

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS



Lobo Antunes in translation: the translations of *Os Cus de Judas*,
As Naus and *O Esplendor de Portugal* into English and Italian

Marisa da Silva Mourinha

Orientador(es): Prof^ª. Doutora Cristina Filomena de Almeida Ribeiro
Prof. Doutor Roberto Mulinacci

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de
Doutor em Estudos Comparatistas,
no ramo de Tradução, na especialidade de Tradução Literária.

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“Às vezes sinto dúvidas em relação a determinadas frases quando as vejo traduzidas para a minha própria língua. Soam-me mutiladas, julgo que faltam palavras. 'Mas não se diz assim?', penso eu e tenho vontade de esclarecer. Mas depois ocorre-me que, com certeza, também não se diz assim em português. *Pensamos assim.*”

Marianne Eyre

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Abstract

This dissertation seeks to explore the translation of works by António Lobo Antunes from a comparative perspective. By studying a limited set of translations into two languages, this work offers an analysis of textual, paratextual, and contextual elements, with the intent to contribute to the characterisation of the international presence of this Portuguese author, by means of the examples under scrutiny.

With a theoretical framework which is strongly indebted to Descriptive Translation Studies, we look into the author's trajectory in English and in Italian language, and we focus specifically on three source texts (namely: *Os Cus de Judas*, from 1979; *As Naus*, from 1988; and *O Esplendor de Portugal*, from 1997) and seven translations (in chronological order: *South of Nowhere*, 1983; *In culo al mondo*, 1996; *Le Navi*, 1997; *The Return of the Caravels*, 2002; *Lo splendore del Portogallo*, 2002; *The Splendor of Portugal*, 2011; *The Land at the End of the World*, 2011).

The structure of this dissertation is divided into five parts, in which the first is but a very succinct overview. Following that opening set of considerations, we summarise, in part II, the theoretical standpoints which guide this enquiry. Part III consists of a description of the contexts in which the translations have come into being. Part IV may be considered the central piece of this work, and is a textual analysis of the translations that constitute our corpus; in it, we read selected passages of the source texts side by side with their target counterparts. Finally, part V tries to draw conclusions from the elements that were collected and presented in the previous pages.

Keywords: António Lobo Antunes; Translation; Portuguese Literature; Literary Translation; Circulation of Literature.

Resumo

Esta dissertação procura examinar a tradução de obras do escritor português António Lobo Antunes a partir de uma perspectiva comparatista. Este trabalho, que estuda um conjunto limitado de traduções para duas línguas, proporciona uma análise de elementos textuais, paratextuais e contextuais, com o objectivo de contribuir para a caracterização da presença internacional deste autor, através dos exemplos que são analisados.

Com um quadro teórico que muito deve à escola dos chamados *Descriptive Translation Studies*, seguimos a trajectória deste autor em inglês e em italiano, focando-nos especificamente em três textos de partida (que são *Os Cus de Judas*, de 1979; *As Naus*, de 1988; e *O Esplendor de Portugal*, de 1997) e sete traduções (por ordem cronológica: *South of Nowhere*, de 1983; *In culo al mondo*, de 1996; *Le Navi*, de 1997; *The Return of the Caravels*, de 2002; *Lo splendore del Portogallo*, também de 2002; *The Splendor of Portugal*, e *The Land at the End of the World*, ambos publicados em 2011).

Os critérios para a definição deste *corpus* foram de dois tipos. Por um lado, o facto de nem todos os romances do autor terem sido traduzidos para uma ou ambas as línguas de chegada com que trabalhamos constitui naturalmente uma limitação de nível prático. Assim, dentro das possibilidades de escolha que essa realidade nos permitia, escolhemos focar-nos naquilo a que se convencionou chamar “o primeiro Lobo Antunes”. A escolha dos textos obedece também a um eixo temático, que tem por base a representação de um momento particular na história portuguesa contemporânea, que compreende a guerra colonial, o fim do império, e a transição que daí decorre. Optámos por aquilo que descreveríamos como uma memória de guerra pós-moderna (Antunes, 1979), uma alegoria distópica em que se entrecem dois planos narrativos, sobrepondo os Descobrimientos com a descolonização (Antunes, 1988) e, finalmente, um relato polifónico que nos dá acesso aos processos mentais de uma família de colonizadores (Antunes, 1997). Não tendo sido essa a principal preocupação que presidiu à escolha do *corpus*, dá-se também a circunstância de haver um tradutor diferente para cada uma das traduções que são chamadas à colação.

A finalidade deste estudo é compreender de que forma e em que condições foi este material literário, fortemente baseado numa experiência local, comunicado a um público estrangeiro. Pretendemos, com este trabalho, contribuir para aquilo que poderá vir a ser uma história da literatura portuguesa em tradução. Detivemo-nos, em particular, no processo de internacionalização de um dos autores portugueses mais divulgados no estrangeiro, através do estudo de dois contextos de chegada.

A estrutura desta dissertação está dividida em cinco partes, sendo a primeira delas apenas um breve sumário do trabalho. Na parte I – *Overview* – esclarecemos quais os objectivos a que nos propomos e a metodologia que será seguida para esse fim. Detalhamos os critérios que presidiram à selecção do *corpus* e das línguas de trabalho, e começamos também a delinear os principais problemas tradutológicos que, na nossa opinião, o material narrativo apresenta.

A esse conjunto de considerações iniciais, segue-se uma parte II em que condensamos as bases teóricas que subjazem a esta investigação: desde as concepções mais gerais que são relevantes para a disciplina dos Estudos de Tradução nos anos mais recentes, até à descrição de materiais conceptuais mais específicos, e que têm relação mais próxima e directa com esta pesquisa em particular. Assim, a parte II – *Theoretical Framework* – começa por fornecer de forma sucinta uma perspectiva sobre o que são os *Descriptive Translation Studies*, ou *Estudos Descritivos de Tradução*, tal como os concebem James S. Holmes (1972) e Gideon Toury (1995). Muito dependente da Teoria dos Polissistemas (Even-Zohar, 1990), a nossa abordagem deve muito também a elaborações como a de Pierre Bourdieu (1992, 2000), e outras que dela partem ou nela se inspiram. Trata-se, neste caso, de autores que fazem parte de uma escola de pensamento com uma formação e uma orientação sociológicas, e que desenvolveram o seu trabalho a partir das concepções propostas por Bourdieu para os campos da arte e da cultura, aplicando-as especificamente à circulação da literatura, como foi o caso de Pascale Casanova (2004), ou à tradução, e disso são exemplo os trabalhos de Gisèle Sapiro (2008, 2016) e Johan Heilbron (1999, 2010).

A parte III – *Target Contexts* – consiste numa descrição dos contextos em que as traduções vieram a ser produzidas. Após uma introdução em que se explicita de que forma a descrição dos contextos é importante para a nossa análise, passamos a caracterizar cada um deles. Sendo que partimos de um quadro teórico que considera a tradução “um facto da cultura de chegada” (Toury, 1995: 24), reveste-se de particular importância proceder a um estudo prévio dos contextos de chegada. Foi o que

fizemos, tentando traçar um quadro tanto da situação da tradução literária em geral, quando do caso mais específico da literatura em língua portuguesa, em cada um dos sistemas em apreço. As secções que dizem respeito ao contexto de língua italiana e ao de língua inglesa são extremamente assimétricas, por razões que se prendem com a incomensurabilidade das realidades retratadas. Procurámos reunir dados que nos permitissem ter uma percepção daquilo que é a realidade cultural e editorial de cada um destes meios, por forma a melhor colocar o fenómeno que é objecto do nosso estudo.

A quarta parte pode ser considerada a secção central deste trabalho, e consiste numa análise textual das traduções que constituem o nosso *corpus*. Na parte IV – *Analysis of the Translations* – são lidas passagens seleccionadas dos textos de partida, lado a lado com as suas contrapartes de chegada. Esta parte IV é composta por uma secção introdutória, onde procuramos dar uma visão geral do tipo de operação que empreenderemos de seguida. Nela, procuramos problematizar as temáticas em torno das quais se articula a análise das traduções. Damos também conta do modo como foram seleccionados os excertos a serem submetidos a exame. Segue-se a análise detalhada de cada uma das obras, estando este escrutínio organizado em função dos textos de partida. Desta forma, existe um capítulo dedicado a cada um dos romances escritos em português, e é nesse âmbito que são estudadas, de forma contrastiva, as respectivas traduções. Temos, assim, uma apresentação de cada uma das obras de Lobo Antunes, de que consta um brevíssimo sumário de conteúdo, bem como uma sucinta descrição do estilo. Numa obra tão vasta como a deste autor, as diferenças são por vezes notórias, e escolhemos deliberadamente três obras que têm marcas estilísticas distintas. Procurámos incluir também algumas notas quanto à recepção destes romances e, sempre que havia dados nesse sentido, das suas traduções. Passámos depois a ilustrar o percurso através do qual cada uma destas traduções veio a ter lugar nos respectivos contextos, tendo o cuidado de fornecer informações quanto a detalhes relativos à colocação editorial e aos currículos dos tradutores envolvidos. A análise textual é feita para secções de texto relativamente longas: seleccionámos três excertos de cada um dos textos de partida e procedemos, para cada um deles, a uma observação em paralelo com os textos de chegada que lhes correspondem. O resultado é um retrato que, sendo necessariamente parcial, se quer exemplificativo daquilo que se pode encontrar nas várias traduções de Lobo Antunes que nos propusemos apreciar.

Finalmente, a parte V tenta retirar conclusões dos elementos que foram coligidos e apresentados nas páginas antecedentes, e tece alguns comentários finais, nomeadamente sobre o papel da academia na tradução do português, em ambos os contextos analisados, e sobre a posição de excepção que ocupa este autor. Entre as conclusões apresentadas, salientam-se as relativas ao percurso editorial das obras de Lobo Antunes em língua inglesa, reflectindo um ajustamento da sua posição no seio daquele sistema. De destacar ainda a questão da retradução, sobretudo pelo que tem de sintomático da evolução da imagem pública e do estatuto do autor ao longo da sua carreira. Finalmente, numa nota geral sobre os resultados desta análise, é de referir o facto de o sistema hegemónico de língua inglesa não produzir, a julgar por estas amostras, traduções mais domesticantes que o sistema de língua italiana, menos central.

Palavras-chave: António Lobo Antunes; Tradução; Literatura Portuguesa; Tradução Literária; Circulação da Literatura.

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“It is, under this rubric, customary to thank one’s family and immediate circle of friends for their forbearance or enthusiasm during a long spell of often obsessive work. But there is cant in doing so, for what choice had they?”

George Steiner

“And a seventh age passed over, / and a state of dismal woe”.

William Blake

This project has been a long and convoluted journey. It took seven years, in circumstances that were not always the easiest, and I am deeply thankful to a very large number of people. My gratitude goes beyond words, but I will write some nevertheless.

I would like to thank, first and foremost, my supervisors for their infinite patience and generosity: Professor Roberto Mulinacci, with whom I maintained a fruitful epistolary relationship for the past three years; and Professor Cristina Almeida Ribeiro, who accepted to come on board *in medias res*, and led us safely to shore, through hell, high water, and covid – particularly in the final and most desperate phase, her relentless endurance saw us through.

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word of recognition is due to those in the Academic Services of the Faculty, most notably Fátima Lopes. I would also like to thank my students at the universities of Perugia and Viterbo, the first barometers with which I measured these ideas and began to work out my reasoning.

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Finally, I would like to thank all of those who, being a part of my close family, have seen me increasingly less, and have all hoped in silence this would all come to a close. It did.

Introductory Note

This project was born out of a curiosity that became a research interest, and its genesis owes much to chance. Maybe twenty years ago, I entered a bookshop in Lisbon and stumbled upon Gregory Rabassa's translation of Lobo Antunes' *As Naus*. I immediately bought it, out of sheer inquisitiveness. Years later, it became the starting point for a PhD project. I was living abroad when I first enrolled in the doctoral programme for Comparative Studies, and many of the viewpoints I would later explore stemmed from that position and circumstance.

During these seven years, I have published a few papers whose content partially overlaps with what you will find in these pages. The first version of the chapter "Italian Context" was written in Portuguese in 2016, under the supervision of Prof. Santiago Pérez Isasi, in the context of a seminar he taught for this doctoral programme. An early version of that chapter, still in Portuguese, was sent (but never published) to the *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie Occidentale*.

No other chapter as such was submitted for publication, but many aspects of this work have been incorporated in some of the articles and chapters I have published. The work of Gregory Rabassa, and particularly his translations of Lobo Antunes (including, but not limited to, *As Naus*) was the subject of a chapter named "Gregory Rabassa's Writings and his Translations of Lobo Antunes' Works", included in a collective volume edited by Ariadne Nunes, Joana Moura and Marta Pacheco Pinto (Mourinha, 2020a).

Issues around the circulation of literature, and namely that of Portuguese language, were approached in the article "O português lá fora: algumas reflexões sobre a circulação da literatura de língua portuguesa", published in the journal *Cadernos de Literatura Comparada* (Mourinha, 2020b).

Rhett McNeil's translation of *O Esplendor de Portugal* was the basis of an analysis undertaken in the chapter "Fear and Loathing in Angola – on a translation of Lobo Antunes' *O Esplendor de Portugal*" of a collective volume edited by Teresa Seruya, Maria Lin Moniz and Alexandra Lopes (Mourinha, 2021).

Two other pieces whose material partially overlaps with the contents of this thesis have been submitted to peer reviewed publications and are yet to be published: one

chapter on both translations of *Os Cus de Judas* into English, focusing specifically on the question of retranslation, and titled “Translating and retranslating Lobo Antunes: on both of the English renditions of *Os Cus de Judas*” was proposed for a volume named *Retranslation and Reception*, edited by Susanne M. Cadera and Andrew Walsh; and another one, on the Italian and the English translations of *As Naus*, named “Reframing of ships past: power and style in two translations of Lobo Antunes's *As Naus*” is under review for a volume called *Reframing Translators, Translators as Reframers*, edited by Dominique Faria, Marta Pacheco Pinto and Joana Moura.

A word of forewarning is due, to remind the readers that the translators had a limited time to complete their work, while I had several years to nitpick their translations, playing the role of that infamous Professor Horrendo (cf. Rabassa, 2005: 44).

I – Overview

Goals and methods

The main purpose of this project is to assert how the prose of António Lobo Antunes has been translated and presented to foreign audiences, by means of analysing a selected corpus. The task this work aims to carry out is twofold, and can be summed up thus: to assess and to analyse. As a preliminary step, we will assess how this author's international career has been built, paying special attention to the two systems we chose as case studies¹. In a second moment, the translations that constitute our corpus will be looked at with a closer lens.

One fact that was ascertained very early on has to do with the pioneering role of the system of English language in the process of the author's internationalization: consistently with the field's theorization (Sapiro, 2008: 41), the English-speaking market has trawled this process, by encouraging and allowing other translations to come to light – encouraging, insofar as the perceived authority of the English-speaking world sanctions the author as worthy of attention; and allowing, since a book translated into English becomes accessible, linguistically and otherwise, to far more people than one written in Portuguese.

Another given which was very soon observed was the fact that the penetration of the author's work in the Italian context happened relatively late, considering the characteristics of the system, and the emergence of Lobo Antunes' translations into other languages. This was one of the motives why we insisted on studying the Italian translations and context, as an attempt to discover the reasons behind this asymmetry. In doing so, we often fell back into using the English-speaking system as a yardstick, mirroring a world vision which is not without its critics. However, if this procedure, when taken to extremes, oversimplifies the matter, it has proved productive – if used with caution – in clarifying the power dynamics and illuminating the nuts and bolts of the field.

