several different levels. Lexically, there are a large number of abstract nouns that are not easily digested by English (see Fig.4): some, such as *tragicidade* and *historicidade* are just about acceptable (as "tragicity" and "historicity" respectively), while others defy easy translation. These include: *ensaísmo* (from *ensaio*, meaning "essay", giving "essayism" or "the state or condition of writing essays"); *portugalidade* (literally "Portugality" or "Portugalness"); *messianidade* (from the word for "messiah", therefore "messianity"); and *saudosismo* (based on the supposedly untranslatable word *saudade* referring to a

state of soul akin to "yearning" or "nostalgia", *saudosismo* can thus be understood as "the cult of *saudade*").

Fig. 4. Extract B: Lexical abstractions

O ensaísmo trágico de Lourenço, [sic] parece em parte decorrer da sua própria tragicidade de ensaísta, *malgré lui*, como se esta posição de *metaxu* do pensamento português, entre o *mythos* e *logos*, projectada no papel do crítico que tragicamente parece assumir, entre o sistema impossível e a *poiesis* estéril, o guindasse para um lugar / não lugar de indecibilidade trágica, ao mesmo tempo que, inserido no fechamento de um pensar saudoso, na clausura de uma historicidade filomitista, mais do que logocêntrica, se debate na paradoxia de uma portugalidade sem mito, atada à pós-história de si mesmo, simultaneamente dentro e fora dela.

   Saudosismo sem saudade, entendida esta como um *universal inconcreto*, expressão usado pelo próprio autor relativamente à ontologia de Pascoaes, o pensamento de Lourenço respira uma messianidade sem Messias que, por um lado, é espera sem horizonte de espera, e, por outro, é a memória saudosa de uma esperança sentida e pressentida na obliquidade dos «místicos sem fé», como ele próprio se define, «adoradores de Deus em sua ausência». Num Portugal que só parece existir como fidelidade hipermnésica a um passado mítico, o que se repete não é mera recordação do nada, mas o próprio acto de repetir o que já não existe senão no acto da repetição. Daí seu ensaísmo trágico do não trágico de «um povo insolentemente feliz».

Another feature of this extract that is alien to the genre in English is the use of paradox (see Fig.5). Some of the paradoxes are presented in a structure that is repeated several times creating an effect of parallelism (shaded darkly; eg. *saudosismo sem saudade*; *messianidade sem Messias*; *espera sem horizonte de espera*). In these cases, the paradox is achieved through the negation of the second element - an essential component of the first - by the use of the preposition *sem* ("without"); this gives, respectively, "the cult of *saudade* without *saudade*"; "messianity without a Messiah, and "a waiting without a horizon of waiting". Elsewhere, there are paradoxes that are semi-parallels in that they reproduce the repeated structure only in part (eg.

portugalidade sem míto, literally "Portugality without myth", and *místicos sem fé*, "mystics without faith"), and others that are not parallels at all, as in *um lugar / não lugar* ("a place / non-place"), *simultaneamente dentro e fora dela* ("simultaneously inside and outside it") and *seu ensaísmo trágico do não trágico* ("his tragic essayism of the non-tragic"). None of these are comfortable in English academic discourse, for obvious reasons.

Fig. 5. Extract B: Parallels and Paradoxes

O ensaísmo trágico de Lourenço, [sic] parece em parte decorrer da sua própria tragicidade de ensaísta, *malgré lui*, como se esta posição de *metaxu* do pensamento português, entre o *mythos* e *logos*, projectada no papel do crítico que tragicamente parece assumir, entre o sistema impossível e a *poiesis* estéril, o guindasse para um lugar / não lugar de indecibilidade trágica, ao mesmo tempo que, inserido no fechamento de um pensar saudoso, na clausura de uma historicidade filomitista, mais do que logocêntrica, se debate na paradoxia de uma portugalidade sem mito, atada à pós-história de si mesmo, simultaneamente dentro e fora dela.

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[Key: dark shading – parallel paradoxes; medium shading – paradoxes that are partly parallels; light shading – paradoxes that are not parallels]

The syntax (see Fig. 6) is also very different from that conventionally used in English academic discourse. The first paragraph of this extract is all one sentence, containing 98 words in total; and the main clause meanders along without any explicit statement of theme, constantly being interrupted by circumstantial information (mostly of location, although it is location in an abstract, rather than material realm). It could

perhaps be literally translated as something like this: "Lourenço's tragic essayism of the non-tragic seems partly to arise out of his own tragicity as an essayist /…../ as if this position of *metaxu* of Portuguese thought /…./ had hoisted him to a place/non-place of tragic undecidibility, at the same time as /…./ it struggles in the paradoxicality of a Portugality without myth…."