An early working hypothesis speculated that the translations into Italian might have contributed in some way to aggravate this asymmetry that had been detected, and which separated the Italian instance from its counterparts. This hypothesis soon

¹ As we will see, the two systems are far from being homogeneous, and they are hardly comparable in terms of size, inner diversity, and importance.

revealed to be not only wrong but rather naïve: a more informed glance into the issues of translation and international circulation would lead us to ask different questions – which are more nuanced and, probably as a consequence of this, less satisfactorily answered. In other words, our growing understanding of the complexity and the manifold nature of these phenomena steered us away from posing and trying to answer direct questions which can be formulated according to a pattern of “whether or not”, and towards more complex queries, bound to bring on more layered, intricate answers.

Therefore, after justifying our claim that the presence and mode of Lobo Antunes' translations in the Italian system constitute an anomaly vis-a-vis a norm (and, for that purpose, we will need to carefully describe the norm as well as this instance of deviation), we will move on to enquiry on the reasons behind that situation. Having (very early into this project) failed to find any evidence that the translated texts were somehow responsible for a lukewarm reception of Lobo Antunes' work in Italy, we were compelled to broaden the scope of our analysis, so as to encompass variables other than the translated text.

This choice naturally has to do with our own training and theoretical positioning, strongly indebted to Descriptive Translation Studies. Following Toury, we started out from a standpoint which considers translations as a fact of the target culture (cf. Toury, 1995: 24), and all analysis bore in mind such premise. It became imperative, therefore, to get the pulse of the target cultures, namely concerning the importance and status both of translated literature in general, and of Portuguese-language literature specifically. These assessments correspond to parts III.1 and III.2 of this dissertation.

Part II details the theoretical framework which guides our analysis. Following a mindset and terminology that echoes authors such as Bourdieu (1992, 2000) and Even-Zohar (1990), we will be interpreting cultural items as products, and analysing how they behave towards their market. We frequently refer to systems, rather than countries or even languages, using Even-Zohar's polysystem approach, which describes the relationships between literary systems not only in strictly commercial terms (i.e., in terms of market, product, producer and consumer), but also considers categories such as repertoire and institution.

The existence of these translations depends on a number of actors – not only translators but also publishers, distributors, proof-readers, literary agents, critics, scholars, etc. So as to reconstruct a coherent narrative, we will need to assert how did Lobo Antunes begin to be translated and published, by whom, under what circumstances, and how that influences – if at all – the way his works are translated in

both the systems under scrutiny.

Even if our focus is mostly on the target texts and their contexts, an awareness of their source counterparts is in order. Hence, even if that is not the object of this study, a thorough knowledge of Lobo Antunes's work and the criticism that it has yielded over the years is a preliminary condition for the subsequent investigation – the choice of corpus depended on it – and any reading – be it of the “originals” or their translational rewritings – can hardly be carried out regardless of this bibliographical material. Still, with so proliferous a work as Lobo Antunes' is, it would be unpractical and probably unwise to encompass all of his written production, and for the purpose of this study we have limited our attention to what came to be called “the first Lobo Antunes”. It is from that sub-section of the author's work that our corpus was selected. We have therefore looked through not only the novels of this first phase, but also the criticism that it spawned, academic and otherwise.

Corpus and working languages

The reasons behind the choice of working languages were both practical and strategic, corresponding, on the one hand, to our own and the supervising team's linguistic skills and, on the other hand, to a desire to study a set of systems whose characteristics would allow for interesting research questions.

In this regard, the choice of the English language is justified insofar as it is considered hegemonic (Ginsburgh and Weber, 2016; Helgesson and Vermeulen, 2016) and, therefore, may often function as the steppingstone for international projection (Sapiro, 2004: 41). While certain instances of consecration depend on more specialized channels, the portmanteau of the English language is, as a concept, wide enough to encompass a variety of phenomena and situations – if for no other reason, because of the territories it covers. For example, the presence of the Nobel Academy in Sweden and the monetary and prestige value of the prize have given place to the circumstance that translations into Swedish are disproportionately high in number for such a small country (cf. Casanova, 2004: 168). Since we are interested in the processes surrounding the consecration and the dissemination of Portuguese literature, the context of English language is of the utmost importance.

Concerning the Italian-speaking context, its characteristics are, according to our experience, unique. It is one of the largest book markets in Europe, in terms of number

of published books, and yet the percentage of translated books is very high, as it is customary with smaller and more peripheral systems: according to Casanova, the European average is 15%, and in Italy the number of translations accounts for 25% or more (Casanova, 2004: 168). Even though translations hold a great deal of importance in the Italian market, translations from the Portuguese are a very small part, both in percentage and in absolute terms. We are thus before a peculiar instance concerning the tension between centrality and peripherality.

The peculiarity of the Italian case study is corroborated by the Portuguese government officials who are responsible for disseminating and funding the translation of Portuguese-language works of literature into foreign languages: in 2015, the then director of the government agency DGLAB² declared that Italy constitutes an exception to what they have known to be the rule; contrarily to what happens with other countries and markets, Italian cultural agents are well aware of financial support to foreign publishing houses, and take the initiative themselves, typically issuing more proposals than more powerful markets. In this instance, the cultural agents include publishers but, mostly, translators, often scholars, who take upon themselves the chore of finding a commercial solution for their academic needs and ambitions. As a result, patronage currently plays a capital role in the penetration of Portuguese literature in Italy, at least in terms of number of titles. One marginal but relevant consequence of this state of affairs is that these operations are, more often than not, performed by publishing houses which fall into the category of small-scale production – as opposed to the one of large-scale production (cf. Sapiro, 2008: 177) – thus with little or even no presence in the main commercial circuits, which results in a poor dissemination of their production.

As we will see, António Lobo Antunes entered either one of these systems not through these small-scale channels, as it often happens with novelties, but was put forth from the beginning by publishers that are a part of the circuit of large-scale production.

When trying to define a corpus, the criteria we adopted were twofold: on the one hand, the fact that not all of the author's novels have been translated into one or both of our target systems naturally narrowed the possibilities of choice, and constituted one practical standard; on the other hand, we aimed to define a theoretical cluster, joint together by common thematic threads. Hence, we have chosen three novels and their

² DGLAB stands for Direcção-Geral do Livro, Arquivos e Bibliotecas; it was in a conference on translation, held during the 8th *Festa do Cinema Italiano*, on March, 30, 2015; the director at the time was Maria Carlos Loureiro.

respective translations: a post-modern war memoir (*Os Cus de Judas*, from 1979), a dystopian allegory that overlaps the Age of Discoveries with the Portuguese late and hasty decolonization period (*As Naus*, from 1988) and, finally, a polyphonic account that invites us into the minds of a family of colonizers (*O Esplendor de Portugal*, from 1997).

These novels and their translations will be thoroughly discussed in Part IV. For now, let us briefly list them:

1. *Os Cus de Judas* is the author's second novel and, arguably, his most well-liked one. We have chosen it for a number of reasons: for its long-lived popularity, its impact on Portuguese culture, and also for the fact that it is, at least so far, the only one of his works to have been translated twice into one language. The power of this novel – as well as its endurance – has to do with the fact that it was one of the first accounts of colonial war experiences. While it lacks the maturity of style the author attained later in his career, it is staggering original and has a vigour and vitality that increases its readability. To this day, it remains a staple of Portuguese literature, particularly concerning the subject of colonial war.

It was published in English by New York's Random House in 1983, in a translation by Elisabeth Lowe with the title *South of Nowhere* (Antunes, 1983). It was then retranslated by Margaret Jull Costa and was published in 2011 by W.W. Norton under the title *The Land at the End of the World* (Antunes, 2011). The Italian version, published by Turin's Einaudi in 1996, was a translation by Maria José de Lancastre and was named *In culo al mondo* (Antunes, 1996).

2. *As Naus* was actually the starting point for this project. The idea that a baroque allegory with strong intertextual relations to Portuguese history and literature would be suitable for foreign audiences was puzzling, and suggested questions which we have tried to answer. One of the most original and inventive novels of Lobo Antunes', it remains an unpaired experiment in his production and is a key element in Portuguese post-colonial reflection (cf. Lourenço *in* Cabral, 2004: 354). Lobo Antunes' seventh novel has been translated into several languages, and was the second work of his to be published in Italian, and the sixth one to come out in English. The Italian translation, also published by Einaudi, was signed by Vittoria Martinetto and was called *Le Navi* (Antunes, 1997b). Gregory Rabassa was responsible for the translation into English, which was published by Grove Press under the title *The Return of the Caravels*

(Antunes, 2002).

3. Finally, *O Esplendor de Portugal* was chosen as part of what we conceived as a trilogy on the colonial history of Portugal. After the revisiting of war memories in *Os Cus de Judas*, and the picaresque allegory of the return from the former colonies in *As Naus*, *O Esplendor de Portugal* presented itself as the natural choice to close the cycle. It is a revisiting of the *retornados*' issue: this time no longer in an allegorical key, but rather by narrating what amounts to a family saga. Its crude portrait of a family of colonizers provided, to our mind, a suitable piece of material with which to carry out our analysis. The author's twelfth novel was published in Italian in 2002, in a translation by Rita Desti, also for Einaudi, named *Lo splendore del Portogallo* (Antunes, 2002), and in English by yet another imprint, Dalkey Archive Press, in a translation by Rhett McNeil called *The Splendor of Portugal* (Antunes, 2011).

Translation issues

Since we set apart two levels of intervention for our work, the problems to be addressed necessarily reflect such standpoint. Broadly put, we can distinguish the translation or translation-related issues we will need to tackle according to two categories: using Christiane Nord's terminology, we might discern intratextual and extratextual matters (Nord, 1991).

While some schools, scholars or individual works chose to forsake one of these routes, they are not mutually exclusive. In this case, if we attach a great deal of importance to context, the analysis of the texts themselves goes hand in hand with that other level of examination. Some details are significant, and help establish the perceived image of the author, and/or the intended target audience. Some of these issues include, for instance: knowing who the translators are, and whether or not they are scholars as well; which, among the author's works, are selected to be translated, how, and by whom; the dimension and characteristics of the publishing houses involved, their penetration and presence in the market; the importance of the author and his work within the publisher's catalogue, the fact that his novels are included in a series or not; etc.

Some of the paratextual factors can be very telling, such as the presence or absence of a translator's preface, footnotes or endnotes, a glossary, etc. The existence

of these usually means we are before a more specialized kind of edition, for a more restricted audience; there are, of course, exceptions but, in broad terms, one can say that large-scale production systematically and carefully avoids footnotes and paratext. We will see what was the take of the different companies involved in publishing Lobo Antunes in translation.

Regarding the hindrances that may occur in a translation process, Christiane Nord distinguishes problems and difficulties – the distinction being that the first are objective, and belong to the text, while the latter are subjective, and lie on the translator (Nord, 1991: 166-167). While this border may be troublesome to pinpoint, we will nevertheless try to list the main *problems* that afflict the Lobo Antunes' translator.

Even with such an abundant body of works as this author's is, and bearing in mind that by now a little over forty years of literary activity have elapsed, there are recurring traits. Needless to say, they emerge with different intensity and frequency throughout the years, and even with a restricted corpus of three novels, such as ours, there are considerable dissimilarities. In an attempt to enumerate the distinctive characteristics of Lobo Antunes' prose, we would refer the following:

1. Concrete, and often very specific, references to Portuguese geography and culture; in the three novels under analysis here, this is most poignant in *Os Cus de Judas*, but it is a constant feature of his early works on general.

2. Explicit and especially non explicit references to Portuguese history, recent and otherwise; this, we would argue, is a key for interpreting *As Naus*.

3. Very strong social modulation: the depiction of social status and class tension is very strong and pervasive in the author's work; it may be especially difficult to convey insofar as they often take forms that relate very closely and very specifically to Portuguese reality and expression. It may be particularly challenging for non-romance languages, or others in which the nuances of social address and treatment are not so wide-ranged. It is very much present in *O Esplendor de Portugal*.

4. Allusions to realities that are familiar to those who have lived in Africa, or are at least familiar with the Portuguese and European colonization of African countries; these often take the form of non European words and is a feature that is very much present in the author's work, but namely in *O Esplendor de Portugal*.

5. Grammatical fluctuations, materialising more often than not in a sudden and inexplicable change of grammatical person in mid-sentence (as we can see in *As Naus*).

6. Alternative and inventive syntax, which may or may not be combined with extremely long, run-on sentences; even if this is an established literary technique, and has been exploited profusely by modernist vanguards that are now largely consecrated, this is especially problematic to deliver in translation, as it clashes with the readability mandate. The long sentences, reminiscent of the stream-of-consciousness style, and punctuated accordingly – that is to say, sparingly or not at all – and the broken syntax, sometimes adorned with repetitions of sentences or strings of text that recur like a ritornello both grew to become a trademark of Lobo Antunes' style.

7. Surreal, fantastic or plainly unordinary images and similes, which remain a staple but drew attention mostly on the author's first novels. *Os Cus de Judas* is a staggering example of this.

This list very roughly systematises the main trends of the author's prose style, simultaneously trying to anticipate those which may pose problems for the translators. While these may be said to be characteristics of the written text, the issues in conveying some of them in translation can either be said to be extratextual (in this case, contextual) or to be efficiently tackled with extratextual (paratextual) devices.

For instance, a constant feature in Lobo Antunes' narratives is a poignant sense of irony – which, without due knowledge about the context, may be lost altogether. In *As Naus* this is a pressing issue, since it can be seen as a parody, and can be read in juxtaposition either with a narrative of Portuguese history, or some of the key works in Portuguese literature – or both. However, in Lobo Antunes' works in general, we may say that understanding and conveying the author's irony is one of the challenges his translators face. Translating irony, thus, may be considering one of the difficulties in rendering Lobo Antunes's prose.

To recapitulate, then, we may say that from a body of work that now encompasses 31 novels, we chose to focus on what can be considered the first phase of Lobo Antunes' career and, particularly, on works in which the recent history of Portugal is portrayed; the three novels we selected are, to this day, considered as groundbreaking, in terms of negotiation of memory and representation of the post-colonial Self. The fact that they have been selected for translation raises questions on how to represent the source context – contemporary Portugal – as a post-colonial nation. We are interested in assessing the ways in which translations materialize these representations. Particularly with *Os Cus de Judas* and *O Esplendor de Portugal* (it happens with *As Naus* to a much lesser extent), the narrative focus travels to Africa, hence the question arises of

knowing what kind of Africa emerges from the several renditions under examination. In other words, what is at stake here is not only how to present a Portuguese author to foreign audiences, but also how to translate what is a Portuguese standpoint and a Portuguese view of the world.

Although it is a very strong feature of this author's writing, the post-colonial angle is not so much a priority of our study as it is a productive theoretical frame with which to work. While the need to find cultural equivalence is a widespread preoccupation of translators, the studies on postcolonial translation put particular emphasis into preserving cultural diversity. What we argue is not so much that Lobo Antunes' writing is postcolonial and thus culturally diverse, but rather that postcolonial theory offers valuable tools with which to tackle issues that emerge in this case. The problems listed above as those most likely to be encountered by the translator of Lobo Antunes can be summed up under an umbrella term of diversity, or unfamiliarity. What makes the author's prose valuable is an originality which is, in our opinion, very much anchored in a Portuguese culture and experience which is not readily available to foreign audiences.

Often unfamiliar cultural information does not simply reside in lexical items, but is a more diffuse presence in a source text. A translator may be faced, for example, with a myth, custom or economic condition presupposed by a text, but not located explicitly in it³. (Tymoczko, *in* Bassnett and Trivedi (eds.), 1999: 27)

This is, in our view, the case with Lobo Antunes's texts in general, and particularly with the ones under scrutiny here: the sheer quantity of unfamiliar and implicit information that pervades his novels make them a problematic choice for an international audience. The question is not so much what gets lost, nor how – or whether – to render explicit the underlying web of meanings. The question that stands and we will try to answer in these pages is what kind of text emerges from those translations or, in other words, how does Lobo Antunes come across in translation.

³ The sentence that follows this one argues in favour of explicitation, be it textual or paratextual: "If such implicit information is to be made accessible to the receiving audience, it must be presented either through explicit inclusion in the translation or through paratextual devices" (Tymoczko, *in* Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 27).

II – Theoretical Framework

The birth of a discipline

While reflections on translation have been around for quite some time, the field that came to be known as Translation Studies is relatively recent: as Bassnett and Lefevere famously put it, in their preface to Lefevere's *Translation/History/Culture. A Sourcebook* (1992), "The growth of Translation Studies as a separate discipline is a success story of the 1980s" (Bassnett and Lefevere, *in* Lefevere 1992: xi). (To be precise, the expression here could have been Descriptive Translation Studies, but we will come to that later.) Those who try to establish a new discipline take care in asserting their genealogy, and that is precisely what Lefevere does in that volume. Including authors that range from Cicero to Schleiermacher, he sets out to collect what can be considered a small but essential selection of texts on translation – from his point of view. This anthology is not organized in a chronological manner but thematically, with chapters resonating, at least to some extent, Lefevere's own theorizing and conceptualizing on translation issues: "The role of Ideology in the shaping of a translation", "The power of patronage", "Poetics", etc. This conception of Translation Studies is the one that lies at the base of our study, and the one whose guidelines we will summarize in the following lines.

Musings on translation have emerged in different times and contexts, and sometimes even with a fair degree of systematization. It is worth noting how the dichotomy word/sense (or signifier/signified) has been present in such early considerations as those by Saint Jerome, who famously encouraged translators to render texts "sense-for-sense" instead of "word-for-word". It is also worth mentioning how this duality has never been completely set aside, in spite of efforts and considerations that point out its limits.

The contemporary thinking on translation, however, may be said to find its roots in modern hermeneutics; to this day, Schleiermacher's contribution is considered seminal: "The lecture 'On the Different Methods of Translating' ('Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzens') which Friedrich Schleiermacher delivered at the Berlin Academy of Sciences in June 1813 is widely regarded as the beginning of modern translation theory." (Hermans, 2019: 17)⁴ In spite of the popularity of over simplistic

⁴ See also Venuti, 1991 and Lefevere, 1981.

readings of his work which tend to read it as if he presented a choice between two opposing stances (either bringing the author to the reader or the reader to the author), Schleiermacher's theorization is more nuanced and makes room for the paradoxical nature he recognizes not only in translation practices but in all human communication, in which the tension between the social and the individual is a defining feature: interaction depends on the striking of a delicate balance between open and close, self and other.⁵

As it often happens, the importance of this piece was established in hindsight. As Hermans notes,

There is no evidence he attached much importance to the lecture on translation, or that it made any impact. (...) On the evening of its first presentation he spoke of it as 'a rather trivial piece' (...). He does not appear to refer back to it in any of his later writings. The text was printed in the Academy's Transactions (which were not sent out for review) in 1816 and then in Schleiermacher's posthumous *Collected Works*, but it remained forgotten until its reprint in Hans-Joachim Störig's anthology *Das Problem des Übersetzens* ('The problem of translation') of 1963. The current high regard for it among scholars of translation is due to the work of Antoine Berman (1992) and Lawrence Venuti (2008: 83-98). (Hermans, 2019: 25)

It is therefore "a rather trivial piece" of Schleiermacher's which was recuperated in the 1960s and later appropriated by an emerging discipline when trying to assert its basis. This lecture mostly consists of a comment on how translating is but a particular case of hermeneutics, thus likening it to an open task, more an effort than a result, potentially a work in perennial progress, with its own set of dialectical and ethical issues. And this is why it is held so dearly by scholars who were vying to shift the practice and especially the theory of translation away from more mechanical conceptions, and thus insist on the interpreting factor. In this essay, to the above mentioned tension between elements perceived as opposites, Schleiermacher adds considerations on the paradoxical nature of language, and the incommensurability of paradigms that separate speakers of different languages. Particularly relevant for our analysis is the notion of *hermeneutical effort*, and Schleiermacher's contention that the more the use of language is personal or individual⁶, the greater is the hermeneutic effort required. (Cf. Schleiermacher 1998:

⁵ Schleiermacher's expression is "Aufschließung", or "unlocking" (Schleiermacher, 1981: 265). Hermans comments in this way: "In a lecture on aesthetics Schleiermacher notes that, as a shared property and a relatively fixed system, language is not well equipped to express either strict singularity or fluidity ('die Bestimmtheit des Einzelnen'; 'das in sich Wechselnde'); it takes a creative artist to force it to do that (1977: 403)." (Hermans, 2019: 19)

⁶ The German word is *eigenthümlich*. Hermans remarks: "Schleiermacher's use of 'eigenthümlich', a term familiar from his other work, is key here: between them the adjective 'eigenthümlich' and the corresponding noun 'Eigenthümlichkeit' (he spells both with an 'h' in the middle) occur no fewer than eighteen times in the lecture, an insistence obscured in the English translations (1977b; 2002c; 2012a), which distribute the terms over different words ('particular', 'individual', 'peculiar', 'special' and corresponding nouns)". (Hermans, 2019: 26)

7)

Another pivotal text, which also builds bridges between philosophical hermeneutics and translation theory, is Walter Benjamin's "The Task of The Translator" ('Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers'). It was first published in 1923, as an introduction to a translation of Baudelaire. Its first English translation is by Harry Zohn, and was included in a 1968 volume titled *Illuminations*, which featured an introduction by Hannah Arendt. Aside from the emphasis on the dialectical nature of the translation process, Benjamin's contribution owes much of its pertinence to his suggestion that the hermeneutical endeavour which takes place in translation has the power to illuminate aspects of the work that are not necessarily apparent in the source text. Still, in spite of the relational pitch the author is intent on illustrating, this text often begets readings strongly marked by an idealism which betrays a neokantian matrix.

In the second half of the 20th century, there are contributions to the reflections on translation that are strongly indebted to the tradition of which Schleiermacher and Benjamin are notorious embodiments, namely in the works of Ricoeur (1981) or Derrida (1985) or, to a different degree, Steiner (1975).

In spite of a background which is indebted to philosophical hermeneutics, it is within the field of linguistics that Translation Studies are constituted as a separate discipline. When, in 2000, Lawrence Venuti compiles *The Translation Studies Reader* – another operation of retrospective genealogy – he takes care to include a number of these approaches, some of them strictly linguistic in method and object of study. In a way, Venuti's *reader* begins where Lefevere's *sourcebook* had left off. His anthology is organized chronologically, with texts exclusively from the 20th century, and the first one is precisely Zohn's translation of Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator". He then includes a few testimonials by established writers who are either translators or have famously reflected on translation (Pound, Borges, etc.), before giving the floor to the scholars who in the 1950s and 1960s have contributed to the debate. He does so by including both philosophical contributions, like Quine's (whose behaviourist theory of meaning has relevant implications to the theorization of translation), side by side with the great names of linguistics such as Jakobson, Nida, or Catford. After this historical overview of the century, Venuti proceeds to include in his anthology the texts of the authors whose theoretical affiliation he belongs to: Holmes, Even-Zohar, Toury, etc.

A commentary is due at this point, to clarify that, even if our personal theoretical pathway led us to prefer the trend of Translation Studies which is closer to Cultural Studies, the input of linguistics to the research on translation has taken its own path.

Namely the cutting edge field of machine translation remains indebted to and is under the scope of linguistic studies. While the chasm is seldom acknowledged, in practice much of the culturally-oriented translation studies research is applicable mostly to literary translation, while other research lines avert to a lesser degree the need for the concepts and modulations that the Cultural Turn brought on. On the other hand, that early vocation towards literary translation has not prevented Descriptive Translation Studies from bearing developments in subfields traditionally closer to linguistics, like technical and audiovisual translation.

From that point of view, the shape the discipline ended up taking owes much to the works of Russian Formalists, a school of literary criticism which bore a keen influence on the theoretical production of Even-Zohar, whose Theory of Polysystems brought important viewpoints to the field of Translation Studies. To Jakobson's conceptions and vocabulary, whose scheme of "communication" was rendered in terms of "code", "message", "addresser", "addressee" (Jakobson, 1969), Even-Zohar (1990) opposes a logic of "system", using terms such as "repertoire", "product", "producer", "consumer", among others. By doing so, he counters the tendency to see literature as a fundamentally isolated phenomenon, with its own set of rules, which differs from the rest of human activities, and places it in its context, where implications and constraints are not only of cultural nature, but also anthropological, sociological and, ultimately, even commercial. The language used helps to put the emphasis on the context, so that the «"text" is no longer the only, and not necessarily for all purposes the most important, facet, or even product, of this system» (Even-Zohar, 1990: 33).

We are thus before the birth of what came to be known as Descriptive Translation Studies. Alexandra Assis Rosa, in her entry for the *Handbook of Translation Studies*, notes that these are "Also known as the Polysystem Approach, the Manipulation School, the Tel-Aviv Leuven Axis, the Descriptive, Empirical or Systemic School, or the Low Countries Group" (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010: 94), a compilation of nomenclature which bears, in itself, information both on the theoretical affiliations and the physical bases of operations of the institutions in which this discipline took shape. In her definition, "DTS corresponds to a descriptive, empirical, interdisciplinary, target-oriented approach to the study of translation, focusing especially on its role in cultural history. This approach was first developed in the early 1970s, gained momentum in the 1980s, boomed in the 1990s, and still inspires several researchers" (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010: 94).

A target-oriented approach

Our theoretical framework is thus the one defined by Holmes ([1972] 2000) and Lambert and Van Gorp (1985) and it is its emphasis on context that justifies the attention we give to the description of the target systems. In a maxim which condenses much of the nucleus of this approach, “Translations are facts of target cultures” (Toury, 1995: 29). Another important benchmark in the history of Descriptive Translation Studies is the 1985 volume edited by Theo Hermans under the title *The Manipulation of Literature*, whose choice of words for the title echoes a strong feature of the group's theoretical presuppositions, namely the importance of the effect of the translator's action: intentionally or not, and consciously or not, the agents involved in translation shape the resulting text. The shift towards the assessment of this (the target) text contributed decisively to relativise the status of the source text and dislodge the “original” from its pedestal.

This school of thought is responsible for a number of key concepts that are productive for our study, such as those developed by Lefevere or Venuti. André Lefevere's theorization of translation takes Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory as a starting point, building and elaborating on it, namely by adding categories such as patronage, ideology, poetics, and rewriting. One concept we find particularly relevant is “institution”, a normative entity whose actions (by means of rewarding and reproaching) shape what will become the canon of a given system. The study of institutions in translation studies will later be further developed by Helgesson and Vermeulen (2016). Milton and Bandia (2009), on the other hand, refer to *agents* of translation, and focus more on agency and the role of intermediary elements.

“Patronage” includes, but is not limited to, the providing of the financial means, having an important regulating role:

Patronage is usually more interested in the ideology of literature than in its poetics. (...) Patrons try to regulate the relationship between the literary system and the other systems, which, together, make up a society, a culture. As a rule they operate by means of institutions set up to regulate, if not the writing of literature, at least its distribution. (Lefevere, 1992: 15)

Ideology can be defined as “the conceptual grid that consists of opinions and attitudes deemed acceptable in a certain society at a certain time, and through which readers and translators approach texts” (Bassnett and Lefevere, 2001: 48). In this sense, it is mostly implicit, as is poetics. “Poetics refers to aesthetic precepts that dominate the

literary system at a certain point in time” (Baker and Saldanha, 2009: 241). It “consists of two components, an inventory component (a repertoire of genres, literary devices, motifs, certain symbols, prototypical characters or situations) and a functional component, which concerns the issue of how literature has to or can function within society” (Lefevere, 1992: 26)

In the early 1980s Lefevere introduced the term “refraction” to designate the kind of process a text goes through in order to become adequate to a specific audience (e.g. children). He used this term with a meaning that ranged from *adaptation* to *manipulation* until, in 1985, he coined the term “rewriting” to describe a series of processes, of which translation is but an example (other examples are anthologization, historiography, criticism, editing...):

Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. (Lefevere, 1992: vii)

Particularly relevant in Venuti's theorization of translation is what he called “invisibility”: the illusion of transparency that is used as a yardstick for the quality of translations, and which he considers to be dominant in contemporary Anglo-American culture:

The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to ensure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning. What is so remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator's crucial intervention in the foreign text. The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text. (Venuti, 1995: 1-2)

The fact that critics and reviewers, regardless of their role or target audience, look for and praise fluency in a translated text is, for Venuti, a symptom of the perceived superiority of the target culture, as well as “a way of conceiving and practicing translation that undoubtedly reinforces its marginal status in Anglo-American culture” (Venuti, 1995: 8). His work aims at exposing this state of affairs and to encourage his fellow translators to choose “foreignization” over “domestication”. The caveat, thought, mentioned by the author but often forgotten, is the danger that lurks behind the best intentions of “foreignization”, which is “exoticisation”. It must be noted that Venuti is writing specifically from the standpoint of a system which he perceives to be

hegemonic and, as such, prone to the kind of “ethnocentric violence” (Venuti, 1995: 20) he seeks to denounce and fight against. His proposal must thus be read in context, more as counter-hegemonic measure than as a universally adequate strategy:

The “foreign” in foreignizing translation is not a transparent representation of an essence that resides in the foreign text and is valuable in itself, but a strategic construction whose value is contingent on the current target-language situation. Foreignizing translation signifies the difference of the foreign text, yet only by disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language. In its effort to do right abroad, this translation method must do wrong at home, deviating enough from native norms to stage an alien reading experience—choosing to translate a foreign text excluded by domestic literary canons, for instance, or using a marginal discourse to translate it. (Venuti, 1995: 20)

This line of thought presented here by Venuti in terms of foreign versus domestic has points of contact with another theoretical current, in which the concept of alterity is fundamental.

A postcolonial approach

Since the author whose works we chose to study in translation is an example of postcolonial writing, the critical apparatus on postcolonial translation also provides relevant insights: not only the more specific literature on translation proper (Niranjana, 1992; Spivak, 1993; Appiah, 1993; Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999), but also the general imprint of postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Ashcroft et al., 1989, 1995; Bhabha, 1994). The author's work is extensive and encompasses many different themes; but one strand that, in one way or another, runs through all of his written production, is an axis which can be seen as postcolonial. The experience of the colonial war proper, his personal perception of it, and all the trauma that ensued, but also his depictions of contemporary Portugal as a postcolonial society, are a recurring feature in Lobo Antunes' prose. Furthermore, we have selected our corpus with that specific focus in mind: we chose an assortment of novels in which these issues are especially visible, even central. Therefore the postcolonial nexus must be mentioned in our analysis.

Since its first formulations, the postcolonial theory has known many distinct developments and applications. In a 2005 introduction to an issue of the *European Review*, Theo D'Haen tries to make sense of this theoretical tool, starting with the

question of orthography (D'Haen, 1995: 73)⁷. He draws attention to the fact that seminal works of the field (such as Ashcroft et al., 1989) use the term “post-colonial” (which they prefer to hyphenate) to refer to a framework that is very closely linked to the British empire and the Anglosphere. Their use of the concept, though, does not imply a strict (or literal, if you will) “post-colonial” chronology, since they also apply the label to literature that has been produced under colonial rule⁸.