The second paragraph speeds up a little, culminating in a sentence that may perhaps be considered as the Topic Sentence in that it seems to encapsulate the main idea of the section (illustrated visually in Figure 6). Thus we can see that, while the English text proceeds deductively, with a frontal statement of theme followed by a development of that idea, this one seems to be more inductive in its approach, involving a gradual build-up to the main thematic statement.

Fig. 6. Extract B: Syntax

O ensaísmo trágico de Lourenço, [sic] parece em parte decorrer da sua própria tragicidade de ensaísta, *malgré lui*, como se esta posição de *metaxu* do pensamento português, entre o *mythos* e *logos*, projectada no papel do crítico que tragicamente parece assumir, entre o sistema impossível e a *poiesis* estéril, o guindasse para um lugar / não lugar de indecibilidade trágica, ao mesmo tempo que, inserido no fechamento de um pensar saudoso, na clausura de uma historicidade filomitista, mais do que logocêntrica, se debate na paradoxia de uma portugalidade sem mito, atada à pós-história de si mesmo, simultaneamente dentro e fora dela.

Saudosismo sem saudade, entendida esta como um *universal inconcreto*, expressão usado pelo próprio autor relativamente à ontologia de Pascoaes, o pensamento de Lourenço respira uma messianidade sem Messias que, por um lado, é espera sem horizonte de espera, e, por outro, é a memória saudosa de uma esperança sentida e pressentida na obliquidade dos «místicos sem fé», como ele próprio se define, «adoradores de Deus em sua ausência». Num Portugal que só parece existir como fidelidade hipermnésica a um passado mítico, o que se repete não é mera recordação do nada, mas o próprio acto de repetir o que já não existe senão no acto da repetição. Daí seu ensaísmo trágico do não trágico de «um povo insolentemente feliz».

[*Key:* main clausal information is identified by shading, with the Topic Sentence identified with darker shading]

The topic sentence could perhaps be paraphrased roughly as follows: "Portugal seems only to exist in virtue of its attachment to a mythical past, constantly repeating something which is not a memory, but which exists only in the act of repetition". At this point, the paradoxes of *saudosismo sem saudade* and *messianidade sem messias* etc, become intelligible as alternative formulations of the same idea, and thus should perhaps be seen as prefiguring the main statement of theme. The central idea here is clearly of a cult which has lost its object, or a symbolic ritual with nothing behind it, and it is this which is seen to have given rise to the paradox of a phenomenon that is simultaneously tragic and non-tragic: the situation is tragic because there is nothing left to revere, but non-tragic because nobody realises it, and so persist happily in their illusion.

Analysis of the processes used in this extract also supports our intuitions that the text is engaged in a markedly different kind of enterprise from the English one.

Fig. 7. Extract B: Processes

1) o ensaísmo de L. parece *decorrer* ["arise"]	Existential
2) esta posição o *guinda* ["hoists"]	Material
3) esta posição *se debate* ["struggles/is debated"]	Material? (Verbal?)
4) o pensamento de L. *respira* uma messianidade ["breathes"]	Behavioural
5) *é* espera sem horizonte de espera ["is"]	Relational
6) *é* a memória saudosa ["is"]	Relational
7) Portugal só parece *existir* ["exist"]	Existential
8) não *é* mera recordação ["is"]	Relational
9) *é* o acto de repetir ["is"]	Relational
10) daí (*vem/surge*) ["comes/arises"]	Existential
10 Processes	**4 Relational; 3 Existential; 1(2) Material; 1(0) Verbal; 1 Behavioural**

Fig. 7 shows that almost all the processes are Relational and Existential, and indeed, the few that are Material are used metaphorically. This suggests that meaning is being