Theo D'Haen cites the work of Elleke Boehmer (1995) as an example of a theorization which “sets up both chronological and ideological dividing lines, independent of a writer’s place of origin. Chronologically, the division is between ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’. Ideologically, it is between ‘colonialist’ and ‘postcolonial’” (D'Haen, 1995: 74). It becomes apparent from these examples how even founding figures of the field worked with formulations of the concept of postcolonial which allow for a latitude they did not necessarily explore. What we see in practice in Boehmer’s work (as in that of Ashcroft et al., and of many others) is the term being applied to describe the literature written in English in the territories that were once a part of the British empire; whereas, as D'Haen remarks, in their theorization “nothing emphatically excludes a post-colonial white English male from breaking ranks and joining the postcolonial camp” (D'Haen, 1995: 74). In this sense,

Boehmer’s inflection of ‘postcolonialism’ brings her close to Edward Said’s ‘resistance culture’ in his 1993 *Culture and Imperialism*. This is not to be wondered at, as Boehmer’s view of the role literature plays in the relationships between Europe and its colonies, colonizers and colonized, reads as if directly descending from Michel Foucault’s ideas on textuality, representation and power – ideas Said likewise acknowledges as having initially shaped the thinking that led to his own

⁷ “To begin with, there is the matter of orthography. I have used unhyphenated ‘postcolonial’ and ‘postcolonialism.’ In fact, the hyphenated forms are the older and more conventional. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin use them in their 1989 *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, still a landmark publication in the field, as does John Thieme in his 1996 *Arnold Anthology of Post-Colonial Literatures in English*. Both restrict the use of ‘post-colonial’ to ‘writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain’ (Ref. 1, p. 1) and ‘the anglophone literatures of countries other than Britain and the United States’ (Ref. 2, p. 1). Both spurn chronology, reaching back to the 19th and early 20th centuries for examples of ‘post-colonial’ literature. Ashcroft et al. and Thieme thoroughly differ, though, as to the term’s precise charge. Ashcroft et al. see ‘post-colonialism’ as covering ‘all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day,’ and this because they find there to be ‘a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression’ (Ref. 1, p. 2). Thieme finds this use of the term problematic, because of its association with ‘writing and other forms of cultural production which display an oppositional attitude towards colonialism, which are to a greater or lesser degree anti-colonial in orientation’ (Ref. 2, p. 1-2).” (D'Haen, 1995: 73)

⁸ “Post-colonial critics and theorists should consider the full implications of restricting the meaning of the term to ‘after-colonialism’ or after-Independence. All post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem. (...) The term ‘post-colonial’ is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates. (...) “post-colonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction. This does not imply that post-colonial practices are seamless and homogeneous but indicates the impossibility of dealing with any part of the colonial process without considering its antecedents and consequences” (Ashcroft et al., 1995: 2).

1978 *Orientalism*, a book that itself greatly contributed to the explosive growth of 'postcolonial' studies. (D'Haen, 1995: 74)

So even if it stems and develops out of a very specific Anglophone post-imperial framework, postcolonial theory does leave room for it to be applied to other realities. For Said, "The nexus of knowledge and power creating "the Oriental" and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter. Yet it is an intellectual matter of some very obvious importance" (Said, 1978: 27). He saw this issue under the light of Foucault's formulations of knowledge, power, and discourse, and what he does in his 1978 work *Orientalism* is to illustrate how these foundations of imperial authority were used to forge a concept that he denounces as dehumanizing. He is writing specifically of "the Oriental", but his method can be applied to other discourses, and other arenas in which there is a struggle for power and dominance.

Thus Theo D'Haen in 1995 presented to his readership of *The European Review* "a number of instances of various forms of 'postcolonial studies' applied to European subjects" (D'Haen, 1995: 77), namely the case of "contemporary Portuguese authors writing about their country's colonial past and postcolonial present (...)" (D'Haen, 1995: 77). The postcolonial nexus is a recurring theme of Portuguese contemporary literature, and it is very much present in Lobo Antunes. As stated before, the novels we have chosen deliberately share that thematic affinity. Therefore, not only postcolonial theory will be instrumental to guide our analysis, it is at the very root of our choice of corpus. Lobo Antunes can be read in many different ways and can be studied privileging several different aspects. We have decided to focus on three novels in which the presence of Africa, the colonial war, the end of the empire and the decolonization process are central elements. While it is debatable that Lobo Antunes can be considered a postcolonial author, there are several works that study his production from a postcolonial perspective (e.g. the contributions of Isabel Ferreira Gould or Ana Mafalda Leite in Mendes, 2011).

Regarding the question of postcolonial translation, there is of course one fundamental correlation with the postcolonial theory's emphasis on the construction of the "other" in the discourses, namely in connection to power. Everything that can be said of postcolonial literature, or of postcolonial readings of literature, can be said of translation – and with an extra tier of interpretation, given the fact that translated texts have a very obvious counterpart in their source texts. There is one additional dimension, which has to do with the fact that one relevant feature of the colonial domination was the imposition of European languages in the occupied territories. From

such point of view, translation is, historically speaking, a weapon of colonial domination. It was, as Eric Cheyfitz puts it, “the central act of European colonization and imperialism in America” (Cheyfitz, 1991: 104). His phrasing reflects the fact that his work specifically addressed the American case⁹, but this idea of translation being instrumental in the establishing of colonial domination is recurrent. Bassnett and Trivedi are adamant: “For it is, of course, now recognized that colonialism and translation went hand in hand” (Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 3). There are, as well, theorisations which seek to explore the reaction of the colonised as a different kind of translation practice. For instance Paul Bandia (2008), in *Translation as Reparation*, addresses the way African literatures use European languages by adopting writing practices that subvert their social and linguistic conventions.

The issues around postcolonial translation thus multiply, and any approach on the subject may be multilayered. One possible strand rests on the contention that the imposition of a colonial language over a number of local languages constitutes itself a translation process. “In this sense post-colonial writing might be imaged as a form of translation” (Tymoczko in Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999: 19). Or, as Salman Rushdie famously put it “Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained” (Rushdie, 1991: 16). Other ways to approach the subject of postcolonial translation have to do with the power imbalances and their relationships to languages (Niranjana 1992: 2), or with what can be seen as “one of the basic constituencies of the postcolonial world—its multilingualism” (Bertacco, 2013: 26-27).

In the works of Lobo Antunes we have chosen to analyse here, aside from the whole issue of the depiction of a postcolonial environment, and the portrayal of alterity in more general terms, there is a very specific question of the interference of Bantu languages, given the frequency with which these texts include loan words from languages other than Portuguese. This is an element of linguistic hybridity in the source text that may or may not find a parallel in the target texts. The choices of the translators in this instances reflect issues of poetics and ideology that can be read as symptomatic of the relationship these target cultures establish with the source culture, but also with the culture signified and represented by these Bantu lexical elements. After all, “The central intersection of translation studies and postcolonial theory is that of power relations” (Munday, 2016: 210).

⁹ Eric Cheyfitz's *The Poetics of Imperialism* (2011) is an enquiry into the pathway of imperialism in the American territory. He provocatively reads several works of the American literature in the framework of a logic of imperialism.

A sociology of translation

Even if Even-Zohar quotes Bourdieu's early 1970s works, there is a line of enquiry which builds directly on the work of Bourdieu (1992, 2000), who employs terminology traditionally used in economics to analyse cultural processes, and builds his theory of cultural production using his own characteristic theoretical vocabulary of *habitus*, capital and field, namely by extending the concept of capital to include categories such as cultural and symbolic capital.

Working mostly from Paris, a school of thought of disciples of Bourdieu has emerged in recent years, giving way to what has been called the sociological turn (Cf. Wolf and Fukari, 2007) in Translation Studies. For instance, Casanova's *La République mondiale des lettres* (2004) builds on Bourdieu's theory of fields to postulate a "world literary space"¹⁰. She addresses the circulation of literature by stressing the notion of an international network of ideas and influences; rather than in a number of texts, the emphasis is on the forces behind them, and the asymmetries between those forces. She pays close attention to the dynamics of that literary space, and namely to the role played by translation in the movements from the peripheries towards the centre (a process she calls *consecration* or *littérisation*).

The works of Sapiro (2008, 2014, 2016) and Heilbron (1999, 2010) also address the international circulation of works and ideas, still having Bourdieu's theories as a background, but they are more specifically focused on translation as such. Heilbron postulates what amounts to a world-system of translation, whose dynamics he studies closely, and in which "Transnational cultural exchange is not simply the reflection of the structural contradictions in the world economy (...) Cultural exchanges have a dynamic of their own which is based on a certain autonomy vis-à-vis the constraints of the world market". (Heilbron, 1999: 432). Aside from recognizing the already established absolute dominance of English language, he points out the highly hierarchical structure and constitutive unevenness of the system. Sapiro has worked with Heilbron, with whom she has co-signed papers (2002, 2007), and her individual work often bears ties to globalisation studies.

In broad terms, it can be said that what is at play in this school of thought is the application of methodologies from sociology to the field of Translation Studies. But insofar as it focuses on the socially relevant aspects of translation, it studies translators and other agents involved in translation as social beings whose actions are, to some extent, determined by their social contexts.

¹⁰ Much like a transposition of Braudel's concept of "economy-world", applied to literature.

Authors such as Sapiro and Heilbron criticise previous trends in the discipline for overlooking the plurality of the agents involved in the translation process and not studying them in detail. They argue for a need to look into the relationships between the various agents (translators, publishers, literary agents, etc.) and the historical and social spaces they are a part of. By doing so, they establish possible lines of dialogue with other trends in literary studies, such as the one known as World Literature.

Towards a definition of translating

With this in mind, we begin to be in a position to approach a satisfactory characterization of the word translation as we use it. At this point, we would like to summon Plato's insistence on a clear definition of the concepts involved as a *sine qua non* condition to any serious debate:

Socrates

And I daresay you remember, when I answered you a while ago about figure, how we rejected the sort of answer that attempts to proceed in terms which are still under inquiry and has not yet been admitted.

Meno

Yes, and we were right in rejecting it, Socrates.

Socrates

Well then, my good sir, you must not in your turn suppose that while the nature of virtue as a whole is still under inquiry you will explain it to anyone by replying in terms of its parts, or by any other statement on the same lines: you will only have to face the same question over again — What is this virtue, of which you are speaking all the time? Or do you see no force in what I say?

Meno

I think what you say is right.

(Plato, Meno 79d-e)

Still, many of the discourses on translation tend to assert how translation can be characterized, described, or analyzed, often without previously telling their readers what translation actually is. For instance, the Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies has entries such as “Literary translation”, “Free translation” or “Translation Studies”, but not for “Translation” *de per se*. The introduction does discuss the issue¹¹, but precisely to point out how evasive the definition of their study object is: “One of the most fascinating things about exploring the history of translation is that it reveals how narrow and restrictive we have been in defining our object of study, even with the most flexible of definitions” (Baker, 1998: xvii) They then go on to speculate how broad a concept of translation they could resort to, but to no avail. The conclusion, at this point,

¹¹ Under “Types of translation/interpreting” (Baker, 1998: xvii).

is that it is no easy task to define what translation or “the task of the translator” is. Baker, who signs this Introduction, reflects that the incredible variety of meanings and forms that “the activities of translation and interpreting” have assumed throughout history call for a careful observation of these concrete facts before one can move on to a more theoretical stance. In other words, she argues that it is hard to proceed towards abstraction in a field in which the concrete elements are yet so incompletely established:

What the historical research done for the *Encyclopedia* seems to suggest is that we still know very little about the history of our own profession, that what we know of it indicates that its profile has varied tremendously from one era to another, and – equally important – that the activities of translation and interpreting have taken such a wide variety of forms and have occurred in such a multitude of contexts over the years that we are obliged to look at the historical facts before we can even begin to develop theoretical accounts for this complex phenomenon. (Baker, 1998: xvii)

While it is understandable that the concept which works as a portmanteau to a whole book is perceived as being in no need of a definition, it is nevertheless telling that instruments like the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* struggle to detail the boundaries of the object of their study field. The same can be said of *The Linguistics Encyclopedia* (Malmkjær, 2002) in which, even if it discusses translation and translation-related events in several of its entries, there is no specific entry for “translation”.

In another example, closely linked to the birth of the discipline of Translation Studies as such, Brownlie (2003: 100) notes how “Toury is reluctant to give a definition of what translation is, and in order to choose objects of study, he takes ‘assumed translations’, utterances which are presented or regarded as translations in the target culture (Toury, 1995, p. 32)”.

Some light on these hindrances may be shed by Sandra Halverson's chapter in the *Handbook of Translation Studies, Volume 1* (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010), which begins as follows:

Talking about a concept of translation in Translation Studies (...) means immediately butting up against fundamental issues concerning how one views the world and things in it, the feasibility or appropriate means of knowing anything about that world, the status of knowledge and of cultural, political, and academic practices and relationships, as well as the tension and conflict that accompany differences of opinion in any and all of these areas. Indeed, the very activity of engaging with the concept may be referred to as “defining”, “conceptualizing”, “discoursing”, or “theorizing”, among other things, depending on one’s stance. This diversity of beliefs is reflected in Translation Studies in the evolution from the ideal

of a definitive Translation to the exploration of multiple Translations. (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010: 378)

After establishing this interdependence between the definition of the object of study and the school of thought which addresses that very object, Halverson then proceeds to briefly describe those that are, to her mind, the most relevant approaches and their take on the subject. The presentation is very schematic and succinct, as it could not help being in a work of this nature. As she carefully points out:

An exhaustive survey of this development is beyond the scope of the present article; thus representative samples of alternative views will be given. (...) Both the temporal divisions and the philosophical positions are somewhat oversimplified, glossing over distinctions and controversies which would otherwise be of interest. (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010: 378)

We argue that this elusiveness of the concept of translation is precisely the main reason why its definition should be addressed. Having said this, we could either fall back into a more anodyne and neutral definition of translation, such as the one we find in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics* (Sebeok, 1986: 1107)¹², or choose to commit to one which both reflects and shapes our own theoretical stance, as it is the case of the one implied by the Lefevere quote we transcribed earlier in this very chapter: that of translation as rewriting, and a particular instance of rewriting. This would be insufficient, though, as a definition, as it does not say how does translation differ from other kinds of rewritings – such as anthologization, criticism, or adaptation. A possible solution for this standstill may be crossing Lefevere's conception of translation as one particular kind of “rewriting of an original text” (Lefevere, 1992: vii) with Toury's formulation of “assumed translations” (Toury, 1995: 32), according to which the determinant factor is that of the product in question being perceived as a translation by the target culture. This definition entails two corollaries: firstly, that translation is defined by its relationship with another text, the “original”; and secondly, that its status as translation depends on its place in the target system.

Specific translation issues

¹² “The translation activity is an extension of the communication process where one distinguishes an encoder who encodes a message, and a decoder who decodes that message, being familiar with the code, and belonging to the same speech community as the encoder. [...] In translation, the decoder of the message in language A encodes this message in language B, making it thus accessible to members of the speech community using language B, but not able to function in language A.” (Sebeok, 1986: 1107)

We will thus be working with a concept of translation that posits it as an ulterior elaboration of a text which has been written before – and, typically, in a different language or code.

After we have summarized the theoretical stances that shape our particular take in Translation Studies, it is time we refer to a set of tools which applies more narrowly to this particular investigation. While describing the specifics of translating Lobo Antunes, we have identified a set of problems. This is the place to determine the instruments that will allow us to study those and the translator's response to them.

As we have seen in the Overview, this author's prose can be said to be strongly marked by elements of alterity. The postcolonial theory is one that provides valuable inputs to equate this aspect of translating Lobo Antunes, but it is not the only one. Postcolonial theory is productive to envisage issues around what has been called cultural translation. Similarly, the Polysystems theory is very helpful in the way it codifies and analyses the relationships between systems, namely concerning power imbalances between them.

This alterity that is mostly an aesthetic option in the author's prose is also a characteristic that can be seen as intrinsic to the source text, when compared to its target counterpart – or, maybe more accurately, to the way it may be perceived by the target context. In that sense, all translation theory has its contribution to give towards this analysis. If, however, we chose to focus on what we argue is the deliberate alterity of Lobo Antunes' texts, exercised, as often happens in literature and art, consciously and as a part of an aesthetic programme, there are more specialized intakes that we can rely on. For instance the study of style in translation has merited the time of some of the specialists. Concerning the alterity which stems from the fact that Lobo Antunes' are foreign texts which, as we argue, are particularly steeped in its source culture, there is a number of detailed analyses which focus specifically on what is called culture-specific words (e.g. Baker, 1992; Newmark, 1988), or *realia* (Vlahov and Florin, 1980). Closely linked with these is the concept of untranslatability, which also bred an extensive bibliography on its own. We will now look more closely into these.

Style in translation

The study of style in translation is not new. However, it has known developments in recent years, carried out by scholars with different approaches and backgrounds. In

broad terms, we could say that the current investigation on this subject follows two or three main lines: that of corpus-based analysis, as in the works of Mona Baker (2000), and Gabriela Saldanha (2005, 2011); those whose approach is cognitive, as is the case of Kirsten Malmkjær (2003, 2004), and Jean Boase-Beier (2006, 2018) whose analysis draws on reader response and relevance theories; and that of scholars who, like Jeremy Munday (2008), resort, among other things, to discourse analysis. Of course one's choice of method both reflects and depends on their theoretical concerns and priorities. For instance, as Saldanha states,

Munday's main concern is the link between stylistic choices at the micro-level and the macro-contexts of ideology and cultural production, which he believes have been traditionally neglected in stylistic studies (...). This inevitably inclines him to pay closer attention to linguistic features that can more easily be explained as meaningful choices (syntactic calquing, syntactic amplification, compound pre-modifiers, creative or idiomatic collocations) rather than the kind of lower-level syntactic patterns that have proved more relevant in revealing the habitual aspects of composition in forensic stylistics. The discourse analytical approach allows Munday to establish a convincing link between micro-level choices and contextual and ideological factors. However, this is at the expense of offering the kind of systematic analysis of specific features across several translations that is required to address the question he poses above, particularly what he refers to as the 'linguistic fingerprint' of the translator. (Saldanha, 2011: 8)

Munday's 2008 work *Style and Ideology in Translation: Latin American Writing in English* combines models of stylistic analysis with the occasional use of computer-assisted analysis in order to examine a corpus taken from translations into English of Latin American Literature. Gabriela Saldanha's 2005 PhD thesis is called *Style in Translation: An exploration of stylistic patterns in the translations of Margaret Jull Costa and Peter Bush*, and uses a corpus-based analysis to collect data which will allow her to identify typical stylistic traits in the work of two renowned and experienced translators.

These works, however, are often more concerned with the individual translator's style than with the question of how a source text's style is rendered in translation (Cf. Baker, 2000; Saldanha, 2011). Although we recognize the value of such inquiry, it was not what we envisaged here: somewhat paradoxically for one who declares to be target oriented in their approach to translation studies, we tried following the path of a set of source texts. A more target-oriented analysis of the translations of Lobo Antunes would probably have either chosen a translator or group of translators, or opted to undertake the same kind of analysis of a corpus chosen from the source language, but by grouping them by target language or system, instead of sorting them by source text as we have.

What we have done, with the method we have used, was to carefully analyse excerpts of each of the target texts, back to back with their source counterparts. In that sense, it is closer to the kind of work undertaken by Boase-Beier, who focuses on “the style of the source text as perceived by the translator and how it is conveyed or changed or to what extent it is or can be preserved in translation” (Boase-Beier, 2006: 5). Boase-Beier is the author of a 2018 book named *Translation and Style* (which consists of a revised edition of her 2006 work *Stylistic Approaches to Translation*), in which she “examines a variety of disciplines and theoretical approaches including stylistics, literary criticism, and narratology to investigate how we translate style”¹³.

Culture-specific words

Our analysis of António Lobo Antunes' prose often insists on the difficulty in dealing with references that are so deeply rooted in Portuguese culture that they may become opaque to foreign audiences. There is a vast theoretical literature on this subject, which are often called culture-specific words or *realia*. They are not exactly the same, as the semantic extension of culture-specific is arguably wider than that of *realia* – to be more precise, “culture-specific”, as Baker (1992) uses it, is more encompassing than the use Vlahov and Florin (1970) make of *realia*.

The term *realia* as it is used in a translation context was coined by Vlahov and Florin in a 1970 paper on lacunar phenomena in translation. It is used mostly in an East European tradition of scholarly literature on translation, but it has reached the West, namely through a Sider Florin paper published in English in a collective volume (Zlateva, 1993: 122-128), and by way of the interventions of Bruno Osimo (2004) in Italy, a slavist whose work in the field of translation theory has had quite some impact.

As they are defined by Vlahov and Florin, *realia* are textual elements which provide local and historical colour – or, as Djachy and Pareshishvili (2014) put it, “carriers of national and historical overtones”¹⁴. They are considered to be challenging for the translator (“untranslatable”), but also an essential element in the texts in which they make their appearance – hence little suited to be dealt with through an omission strategy. They are a recurring and, some would argue, defining feature of literary texts.

¹³ As it says on the frontispiece of the book.

¹⁴ “Vlahov & Florin define *realia* as follows: “words (and collocations) of a national language which denote objects, concepts and phenomena characteristic of the geographical surroundings, culture, everyday realities or socio-historical specifics of a people, nation, country or tribe, and which thus convey national, local or historical colour; such words have no exact equivalents in other languages” (1970: 438, translated)”. (Shuttleworth, 1997: 193)

As summed-up by Shuttleworth:

There are four categories of realia: a) geographical and ethnographical (e.g. mistral, Hakka), b) folkloric and mythological (e.g. Baba Yaga, leprechaun), c) everyday items (e.g. hurdy-gurdy, rupee) and d) socio-historical (e.g. Bezirk, Infanta). Vlahov & Florin suggest six strategies for translating realia: transcription, calque, formation of a new word, assimilation, approximate translation and descriptive translation (...). When selecting the most appropriate strategy, the translator should seek to retain some local colour without encumbering the reader with an excess of new, frequently impenetrable lexical items, and should also be mindful of the influence, whether enriching or polluting, which the new coinings may exert on TL. (Shuttleworth, 1997: 193)

Their take can then be said to be more prescriptive than that of Baker, for instance, who tries to remain within the boundaries of description. One important detail we would like to point out is that Baker's formulation also includes more abstract and less obvious instances: "The source-language word may express a concept which is totally unknown in the target culture. The concept in question may be abstract or concrete; it may relate to a religious belief, a social custom or even a type of food. Such concepts are often referred to as 'culture-specific'" (Baker, 1992: 21). The example she gives immediately after this explanation illustrates how encompassing is her notion of culture-specificity: "An example of an abstract English concept which is notoriously difficult to translate into other languages is that expressed by the word privacy. This is a very 'English' concept which is rarely understood by people from other cultures" (Baker, 1992: 21). The English word "privacy" has its root in Latin and, accordingly, many romance languages use their vernacular counterpart: "privacidade" in Portuguese, "privacidad" in Spanish, "privacit " in French¹⁵... According to this line of thought, however, the precise connotation of these words, even when they do exist in other languages, hardly conveys the way the word as it is culturally-charged in a given source culture.

Untranslatability

The debate on the concept and the conditions of translatability is long and yet, by some, considered either futile or unfruitful. For instance Catford (1965), after considering translatability at the word level, and demonstrating how easily it may fail (his example is the fact that the feminine pronoun "elles" in French has no counterpart

¹⁵ Incidentally, in Italian this concept is conveyed by the English loan-word "privacy", as if to prove Baker's point.

in English language and tends to be translated as “they”), concedes that this kind of linguistic discrepancy is “functionally irrelevant” to the question of equivalence (cf. Catford, 1965: 94). It is precisely under a section dedicated to “Common problems of non-equivalence” that Baker (1992) lists, among other things, the “culture-specific concepts” we have discussed above. This and other types of non-equivalence that Baker (and many others) mention are almost exclusively pertaining to singular terms or at least limited lexical units, and it is hard to argue that singular terms pose a problem, when they can be neutralised by means of several strategies (including paratext, explicitation, even omission...). Even when the issue is above word level, there are still strategies which can be used (like compensation).

Shuttleworth, who quotes Frawley (1984) in this excerpt, admonishes:

Yet it is not enough to consider simple retention of the same basic semantic features as the sole criterion for translatability. The existence of further semantic dimensions which are added by such concepts as connotation and collocational meaning supports the conclusion that an absolute meaning does not exist independently of any particular language and that translatability can consequently only be a limited notion. In addition to this, textual and contextual features such as implied meaning, as well as formal features such as puns, wordplays and poetic devices, which are notoriously difficult to preserve through the translation process, indicate that meaning is to a large extent generated by a specific text. In the light of such considerations Frawley, for example, argues that there can be no exactness in translation in any “but rare and trivial cases” (1984: 163), and concludes that “any interlingual translation that seeks to transfer only semantics has lost before it has begun” (1984: 168). If this is the case, then any idea of absolute translatability must be abandoned. (Shuttleworth, 1997:180)

In a way, every one of the characteristics we have attributed to Lobo Antunes' prose leads back to the debate on (un)translatability. If, following Frawley as quoted by Shuttleworth, we are to consider that translatability/untranslatability is not a binary option, but a broad spectrum into which every element of any translation will find their place, we come to the conclusion that the very concept of translatability is misplaced or misconstrued. “No two snowflakes are alike”, as Rabassa (1989) tells us about translation. While bearing in mind the impossibility (if not the dire absurdity) of complete equivalence outside mathematics, the question that stands and is relevant to our inquiry has to do with the degree of untranslatability of our corpus. And, to put it more accurately, since even with all the commas, “translatability” would never be an intrinsic characteristic of the source text, but something that might emerge out of the interplay with another code in a specific work of translation, the issue would be to what extent have these source-texts been met with problems of translatability in each of the instances of translation under analysis here.

The question of untranslatability, though, can be productively put in other terms. For instance, by resorting to the concept of “remainder”, posited by Lecercle (1990), and recalled by Venuti (2013), in an essay on the translator’s unconscious: “The remainder consists of such variations as regional and social dialects, slogans and clichés, technical terminologies and slang, archaisms and neologisms, literary figures like metaphors and puns, stylistic innovations, and foreign loan words” (Venuti, 2013: 37). In other words, then, it is an instance of heterogeneity: conceptually opposed to the standard use of a language, it embodies variation and difference. It is also, we would argue, the very mark of style, and the ambition of every work of literature. It is particularly present in what is called *experimental* works, those which seek to be truly innovative – thus, in Lobo Antunes’ prose.

A State of the Art

Lobo Antunes has merited scholarly attention and there are a few works that are central to the study of his work, namely Maria Alzira Seixo’s comprehensive analysis of the novels in two volumes (Seixo, 2002; 2010), and the *Dicionário da Obra de António Lobo Antunes* for whose organization she is responsible as well (Seixo, 2008).

There is a number of individual works that are worth mentioning, such as: Cardoso, 2011; Arnaut, 2012; Warrot, 2013; Carvalho, 2014; Sousa, 2015. Among the collective works, we would like to point out the following: the volume which collects the proceedings of an International Congress entirely devoted to the work of Lobo Antunes, which took place in Évora in 2002 (Cabral et al., 2003); the one organised by Filipe Cammaert, which inaugurates a collection exclusively dedicated to essays on the author, thus giving voice to an emerging generation of scholars (Cammaert, 2011); and, finally, for the international projection the English language can grant it, the volume organised by Victor K. Mendes and published by the Tagus Press, which is the publishing arm of the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture (Mendes, 2011).

A set of contributions that have been very relevant for our work include Ana Paula Arnaut’s compilation of press reviews, that allows us to follow the evolution of the author’s reception in Portugal (Arnaut, 2011), and also her collection of interviews with the author (Arnaut, 2008). The latter, complemented by a number of works which consist of interviews with Lobo Antunes (Blanco, 2002; Silva, 2009; Filipe, 2017), have

contributed decisively to build a rather detailed picture of the author's itinerary throughout the years of his literary career.

As far as we could ascertain, little attention has been dedicated to the study of the translations of Lobo Antunes' works. There is a considerable amount of material which consists of testimonies given by his translators, in several forms: as memoir (Rabassa, 2005), interviews (Hoeksema, 1978; Coelho, 2002; Rossi, 2016; McNeil, 2018), and even short essays; the latter is the case of the inclusion of chapters written by the translators into French, English, German and Swedish in the volume of proceedings of the 2002 International Congress, or Richard Zenith's participation in the collective volume *Facts and Fictions of António Lobo Antunes* (Mendes, 2011).

Concerning works with a more distinctively academic tone, we would like to mention Maria Eduarda Keating's analysis of French translations, also included in the Évora proceedings (Cabral et al., 2003) and, more recently, Dominique Faria's research, which includes more than one instance of analysis of translations of Lobo Antunes' (Faria, 2018, 2021).

There are recurring features in the testimonies of Lobo Antunes' translators: they mostly see his prose as highly dense and extremely creative, with unorthodox solutions both at the syntactic and the semantic level and, therefore, challenging to translate; nearly all of them resort to musical metaphors or comparisons to describe his writing; and they share an admiration for the author's work, a kind of appreciation that seems to precede the translating process, but to grow with it as well.

In the volume of congress proceedings *A Escrita e o Mundo em António Lobo Antunes* (Cabral et al., 2003), the French translator Carlos Battista starts by confessing to have incurred in a “blunder worthy of a stammering schoolboy”¹⁶ (Cabral et al., 2003: 382), when he translated “lobos da Alsácia” as “loups d'Alsace” (“Alsace wolves”), without realizing this is a common way to refer to “german shepherds” in Portuguese. The unintended surreal effect of this translation option ended up appealing to the publisher Christian Bourgois, who suggested it be kept in the target text. This anecdote illustrates one of the less visible motivations behind translation choices. We rarely have access to examples such as this one, in which Battista was brave enough to admit before an audience he had failed to understand what “lobos da Alsácia” were, and had neglected to look it up in the dictionary. But it shows us how, when it comes to translation, chance and whim can play a role.

In the same volume, both the Swedish translator Marianne Eyre and the German

¹⁶ In French, “cette bourde digne d'un balbutiant écolier”. (Cabral et al., 2003: 382)

translator Maralde Meyer-Minnemann commented on the difficulties due to the different structures of source and target languages. Even if they do comment on the author's peculiar prose and his personal style, most of their remarks have to do with the differences between languages. They muse on questions around sound and meaning, loss and gain, and cultural asymmetries.

Maralde Meyer-Minnemann claims to envy those who translate Lobo Antunes into romance languages (Cabral et al., 2003: 403): to her mind, much of the difficulties of translating Lobo Antunes are due to the fact that Portuguese, being a romance language, is filled with solutions and structures that have no parallel in her native tongue. Conversely, she also grants that German has an advantage that many other languages do not, insofar as its habit of word formation by juxtaposition allows her to create new words that may solve at least some of the difficulties she is faced with as a translator.

Marianne Eyre, whose intervention (Cabral et al., 2003: 389-394) compares the writer to a composer and the translator to an interpreter, insists on the musical metaphor. She also stresses the importance of getting acquainted with the country, its history and literature, and the people and their habits as well; she claims that this dimension is an important part of her work as a translator, and it is no doubt significant that she speaks of "familiarity" (Cabral et al., 2003: 393) rather than knowledge, implying it is more a matter of experience than of information.

Richard Zenith, who translates into English, has at least two published articles on his experience of translating Lobo Antunes. In both of them he reflects mostly on one characteristic of the author's prose: the way in which it is steeped on local realities, and how local experiences and habits are of crucial importance. He also gives some thought to the conundrum of the forms of address, which is no minor issue in Portuguese nor in this author's prose in particular. This is, in fact, something most translators comment on: since social commentary is very strong in Lobo Antunes, there are verbal markers of class and social status that play a preponderant role in his works; and these may not always have a direct correspondence in other languages and cultures.

These are the assessments made by some of Lobo Antunes' translators. Even if they summon theoretical considerations made by others and establish links between their own experience and this kind of literature, their perspective is in the first person. Their inputs are valuable but have an imprint which is not, strictly speaking, academic. We have found very few instances of works which analyse translations of Lobo

Antunes with a distinctive scholarly hallmark.