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created in a very different way in the two texts, an intuition that is confirmed if we situate the processes from both texts on Halliday's famous diagram (see Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. The grammar of experience: types of process in English (Halliday, 1994:108)
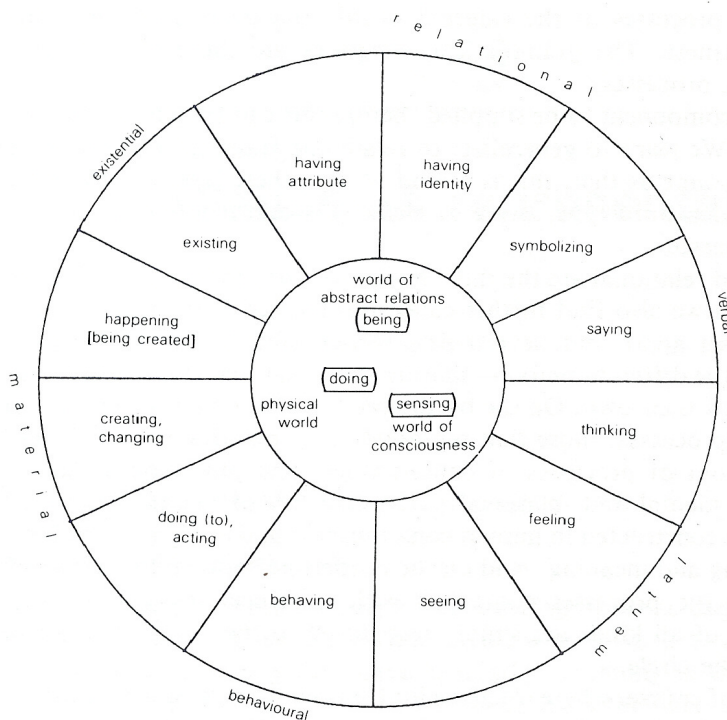
Thus, it becomes clear that, while the English is concerned with the physical world and activities of 'doing', the Portuguese text is giving its attention to something entirely different, namely the world of abstract relations.

It should also be noted that the relational processes used in the Portuguese text do not operate in quite the same way as they usually do in English. Instead of connecting the concrete or material with the abstract or symbolic, they mostly link ideas that already abstract with others that are even more so. The effect of this is that the text spirals off into a conceptual realm totally unanchored in the physical world.

Consequently, the notion under discussion here (of a cult or ritual that has lost its object) is effectively being enacted by the discourse. For this text is an edifice of linguistic signs with few or no referents in the outside world, and as such construes knowledge in a way that is entirely alien to the positivist, empiricist outlook of English academic discourse.

3. Conclusions

To sum up then, despite the superficial similarities of genre between these two extracts, analysis reveals that underlying them are very different worldviews. While the English text posits the existence of an objective reality that can be observed, analysed and described, the Portuguese one is supremely uninterested in the physical world. Indeed, it makes no distinction between observer and observed, for Lourenço's work is not analysed empirically as Torga's is; instead, his essays serve merely as a springboard for the author's own reflections, and she appropriates and incorporates his words into a whole new creation.

The Portuguese text also collapses the traditional distinction between form and content in a way that is alien to English academic discourse. While English texts are constructed to be transparent "containers" of information - information that can then be easily extracted, summarized and transferred – this Portuguese text has not been conceived in the same way. Instead, the sense is diffused throughout the discourse and enacted by it, and thus cannot easily be separated from the words that are used to convey it.

Finally, there is also a different attitude towards the propagation of meaning. The English author controls the sense very tightly, using terms in a strictly denotative way, keeping syntax as simple as possible, and not permitting any ambiguity to cloud

the clarity of the message. The Portuguese author, on the other hand, revels in ambiguity, deliberately setting up paradoxes and analogical relations, and allowing the syntax to sprout unrestrainedly until the main trunk is all but hidden by linguistic foliage. The result is a jungle of signification that is chaotic and easy to get lost in, but which is also rich and fecund in comparison to the sparse unidirectional lines of the English style.

4. Discussion

This divergence in approach between the two discourses raises many interesting questions for the theory and practice of translation. First and foremost, how can we possibly translate a text of Type B into one like Type A when the whole worldview is so different? Any attempt to render the one in terms of the other would surely result in a travesty of such proportions that the whole purpose of the original text would be all but destroyed. And yet this is what is frequently expected. Professional translators, operating within the Portuguese market, are often asked to put texts of Type B into a form that would render them publishable in English-speaking journals, and if publication is refused (as it inevitably is), then it is their work that is called into question.

For this reason, a translator in such a situation is, to my mind, faced with two unappealing alternatives: she may either refuse to undertake the translation at all on the grounds that it is unacceptable in the English-speaking world, or may seek the client's permission to reformulate the paper entirely, producing a completely new text. Ultimately these are the only ways available of protecting her professional reputation and of avoiding situations that might be embarrassing and costly for her client.