The most recent instance includes several contributions by Dominique Faria who, in conference papers, journals or collective volumes, has examined certain details of translations (into English and French) of Portuguese contemporary authors, including Lobo Antunes. Her perspective is a post-colonial one, and her choice of texts evinces just that. In “La langue du colonisé à l’épreuve de la traduction” (Faria, 2018), she enquires on how the colonized people are represented in the translated versions of the novels under analysis. She pays close attention to the treatment given to words from African languages that are included in the source texts, and she concludes that “there has been a tendency, during the translation process, to replace non-Western cultural references with more widespread forms of representation” (Faria, 2018: 164).

The only other study on translations of Lobo Antunes which we have identified is Maria Eduarda Keating's contribution to the 2002 Congress proceedings (Cabral et al., 2003: 411-420). Looking into the French translations of two of the author's novel (*As Naus* and *Exortação aos Crocodilos*), she identifies several instances of normalisation. These take the form of lexical choices, explicitations, and syntactic rearrangements, and compose a framework of subtle but persistent neutralisation. As we will see, working with a different corpus, our conclusions converge with Keating's.

III – Target Contexts

A key element of the Descriptive Translation Studies approach is the importance given to the cultural and historical dimensions of translation. In his 2009 work *Translation in Systems – Descriptive and System-oriented Approaches Explained*, Theo Hermans uses the example of Helen Lowe-Porter's translations of Thomas Mann to illustrate this school of thought's stance. After summing up the polemics around these translations, and concluding the assessment is not at all positive, he reflects:

But maybe there are further questions that are worth asking. After all, however deplorable they may be, Helen Lowe-Porter's translations exist. They were and are read. We cannot simply wish them away. Whether we lament or applaud their presence and their impact, they are facts of life, an undeniable part of history (...). Even if we wish the Lowe-Porter translations had never been produced, the mere fact of their existence, and of their effect on generations of readers, should be reason enough to take a closer look at them, not just in order to damn them but to try to account for their appearance.

That means approaching them from a somewhat different angle. Critical evaluation, the apportioning of praise or censure, need not be the exclusive or even the primary aim. Perhaps explanation can be. If we take this other path, we could begin by taking stock, not of what we feel there should have been, but of what, for better or for worse, there *is*. (Hermans, 2009: 4)

This is thus the purpose of the kind of analysis undertaken within a framework of Descriptive Translation Studies. Detaching itself from a kind of translation criticism that could be found sterile, this school of thought also tries to placate the linguistic approaches to translation by broadening the scope of their enquiries. By putting the phenomenon into context, these scholars asked different questions which naturally lead not only to different answers but, more importantly, to new sets of questions in turn.

(...) the questions are geared not so much to gauging the quality of individual translations, upholding particular principles as to what constitutes a good translation, or guaranteeing the quality of new translations to be made. Rather, the aim is to delve into translation as a cultural and historical phenomenon, to explore its context and its conditioning factors, to search for grounds that can explain why there is what there is. (Hermans, 2009: 5)

As cultural and historical phenomena, translations depend on the context in which they are produced and, in turn, contribute to shape its conditions. The process is dynamic: whenever one says context, one is implicitly referring to a given moment; "context" is a

situation that has more of conjunctural¹⁷ than of structural.

It is with this in mind that we set out to define the target contexts in which these translations have been made. This scrutiny does not substitute textual analysis, but rather complements it: “Although including micro-textual studies, this approach clearly stresses the need to focus on the wider picture in order to encompass how translation (as product, process and function) is related to the sociocultural context in which it occurs” (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010: 98).

Before the examination of the translations proper, we will therefore attempt to sketch out, albeit briefly, the cultural and editorial landscape in which these translations come into being. To that end, we will need to ascertain the relative importance of the target contexts, both in relation to one another, as in what concerns the source context. This assessment is based in a Polysystems framework (Even-Zohar, 1990), but builds on ulterior theoretical elaborations that mostly apply Even-Zohar's theory to the circulation of literature. These elaborations contribute to a reformulation of the general comparative theory of literature, and yield relevant results regarding the circulation of literary works in an unequal (or uneven) world-stage in which national literatures behave and are received differently depending on their position (Casanova, 2004; Heilbron, 2010; Ginsburgh and Weber, 2016; Helgesson and Vermeulen, 2016).

We also tried to gather specific data on the current situation of translated literature in the target systems, both in general terms, and particularly concerning translation from the Portuguese. We did so by consulting works in the field of what can be considered book and/or translation history (Raposo, 1999; Russo, 2007; Guerini et al., 2008; Schiffrin, 2010; Mulinacci, 2011, 2012, and 2015; Neves, 2012; West III, 2012; Bernstein, 2016; Ferro, 2017), but also more direct sources of raw data, like statistic reports (like those of the International Publishers Association, the World Intellectual Property Organization, Literature Across Frontiers, Associazione Italiana Editori, Nielsen, Pen Club International) and databases, most notably those that correspond to the legal deposit entity of the countries in question¹⁸.

This information is relevant because, as Rosa writes, on Toury and his school's

¹⁷ While applied to a broader context, it seems appropriate to recall the formulation of Stuart Hall, for whom the practice of the conjunctural analysis he called for implied “describing a complex field of power and consent, and looking at different levels of expression – political, ideological, cultural and economic. It's about trying to see how all of that is deployed in the form of power which ‘hegemony’ describes” (Hall and Massey, 2010: 65). “Conjuncture” is a key concept in Hall's thought, whose frame in these writings is more blatantly political. It is interesting to evoke it here because even though Hall defines it against a backdrop of hegemony, his emphasis is always on the dynamic nature of these processes and on the unsteady balance that allows for power shifts. His standpoint is political and ideological, but these reflections may be applied to cultural phenomena as well, insofar as they are also subject to political, ideological, and economic factors.

¹⁸ Unesco's Index Translationum has its shortcomings, and is not presently up to date. The Three Percent project, on the other hand, has been issuing new databases on a yearly basis.

approach,

(...) the target text must always be interpreted as a result of the constraints and influences of such a target context, or as a cause for the introduction of changes into the target system. (...) As a consequence, attention is shifted from the comparison of source and target text to the study of the relations between target texts and between target texts and their context, the target culture. (Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2010: 98-99)

The status of a translation – any translation – is entirely different, depending on the centrality of the system in question. By the time Venuti writes his *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (1995), he comments on how “British and American book production increased fourfold since the 1950s, but the number of translations remained roughly between 2 and 4 percent of the total” (Venuti, 1995: 12). One could then say that translated literature is much more marginal in an English-speaking context than it is in others – like, for instance, France (in which Venuti estimates that 9.9% of published works were translations) or Italy (where they amounted to 25.4%, according to the same source). As we will have the opportunity to see in the following chapters, these statistics concern the number of titles, and say very little about the effective projection a given translated work may have: and it is under this light that we may read phenomena such as the relatively high ratio of translations that achieve notoriety in the English-speaking world, on the one hand; or, on the other hand, the fact that the relatively high number of translations from the Portuguese being published in Italy in recent years does not necessarily correspond to an increased visibility of Portuguese language literature, due to factors like editorial collocation.

Aside from the fact that foreign or translated works have a dissimilar presence and are perceived differently in both of these contexts, one has to consider that even on the inside of each system there are significant nuances that must be taken into account. Editorial collocation is indeed of crucial importance to define the status of an author in a given system; and this is relevant in more than one way: the dimension and prestige of the publisher may be seen as a reflex of the author's perceived status, as he enters a new target system for the first time; but this cataloguing and the way it is carried out may in turn decisively influence the author's reception in said context. We will therefore summarily characterize these contexts publishing scenes, so as to better understand the importance and the significance of the imprints involved in the publication of Lobo Antunes' translations.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1985, 1992, 2000) has written profusely on this issue, and he has made several distinctions and considerations regarding the position of symbolic

goods in the cultural market¹⁹. We will be using his terminology when referring to large-scale and small-scale production circuits; these categories correspond, respectively, to the more commercial field of production, conceived for a wider audience (or, in the case of books, readership) and the more specialised one, aimed at a more restricted and selective group. The collocation of Lobo Antunes in both systems under scrutiny has a distinct history, as it was in some ways inevitable, given their constitutive differences. We will see how the pathway of this author in the Italian context starts out later, but then gains momentum and can be said to have a degree of stability throughout the years, whereas his parable in the English-speaking context illustrates an evolution in his career and in the public perception of his work.

In Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of the field of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1984), he posits that the position of each agent in the field depends on a number of factors, and it ultimately results from the relationship that ends up being established between the specific rules of the field, the agent's habitus and the agent's social, economic and cultural capital. This author's importance to this discipline has to do with his innovative way of considering and carefully accounting for both the economic and the symbolic aspects of cultural products, and producing a conceptual framework that articulates both these dimensions. From that perspective emerges a multi-layered conception of the reality of the cultural market: "Symbolic goods are a two-faced reality, a commodity and a symbolic object. Their specifically cultural value and their commercial value remain relatively independent, although the economic sanction may come to reinforce their cultural consecration" (Bourdieu, 1985: 16).

The book market is subject to this complex dynamics of the exchanges of symbolic capital. The international circulation of literature is thus on the cusp of seemingly opposing forces. This antagonism between market and cultural value, though, is but an oversimplified perception. If every company depends on sales, the market value of a publishing house rests heavily on the symbolic value of their catalogue. Profit is therefore but one element to be taken into account, and it cannot be considered separately from other, less material factors.

As a consequence, one needs to take into account the fact that the power of the agents involved is not only – and in some instances not even primarily – financial. The

¹⁹ Bourdieu proposes an opposition between "large-scale" and "small-scale" production circuits. In broad terms, one can say that large-scale production is "directed at catering to the preexisting demands of a larger audience, and small-scale production meant for an audience that mainly consists of fellow artists, experts, critics, and a limited number of other insiders" (Velthuis, 2007: 17). As the same author remarks, "on different occasions Bourdieu has referred to this opposition as an opposition between the commercial and the noncommercial, between traditional and avant-garde, or between bourgeois and intellectual art" (Velthuis, 2007: 17-18).

actors that take part in such processes are not only those more directly in contact with the cultural product in question (like publishers and translators), but the whole structure of production (which includes proof-readers, but also graphic artists, publicists, distributors, etc.) and the entire social, economic and cultural system they are a part of, and which includes critics, scholars, and a wide range of institutions.

Mapping out the history of the internationalisation of António Lobo Antunes as an author thus implies identifying not only who his translators and publishers are, but also what is their status and how did they come into such position. We will briefly describe the professional trajectory of each one of the translators involved, and very succinctly explain the importance of each one of the imprints that ended up publishing this author. It is only by reading these elements against the backdrop of their context that one can have an idea of their significance. In other words, we will not only inquiry who translated Lobo Antunes and how, but we will try to understand, in the contexts in question, who else is translated and published, and in what circumstances.

The Context of Italian Language

Italy's is one of the largest book markets in Europe: it usually²⁰ occupies the 4th position, after the United Kingdom's, Germany's, and France's, and right before Spain's. It can be said to be currently semi-central (Ginsburgh and Weber, 2016 and Helgesson and Vermeulen, 2016)²¹.

As a rule, one can say that peripheral systems tend to publish a great percentage of translations. In a hyper-central context such as the English-speaking one, translations are the exception. In 2004, Pascale Casanova (Casanova, 2004: 168) placed the European average in the 15% mark; also according to her, the quantity of translations in Italy was around – or even above – 25%²².

On the beginning of the decade of 2000 the translations in Italy amounted, in fact, to 25% (according to the data supplied by the competent Italian association, AIE, “Associazione Italiana Editori”); this number, however, has been decreasing, amounting to 17,6% in 2015²³. By crossing this number with those of the Nielsen report (Manzotti, 2015) on small publishers, we can speculate that it is in great part due to the action of these publishers that national production in Italy has been winning terrain to the foreign one. This is, hence, a context that is very permeable to translations – and even so, predictably, the presence of minority languages is negligible.

It should be noted that these figures refer to the number of published titles (of any kind, including non-fiction), regardless of their print run or circulation; many of these national titles are issued by small presses, with little or no distribution whatsoever, and very restricted circulation – and, in some cases, include phenomena like that of “editoria a pagamento”²⁴, very diffused in Italy. This is, therefore, and in spite of the

²⁰ Unlike France's, Italian production is very uneven: while the number of published books has been slowly but steadily rising over the years in the French market, the behaviour of its Italian counterpart is less straightforward, reaching, on occasion, high peaks that are often followed by strong decreases in the number of published books; during those peaks, it sometimes happens that the Italian production surpasses the French one.

²¹ In spite of it, this country features unusually high numbers of non-readers, with more than half of potential readers (those over 6 years old) stating they have not read a single book in the previous year (according to the ISTAT, the number amounted to 56,5% in 2015) – in France, for instance, that percentage is about 30% – and ranks 21st in literacy, according to OSCE's data.

²² She does not identify her sources.

²³ The numbers we quote are from the reports of the AIE. Tim Parks, for instance, has very different numbers – although he does not mention his source: “about 70 percent of novels published in Italy are translated and of those about 70 percent are translated from English”. (Parks, 2016)

²⁴ The kind of commercial operation that consists in providing not only typographical but also editorial

constant decrease of the quota of translated books, a market that is very permeable to translations.

This was not always the case, though. Italy has a curious history of resistance towards foreign cultural products, namely concerning literature. This is probably due to the weight of classical culture, abnormally strong and long-lasting – as it can be inferred by a famous remark²⁵ by Madame de Staël's; noting the strong (and, in her opinion, worthy) tradition of translating Greek classics, she comments on how Italians should translate from living languages, encouraging them to consider German and English poetry of that time, and chastising their insistence on dwelling in the graeco-latin tradition:

It would be highly desirable, it seems to me, for the Italians to attend to the careful translation of various new poems by the English and Germans; they would thus introduce a new genre to their compatriots, who for the most part stick to images drawn from ancient mythology, when in fact these are beginning to run dry and paganism in poetry is seen less and less in the rest of Europe. It is important for the progress of thought in lovely Italy to look often beyond the Alps – not to borrow, but to become acquainted; not to imitate, but to free themselves from certain conventional forms that persist in literature very like official phrases in society, and that likewise deprive it of any natural lifelikeness. (Stäel in Robinson, 2014: 243)

In his chapter in the collective volume *Translation Under Fascism*, Christopher Rundle focuses “on the debate that arose around the question of translation in the 1930s and on the way in which the attitude of the regime towards translation evolved from a silent tolerance to an active hostility” (Rundle and Sturge, 2010: 15):

The discussion on the subject of translations developed from an aesthetic question in the 1920s, centering on the contribution that literary exchange could potentially make to the modernization and popularization of Italian literature, with the fear expressed in some more culturally conservative quarters that this process, if left uncontrolled, could lead to its impoverishment, to a characteristically Fascist ideological debate in the 1930s which was dominated by the symbolic value attributed to translation as a phenomenon and by the concern that Italy was the weak partner in an international struggle for cultural expansion and that its cultural prestige was being threatened by translation. (Rundle and Sturge, 2010: 15)

If every system is conservative by nature (Lefevere, 1992), fascist regimes do tend to push this natural feature further, forcing systems to resist what is often seen as contamination. It is in this cultural and political framework that begin to operate agents

services to an author; often confused with self-publishing, it differs from it in the fact that the edition bears the name of an editorial brand; in the English-speaking world, it is also known as vanity press.

²⁵ The text was written originally in French by Madame de Staël, but it was translated into Italian (by Pietro Giordani) and published in the literary magazine *Biblioteca Italiana*, feeding the by then fierce debate which opposed classicists and romantics. We have used the translation by David G. Ross included in the 2014 anthology by Douglas Robinson.

(intellectuals and writers such as Pavese, Vittorini, Prezzolini, Moravia, Papini) whose work helped lay the foundations of modern Italian publishing industry.

In the 1930s, dubbed by Cesare Pavese *il decennio delle traduzioni*, “Italy published more translations than any other country in the world” (Rundle and Sturge, 2010: 3). This was the turning point. To put it in Lefevere's terms, the penetration of foreign (and mostly American) literature in those years changed the Italian *dominant poetics* in a permanent way.

According to Casanova

Translation is the foremost example of a particular type of consecration in the world. Its true nature as a form of literary recognition (rather than a mere exchange of one language for another or a purely horizontal transfer that provides a useful measure of the volume of publishing transactions in the world) goes unrecognized on account of its apparent neutrality. Nonetheless it constitutes the principal means of access to the literary world for all writers outside the center. Translation is the major prize and weapon in international literary competition. (Casanova, 2004: 133).

If this is so, the very fact that a book is selected for translation is perceived as a sign of approval in itself, both by the source and the target systems, independently of how good the translation turns out to be and of how it performs in the book market. In this sense, the importance of having a book translated into a prestigious (i.e., more central) language overcomes that of not having it properly distributed.

Statistics regarding translation are usually organized by linguistic area and not country of origin. In any case, the AIE – Associazione Italiana Editori (Italian Association of Publishers) – does not supply specific data on the Portuguese language. From their data, however, we learn that, from all the translations published in Italy (in 2008), 43% are from English originals. French comes next, but it is very much behind, with 2,3%, followed by German, which accounts for 1,3% of translations²⁶.

In order to obtain data on the translations from the Portuguese in Italy, a relevant resource is the work of Jaime Raposo Costa (1999), *Autori Portughesi Tradotti ed Editi in Italia, Narrativa Poesia Saggistica (1898-1998)*. It was published by the Portuguese Embassy in Rome, and it lists only Portuguese authors. Since this work was published in 1999, it is of no help when it comes to works that have been published after that year. The best source to gather those data are the databases compiled by the Portuguese government departments who are responsible for that area: the former Instituto Português do Livro e das Bibliotecas (IPLB), currently Direcção Geral de Livros, Arquivos, e Bibliotecas (DGLAB). Aside from the data concerning the

²⁶ According to the report of the Associazione Italiana Editori.

publications that have been financially supported by the Portuguese Government (and which include not only Portuguese authors, but those of Portuguese-speaking Africa as well), this government agency tries to keep an up-to-date database of the translations of Portuguese-speaking authors abroad. Their lists leave out the Brazilian authors, concerning whom there have been some studies²⁷, usually of very limited scope. A reliable source, for all of these instances, is the Italian SBN (Servizio Bibliotecario Nazionale) database, in which are listed all the titles published in Italian territory, complying with the registration of duty copies required by the law of copyright. There is a certain delay in the insertion of data²⁸, due to which it may be advisable to regularly probe the commercial catalogues of publishing houses.

Portuguese language literature's first translations into Italian were those of the authors now considered classic, such as Eça de Queiroz. Mariagrazia Russo (2007) uses the above mentioned work by Raposo (1999) in order to describe this author's relationship with the Italian system: his works began to be translated and published soon after his death, and the number of publications slowly increased until it reached a peak in the 1950s, only to decrease almost to a stand-still, in the 1970s (cf. Russo, 2007: 128).

Using the same source, Russo summarizes how Portuguese literature has performed over the years in Italy: up until the 1950s there are very few translations, less than ten per decade. A slight augment may be perceived, between the decade of 1950s and that of 1970s, but a peak was reached in the 1980s, with 45 translations, followed by 104 in the 1990s (Russo, 2007: 129).

This shift owes much to the affirmation of Fernando Pessoa as an author in the Italian context. His work had been presented to the Italian public in the 1950s (by Enrico Cicogna²⁹), although the credit for introducing Pessoa in Italy is usually given to Luigi Panarese³⁰; a few publications ensued, be it in volumes of their own, or as a part of anthologies. It is only in the late 1970s that Pessoa's fame begins to build up, with much responsibility of Antonio Tabucchi.

A new momentum took place in the 1990s, around José Saramago who, even before being distinguished with the Nobel Prize for Literature (1998), was being repeatedly and consistently translated into Italian, entering immediately the large

²⁷ Martins 2008, and Bucaioni and Gatti, unpublished.

²⁸ There are two "Biblioteche Nazionali Centrali", one in Rome and another one in Florence; the delay in the insertion of the data is more noticeable in Rome.

²⁹ Cicogna was a versatile translator, and has translated books from the English, German, Spanish and Portuguese language; Pessoa is not the only Portuguese-speaking author in his curriculum (he also translated Fernando Namora), but he is most famous because of his translations of García Márquez and the 007 series by Ian Fleming.

³⁰ Panarese lived in Portugal since the 1940's and taught Italian at the University of Coimbra.

editorial circuit: «All'opera di Pessoa si aggiunge quella di José Saramago del quale sono apparse in Italia nel secolo scorso ben 42 edizioni.» (Russo, 2007: 130).

Between these two phases, that of the classic Eça de Queiroz and the contemporary phenomena of popularity around Saramago and Pessoa, there was a wave of appreciation of a different kind, the reasons behind which were not only strictly literary: it was the case of the Brazilian author Jorge Amado, adopted and strongly endorsed by the Communist Italian Party. Most of his works have been translated and published in Italy. According to an old joke, the qualification required to translate Amado was being a member of the communist party.

The fact is that, back then, it was not easy to find translators who even knew Portuguese, let alone have an academic background in that language. Among the first translators of Amado, we find names such as Panarese (the Portugal-based pioneer of lusophone letters, famous for having translated Pessoa), but also Dario Puccini, a very respected hispanist (and a member of the Roman resistance during World War II) and Giuliana Segre, famous for her anti-fascist militancy, and who lived in Brazil for 30 years before becoming a translator.

Daniela Ferioli, who retranslated several of Amado's works, stated in an interview how she was asked to retranslate Jorge Amado, because of the poor work that had been done by those who came before her³¹. (Zornetta, 2016: 419) Translator and scholar Roberto Francavilla, specialized in Portuguese, has declared on more than one occasion³² how “until not very long ago, in Italy, the translations from the Portuguese were carried out by those who were proficient... in Spanish!”³³ This certainly testifies to the peripheral quality of the Portuguese language in the Italian system.

Our point is not that one cannot be fluent or competent in more than one language³⁴

³¹ Her testimonial: “(...) nel 1996, Einaudi mi fece ritradurre Jorge Amado, perché le prime traduzioni italiane lo avevano massacrato. Quando era stato tradotto e pubblicato per la prima volta in Italia, mancavano traduttori dal portoghese brasiliano, per questo era stato affidato a traduttori di lingua spagnola o, tutto al più, portoghese, che comunque ignoravano la realtà e il linguaggio, usi e costumi del nord del Brasile. Un vero disastro. Lo stile dei primi libri, *Sudore*, *Cacao*, *Jubiabá*, povero, secco e asciutto come quelle terre, era diventato pomposo, ricco, pletorico. Per non parlare degli errori, da cui ho creato un bestiario”. (Zornetta, 2016: 419)

³² Associate professor of Portuguese Literature at the University of Genoa, he regularly translates from Portuguese for large publishing houses (like Feltrinelli), names like Chico Buarque or Gonçalo M. Tavares; he recently translated Clarice Lispector for Adelphi.

³³ For instance, in a round table on translation, held at the margin of the festival of Italian Cinema in March 2015. But also in an encounter held in Pisa on dissemination of Lusophone literatures in Italy. Here is a quote taken from the book which resulted from that event: “Il modello che se impone provoca una serie di goffi automatismi che vanno dalle facili mapazioni all'inusitata pigrizia intellettuale: così, ad esempio, nel lessico del nostro giornalismo ogni riferimento linguistico al Portogallo sarà accomunato al castigliano; peggio ancora, nell'editoria, perlomeno fino alla fine degli anni '90, si assisterà al frequente affidamento di traduzioni dal portoghese a ispanisti.” (Tocco and Lupetti, 2010: 26)

³⁴ There is no lack of examples of professional and/or prestigious translators who are competent in both languages: for instance Gregory Rabassa (U.S.A.), famously translated and received praise for his translations from the Spanish (of authors such as Cortázar or García Márquez), but he ended up earning his tenure in Portuguese and translated from the Portuguese, as often as the market would

(although we agree with Landers (2001: 114) when he says that more than two may be hard to juggle); but what we see in Italy is how translations from the Portuguese are often carried out by hispanists. One blatant example is that of Vittoria Martinetto, translator and scholar at the University of Turin: having specialized in Spanish, she is known as the translator of popular Spanish-speaking writers (such as Luis Sepúlveda); but she also translates, for the Feltrinelli publishing house, António Lobo Antunes; what strikes us as odd is that it is the only Portuguese-speaking author in her curriculum. She claimed, in an interview (Rossi, 2016) how he is her favourite author and how much she enjoys translating his books. She also has stated, in a conference in Mexico how she never formally learned Portuguese; she dismisses any possible objection to her work as a translator from the Portuguese by declaring that, in her opinion, what is important is to know Italian well. She even goes on to tell an anecdote of how, when working as an interpreter for Portuguese author Saramago, he told her: «Hablas muy mal portugués» (Martinetto, 2016).

This example allows us to reach the following conclusions: on the one hand, it proves how, in spite of the formative offer in Italian universities (and, very recently, high-schools) Portuguese is seen as a minor language – for no one hires a specialist from a different area unless they are convinced there is lack of specifically trained human resources; on the other hand, the insistence of this translator – a reputed translator, working for a major publisher, and translating very canonical authors – on the importance of the target language leads us to believe this is a system where the translation practice tends to be target-oriented.

But other speculations are possible: it would be naive to think that the dynamics of large-circuit publishing depend mostly on language skills. It is also, to a great degree, a matter of (perceived) prestige – a renowned author calls for an equally respected translator; since the translations from the Portuguese are so few, one would hardly make a name for oneself as a translator from that language. And while a small press is more at liberty to invest in an obscure specialist (someone who has specific training, even if he/she is unknown to the public), the big imprints have their trusted regular collaborators, and it is unthinkable to confide the translation of an author who is perceived as central in their source system to a translator who is not equally distinguished.

Tim Parks, who is a writer, translator, and also a theorist of translation studies, has

allow or demand for it (one instance is Lobo Antunes); in Italy, there is the example of the veteran Vincenzo Barca, who regularly translates from both languages; in spite of his personal interest in Spanish-speaking literature, he has translated several great names of the Portuguese-speaking world, having been the first translator of Mia Couto in his country.

studied the way in which these dynamics take place, in the particular case of Primo Levi's translations to English. In 2015, Norton undertook a full edition of Italian author Primo Levi's *opera omnia*, involving a team of ten translators (for fourteen books). By analysing the translations, and the press coverage of these works in translation, Parks reaches the conclusion that the authors who translated the most notorious works³⁵ are praised the most, in spite of the quality of their work – which incidentally is, in some of the cases, in Park's opinion, quite sloppy; on the other hand, those who translated the other eight works that constitute this project get little or no recognition whatsoever, even though he deems the work of some of them to have been absolutely brilliant:

These three books [...] have monopolized critical comment on *The Complete Works* and inevitably brought prestige to their translators, Stuart Woolf and Ann Goldstein. But they amount to fewer than 600 of almost 2,800 pages. The other writings, comprising about 1,600 pages of stories and essays, 150 pages of poems, a novel, *If Not Now, When?*, and a fiercely controversial reflection on concentration camp survivors, *The Drowned and the Saved*, have received at best generous nods and asides from the critics, while their eight translators were fortunate if they were named at all. (Parks, 2016)

This example illustrates how well-known or consecrated authors and/or works tend to be perceived under a grid of pre-conceptions which result in this phenomenon. This is particularly true when it comes to the large circuit, where both investments and expectations are higher. The commercial circuits known as “alternative” can indeed function as such, to some extent, as they have more latitude for risk – with smaller investment, the losses are less significant, and hence small and medium presses can more easily afford to bet in less known authors and translators.

In Italy, this was the case with Saramago and Lobo Antunes, whose works entered the target system already with the status of canonical (even though the first of these names is very popular and the second one much less so), and therefore have both been published, from the start, by large editorial groups (Einaudi and Feltrinelli).

The dynamics we have illustrated above may help explain the curious case of Lídia Jorge: an author who is canonical both in Portugal and abroad, with a long established career and international fame and recognition (mostly in France, a system that often works as a stepping stone to minor systems), having received several important awards (Jean Monnet in 2000, Albatroz in 2006, Latin Union in 2011, just to name a few) and also very popular with the general public – and whose work is almost totally ignored by the Italian context: after two feeble attempts by major labels (the first one in

³⁵ *Se questo è un uomo, La tregua, Il sistema periodico.*

1992, by Giunti, and the second one in 2003, by Bompiani³⁶), the Italian editorial system seems to have given up on this author altogether. An explanation may be the following: the circuit of large distribution either works with big numbers or not at all; if the investment does not give immediate financial return, the publisher is likely to move on. Ill-advised as this may seem for the Bourdieu reader, it seems to have become common practice, if we believe Schiffrin's testimony (Schiffrin, 2000).

Fernando Pessoa's case has peculiarities of its own, since his works became public domain: it was, in the past, the object of ambitious editorial projects (such as Adelphi's); more recently, though, the fact that it is free of rights makes it available to small publishers and, as a consequence, there have been several cases of isolated editions, often of lesser works.³⁷

We can say that, with the exception of these few great names (Jorge Amado, Saramago and Lobo Antunes by Feltrinelli; Fernando Pessoa by Adelphi, Passigli and Feltrinelli; the two isolated attempts by Giunti and Bompiani to publish Lídia Jorge; and we should also name Clarice Lispector whose work, after having been published by La Rosa and Feltrinelli, is now being published by the prestigious Adelphi), the translations from the Portuguese that are published in Italy are not in the main circuit of editorial – and distribution – giants. A quick glance at the list of titles translated from the Portuguese will reveal that there are nearly as many publishers as translators involved.

These translations have been carried out by a relatively small circle of translators, more or less established and respected in the field, and who are often scholars as well, surrounded by a larger circle of occasional translators, who sometimes end up having but that one single (literary) translation in their career; often it is the case of students who, in the course of their academic life, carry out a translation – either as a part of their thesis (in Italy they have under-graduate thesis, so we are talking of a potentially enormous pool of would-be translators), or as part of their formative experience, guided by their Portuguese teacher, who often spends their name to provide the (academic) sponsorship required by the publisher. He may or may not collaborate in the volume, and appear as a “curatore”³⁸.

³⁶ Maybe the commercial collocation was not the best: Giunti is a very popular publisher, mass-oriented, not adequate for this author; Bompiani is considered “literary” and would be a better match for Lídia Jorge's works; by now, both brands are part of the same group.

³⁷ For example the publication of *Alla memoria del Presidente-Re Sidónio Pais* (2010) and *Economia & commercio. Impresa, monopolio, libertà* (2011), by Urogallo, or *Il banchiere anarchico* (2010), by Nova Delphi, although it had already been published by Guanda in 1997.

³⁸ “Curatore”, we would like to argue, is an Italian feature, not quite translatable as “editor” or “organizer”. While these last formulae usually refer to a collective work, in which the organizer puts the volume together as such, or to a philological edition, in which case he/she puts together and fixes the text, in the Italian context a book may be “curated” (“a cura di”) by someone who is neither author, nor translator, nor editor; it may consist of an edition of an individual text, like in the following example: *Da qualche parte in Africa* (Reggio Emilia, Diabasis, 2010), the Italian rendition of Helder Macedo's *Partes*

Unlike what happens in English-speaking countries, Italy does not have a strong tradition of University Presses, and therefore the role that elsewhere belongs to those is, in Italy, played mostly by the private sector: concerning essay, there are a few publishers in the market that have made a name for themselves and are respected as specialized imprints (Bologna's Il Mulino, Rome's Carocci, Bari's Laterza and Milan's FrancoAngeli); when it comes to translations of literary works, and especially when it is the case of lesser languages, that role tends to be played by non-specialized small and medium publishers, that are either commercial in nature (La Nuova Frontiera in Rome), or that depend strongly on the University institute(s) with which they have a partnership, be it formal or less so (Morlacchi in Perugia, ETS in Pisa, Sette Città in Viterbo).