However, this ethical concern on the practical level conflicts with a much greater one in the theoretical sphere. For in the end, each of these alternatives yields the same broad result. Both involve the *silencing* of this particular Portuguese way of configuring knowledge and thus implicitly confirm the right of the hegemonic discourse to prevail over all others. What we have here, then, is a concrete example of what the Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos calls 'epistemicide' - the systematic elimination of alternative knowledges that is one of the more sinister symptoms of globalisation. In his General Introduction to the multi-volume study *Reinventing Social Emancipation: Towards New Manifestos* (forthcoming), Santos explains how the scientific paradigm, which rose to epistemological prominence on the promise of peace, freedom, equality, progress, etc, is now used to justify the subordination of peripheral and semi-peripheral countries to Western imperialism.

> In the name of modern science, many alternative knowledges and sciences have been destroyed, and the social groups that used these systems to support their own autonomous paths of development have been humiliated. In the name of science, epistemicide has been committed, and with this, the imperial power has gained strength to disarm the resistance of the conquered peoples and social groups.

There is no such thing as pure or complete knowledge, he argues, only constellations of different knowledges; moreover, the "universality" of modern science is in fact a Western particularity. Yet "with its strict narrow divisions between disciplines, positivist methodologies that do not distinguish objectivity from neutrality, bureaucratic and discriminatory organization of knowledge into departments, laboratories and faculties that reduce the adventure of discovery to a matter of corporate privilege", it nevertheless has the power to define all rival forms of knowledge as local, contextual and situational. Consequently, "new ideas, especially those that try to bind science to its original promises, rarely get past the gatekeepers and the demands of the free market".

Santos does not specify the nature of the gatekeepers that control the flux of new ideas into the system. However, amongst them we can clearly count translators; who, in making the kinds of decisions described above, ultimately determine which foreign texts gain access to the dominant culture and in what form. These are not free decisions, of course; the translator is constrained, as we have seen, by market forces and obliged to operate first and foremost in the interests of her clients. Yet the inevitable and ironic result is an endorsement of a hegemony that does not allow that client an authentic voice of his own.

This situation begs some interesting questions. Firstly, is the translator merely a passive agent in all this? Or could translation be mobilised as an instrument for social change, thus helping to overturn the preconceptions that have allowed the hegemony to flourish in the first place? Some theoreticians, notably Lawrence Venuti (1995), seem to think it could. Yet the foreignizing style of translation that he advocates as a means to this end is undeniably difficult to sustain in practice, since all the relevant actors in the publication process (from publishers, editors and critics to readers) are oriented towards a translation strategy that foregrounds domestic values. It would take years of concerted effort by all of these forces together before preconceptions could seriously start to change.

Secondly, we need to ask why it is that texts like this Portuguese one continue to be silenced or domesticated when the ideology underlying them is more in tune with postmodern concerns than the dominant one? As we have seen, English academic discourse ultimately displays a positivist stance upon the world that is difficult to sustain in theoretical terms nowadays: why then does it persist in this encoded form? As a tool for the processing of ideas, it is surely as obsolete as the mechanical typewriter in this age of virtual realities.

One response may be that this discourse, oriented as it is towards the world of action and things, "can build aeroplanes",[ii] an application which of course gives it credibility in the wider world beyond the university department and academic journal. Could it be that it is now so entrenched in the power structures of the modern world that nothing short of a major revolution will unseat it?

To my mind, it is exactly because it is so entrenched that we, translators and academics, should be thinking very seriously about whether to perpetuate it any further.

For as we have seen, this discourse which, in the seventeenth century, was an instrument of liberation from the stifling feudal mindset, has now become imperialistic in its turn, excluding all other views with a zeal worthy of some of the more fundamentalist religions. The sensible thing at this point in history might well be to encourage the process of linguistic perestroika by opening it up to other voices (through translation or otherwise), thus allowing those cultures access to the power structures we control. If we do not, then we run a serious risk of losing the whole thing. For one day, the silenced majority from the non-English parts of the globe might suddenly feel that they have had enough of exclusion and, in a desperate demand that their alternative worldviews be recognised, decide to turn our achievements against us. A few of those metaphorical aeroplanes strategically aimed might be enough to bring the whole linguistic edifice of western knowledge tumbling down.

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[i] While it is fashionable today to focus on the inter- and intra-disciplinary differences that exist between academic 'discourses' in English (c.f. Hyland, 2000; Swales, 1990), I would argue that these are largely questions of detail, with the macro-structures remaining essentially the same. This becomes clear only when we compare them with texts produced in other cultures (c.f. Kaplan, 1980; Connor, 1996)

[ii] This observation was made by Andrew Chesterman in private conversation.

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