Having said that, we think the fact that translations from the Portuguese appear in so many different publishing houses is closely linked to the fact that many of the translators are scholars. While some of them work in the large-scale circuit (like Francavilla or Martinetto), most of the production of books translated from the Portuguese mirrors not an editorial plan or will, but a partnership with a scholar: and here is why local press Morlacchi, from Perugia, has published, from the Portuguese, under the supervision of local Associate Professor De Cusatis; or why the Parma-based Diabasis³⁹ published, from the Portuguese, a (very experimental) novel by Helder Macedo (*Da qualche parte in Africa*) and two of the most important essays for the post-colonial approach to Portuguese culture (Eduardo Lourenço's *Il labirinto della Saudade* and Boaventura Sousa Santos' *Atlantico periferico. Il postcolonialismo portoghese*); these three books certainly answer more to the research guidelines of the Portuguese Chair of Bologna than to any commercial objective.

It is therefore fair to say that the great catalyst behind the publishing of translations from the Portuguese in Italy is the academia, through the Chairs of Portuguese throughout the country. Be it through small satellite presses that depend on the University (like the above mentioned Morlacchi) or through the collaboration with small or medium local presses, as was the case, during the 1980s, of the Aquila-based Japadre who, under the supervision of the leading lusitanist Giulia Lanciani (who taught at Roma Tre), went on to publish several volumes of contemporary poetry and prose (including names such as Fernando Namora, Teixeira de Pascoaes, or Sophia de Mello Breyner).

de África is catalogued as having been “curated” by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro and Roberto Vecchi; the translation is by Chiara Magnante and Agnese Soffritti, and the “curators” sign the book's introduction and its postface.

³⁹ The now Parma-based Diabasis; it was once in Reggio Emilia.

The examples could go on: even stronger editorial imprints often team up with lusitanist scholars, for the simple fact that they do not possess (neither the head publisher nor anyone in their team) a knowledge of the Portuguese language and literature that would allow them to scout for worthy texts and authors. Such was the case of La Nuova Frontiera who, under the supervision of the specialist in Portuguese-speaking Africa Giorgio De Marchis, has published 4 novels by José Eduardo Agualusa (Angola), 3 by Paulina Chiziane (Mozambique), and one by Germano Almeida (Cape Verde).

The data we collected – through bibliographic research, but also by directly contacting publishers, authors, translators, booksellers, and teachers and students of Portuguese – lead us to the conclusion that to those authors who enter the target system already perceived as canonical, the path is the “classical” one: the works are usually proposed by their literary agent, and the translator tends to be a regular collaborator of the publisher. But most of the titles from the Portuguese-speaking world that end up being published do so in the minor circuit, which has a different set of rules. Typically the title is suggested by the translator him/herself, or by the “curatore”, since most publishers do not have any knowledge of the language or the literary culture. As a result, the selection of works and authors to be translated mirrors, as stated above, the personal and professional interests of those who vouch for them than to commercial standards.

This creates a curious effect of consecrating a somewhat alternative canon, in which authors who are rather marginal in their source system come to have a position on the target system that is not in line with it; for instance, an author who is little known in Portugal, like the Mozambican Paulina Chiziane, appears in the Italian context side by side with the very popular Angolan writer José Eduardo Agualusa.

These are, as seen above, two of the African Portuguese-speaking authors published by La Nuova Frontiera. This publishing house was founded in 1999, but it was only in 2002 that it adopted the publishing line by which it is now renowned, specialized in Spanish and Portuguese-speaking authors. The Portuguese-Speaking branch was never dominant in their catalogue, but it resulted in the publication of more than 20 titles translated from the Portuguese.

That decade was of the utmost importance for the presence of Portuguese-speaking literature in Italy. As we have seen, in the 1990s, the number of translated titles was less than 20 a year (even with the Saramago phenomenon at its peak). This number more than doubled with the new projects that appeared after 2000, of which La Nuova

Frontiera was but one example.

In 2004, also in Rome, Cavallo di Ferro makes its entrance in the Italian publishing world. It started out as exclusively dedicated to Portuguese literature, and it began by publishing a few of its most successful names, like best-selling authors José Rodrigues dos Santos and Miguel Sousa Tavares. They clearly invested in this kind of mainstream literature, with large print-runs and an adequate commercial promotion. But it did not make it; the brand still exists, but it is no longer specialized. The debts forced the owners to sell the imprint, which is now under a different leadership, with different priorities, and it now publishes authors who are not from the Portuguese-speaking world. Even so, before its downfall, Cavallo di Ferro was responsible for publishing over 60 translations from the Portuguese.

Other smaller projects have contributed to increase these numbers, however. Such is the case of the Perugia-based Edizioni dell'Urogallo⁴⁰, which has published, since 2009, more than 60 books, translated from the Portuguese⁴¹. With limited but steady production and circulation, it is currently the only publisher in the Italian market exclusively dedicated to the Portuguese-speaking world, and it has published authors such as Rubem Fonseca, José Eduardo Agualusa or Teolinda Gersão. Another similar, even if smaller, project, and not limited to Portuguese language, is Vittoria Iguazú Editora, whose activity began in 2012, when it published translations from Manuel Ferreira and Álvaro do Carvalhal. These projects, operating on the margin of the big publishing circuits, have in common the fact that they both are individual companies, founded and managed by young lusitanist scholars who are translators as well.

Although Portuguese-speaking literatures maintain their peripheral status in the Italian context, the global landscape can be said to have evolved positively: while 20 years ago the Italian public could have access only to a few great names, through the large circuit of the publishing industry, today the offer is far richer – to an extent that would have been unthinkable in the late 1990s – even if it is scattered through a number of publishing houses, many of which, because of their dimension and status, do not achieve the diffusion that would be desirable.

⁴⁰ With which we collaborate since 2010.

⁴¹ And Galician as well, which is considered as belonging to the same language system.

The Context of English Language

While the geographical limits of context of Italian language are easy to identify, the context of English language is much more complicated. On the one hand, the Anglosphere is a complex constellation of countries with English either as an official or a co-official language, with great variations in the countries' geographical and demographical size, geopolitical positions, economic power and human development index. On the other hand, this English-speaking world includes countries, such as the U.K., Ireland, Canada, the U. S., Australia and New Zealand, with a history either of centrality in the former British Empire or of a settlers' colony, with the result of having a majoritarian presence of the English language as a mother tongue amongst its population. All the range of different percentages in English speakers as a mother tongue are present, in combination with different sociolinguistic and cultural situations, in the case of other countries, ranging from India, the Caribbean Islands and some African countries with an expressive literary tradition in English, to countries in which the English language has a less firm presence.

Even faced with this constellation of big and small countries and territories, the English-speaking world is seldom taken as a whole, or a linguistic continuum. Similarly, when studying the English-speaking context, we have limited our attention to the United States and the United Kingdom, following the data available, but also a theoretical tradition. Scholars often refer to an Anglo-American context, whose limits are not always very clear. Venuti (1995) refers to an Anglo-American tradition of translation. In another timeframe, and with a distinct theoretical framework, Sapiro (2015) mentions “the Anglo-American publishing industry”. And yet, one can hardly consider the United Kingdom and the United States of America as one reality, particularly when it comes to the publishing industry.

While it is evident that the U. K. and the U. S. publishing systems play a major role within this context, it is also undeniable that each of the two has its peculiarities. This chasm is photographed in detail by James L. W. West III. In his 2012 paper (West III, 2012) “The Divergent Paths of British and American Publishing”, he traces the difference in procedure back to the early 19th century: “Commercialism in American

book publishing has a long history. It can be traced back at least to the early nineteenth century, a time when American publishers – undercapitalized and struggling with an inefficient distribution system – subsisted on titles pirated from the British market”. (West III, 2012: 503)

The reason behind this is an asymmetry in the legislation of the two countries. This was the historical moment in which international copyright laws were being put forth, but the United States and the United Kingdom behaved differently. The American refusal to offer protection to foreign works can be easily understood if one bears in mind that the United States were, by then, trying to establish a literary tradition of their own. This protectionism, however, was not as beneficial as intended, as it also meant that American works were unprotected abroad (in fact, Mark Twain filed for residency in Canada so as to obtain international protection for his work *The Prince and the Pauper*). The 1891 bill known as the Chace Act was the first congressional act to provide copyright protection in the United States to citizens of other countries⁴². It granted limited protection to foreign copyright holders and only from a few nations, namely the United Kingdom, but it also tackled the issue of the protection of American authors, as they were more likely to be granted international copyright protection by countries that were included in the bill. It did, nonetheless, include “a protectionist clause (insisted upon by the print unions) that required British books to be typeset, printed, and bound in the United States to qualify for copyright. This clause prevented British publishers from flooding the American market with overruns and remaindered stock” (West III, 2012: 503).

West III explains how the United States' troubled history with international copyright law contributed to shape their book industry, and to lead it down a path which was different from the British one. Interestingly, his phrasing opposes “commercialism”, on the American side, and a certain degree of idealism, on the British one (West III, 2012: 503):

American houses, for their part, bent their energy toward developing their own authors, discovering new readers, and building a more efficient distribution system.

⁴² In spite of this and other efforts, David Nimmer wrote in 1992 about the exceptionalism of the United States in this matter: “For most of its two centuries, the United States has been a copyright island, its jurisprudence having evolved in isolation from developments elsewhere. As long as it served American interests, U.S. copyright law did not concern itself with the waves that our statutes or rulings would set in motion outside our borders, and few ripples from abroad affected U.S. copyrights. In 1955, however, the international tide began to lap against U.S. copyright shores. In 1976, Congress acknowledged what had by then become the crash of foreign waves, amending parts of the Copyright Act to reflect international standards. Finally, in 1989, the floodgates opened to a massive effort to bring the United States into the world copyright fold and to amend U.S. law for compatibility with that purpose. Fully three years after this 1989 effort, the integration is still not complete, however.” (Nimmer, 1992: 211)

(...)

The British model of publishing, with low overhead, limited advertising, efficient distribution, and a deep backlist, was viewed by many people in the U.S. trade as a worthy ideal that might be aspired to by a small house but that would not work for a large operation. The British approach depended too heavily on price control and did not generate a sufficiently rapid cash flow. The American trade took a different course: it became frontlist oriented, with high overhead, large advances, a strong emphasis on advertising, and a pronounced gambling⁴³ mentality. (West III, 2012: 503-504)

If the author here is identifying a trend he traces back to the early 19th century, one would get the impression, reading André Schiffrin's testimonials, that the whole "business of books" has, on an international level, shifted towards this model West III identifies as American.

In common, the two systems have the fact that they share an hegemonic language. And one defining feature of this condition is the extremely low numbers of translations. According to data from the International Publishers Association (IPA 2015-2016: 15), the United States was the top publishing market in revenue, followed by (in this order) China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France; the 6th and 7th positions were occupied, respectively, by Brazil and China. In terms of new titles produced, however, China came first, followed by the U.S.A., the U.K., France and Germany (Italy was in the 9th position) (IPA 2015-2016: 16). It is thus safe to say that both the U.K. and the U.S. are amongst the world's greatest markets, and it should be noted that Italy also performs rather well. An interesting indicator / benchmark, which probably has to do more with the weight of book culture than with the book industry, is the number of titles produced per million inhabitants. By this measure (at least in cases for which figures were available), the United Kingdom is far ahead of the race, with more than 2.500 titles per million inhabitants, followed by Iceland, Denmark, Brazil, and France, in that order. In this counting, the United States appears in the 12th position (after Italy, in the 11th one), around the mark of 1.000 titles per million inhabitants (IPA 2015-2016: 16).

Powerful and prolific as these two systems are, they produce a great amount of books but a very small quantity of translations. And, in spite of the differences which separate them, they are often mentioned together, and often as a part of a larger, more abstract entity, which shares the hegemonic language. As Margo Fitzpatrick puts it in her 2016 piece "Translation in the English-Speaking World",

⁴³ The "gambling" quality of the publishing field is stated in a famous G.B. Shaw quote (which West III uses as an epigraph): "Publishing is not ordinary trade. It is gambling. The publisher bets the cost of manufacturing, advertising and circulating a book, plus the overhead of his establishment, against every book he publishes exactly as a turf bookmaker bets against every horse in the race. The author, with his one book, is an owner backing his favorite at the best odds he can get from the competing publishers. Both are gamblers. – G. B. Shaw (1945)" (Shaw *apud* West III, 2012: 503)

Translations are an integral part of the publishing industry. They are potentially invaluable to shaping young minds, breaking down cultural barriers, and furthering the development of modern languages; literature in translation accounted for 13 percent of *The New York Times*' list of the 100 most notable books for 2015. And yet, the English-speaking world produces translated titles at a very small rate. Salman Rushdie called the low number of translated books into English in America "shocking," and Literature Across Frontiers Director Alexandra Büchler said that the percentage of books published in translation in the United Kingdom and Ireland is "embarrassingly low." (Fitzpatrick, 2016)

Fitzpatrick's piece is mostly a comment against the lack of literary diversity in "the English-Speaking World"⁴⁴, and she is making a point not just on the scarcity of translations, but also on how the few books that end up being translated into English reflect the same asymmetries of power we see elsewhere. But, for this purpose, she provides some background information, while also commenting on the data: "The statistics certainly are dismal, especially given what is at stake." (Fitzpatrick, 2016) While this is not an academic piece of writing, it presents problems which we have detected in texts whose intended audience would indeed be more scholarly: she quotes another writer⁴⁵ as her source of statistical data, instead of the entity that collected the data, and she resorts to the Index Translationum, as many scholars do, in spite of its significant limitations:

So just how low are translation rates in the English-speaking world? In America and the United Kingdom, translations only constitute 3 percent of publications, with fiction accounting for less than 1 percent of that figure. According to Rachel Bitoun, writer for *The Artifice*, those translations into English that are published tend to be produced by established authors, and American publishers have shown more interest in bringing British authors to the United States than in translating foreign books. According to the United Nations' Index Translationum database, the top language translated into English is French, followed by German. The database also recorded that nine of the ten top languages translated into English are of the Indo-European language family. The only Asian language on this "Top 10" list is Japanese, and no Middle Eastern or African language makes an appearance. These statistics reveal a lack of variety of language families accepted for translation into English. (Fitzpatrick, 2016)

This article is quoted here for two main reasons: the rhetoric around the 3 percent figure in itself, which will be under discussion here; and the comparison which juxtaposes the percentage of translations published (3% total, but less than 1% fiction), and the share occupied by literature in translation (13%) in a selection made by an influential magazine (*The New York Times*), whose staff seems to be interested in

⁴⁴ Similar preoccupations surface in *The Guardian*, in a 2015 article titled "How do we stop UK publishing being so posh and white?" (Shukla, 2015).

⁴⁵ She hyperlinks the words "3 percent" to lead to Rachel Bitoun's article (Bitoun, 2016).

cultural diversity – or at least with their version of it. A very similar perception seems to be at work in another piece, originated in the United Kingdom, and under the title “In Multi-Cultural Britain, Only 2.5% of All Publications are Translations” (2013).

According to a 2012 report from Literature Across Frontiers, approximately 2.5% of all publications in the U.K. and Ireland, and 4.5% of literary works (poetry, drama and narrative fiction) are translations. This report is a study by Jasmine Donahaye⁴⁶ whose full title is *Three percent? Publishing data and statistics on translated literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland*, and whose subtitle reads *Making Literature Travel – a series of reports on literary exchange, translation and publishing*. It is actually the first instrument to gather together accurate figures on the publishing of translated literature in the British Isles, and was compiled from data provided by the British legal deposit entity for three sample years (2000, 2005, 2006).

Literature Across Frontiers is an European Non-Governmental Organization, based at the Mercator Institute for Media, Languages and Culture of the Aberystwyth University (Wales), and is partially funded by the EU Culture Programme. The fact that this organization exists reflects the growing concern with issues regarding literature and translation, namely in the English-speaking world. This report, in particular, is also funded by the Arts Council of England, and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

A significant part of Donahaye's paper details how her data was gathered, and how trustworthy it is – and she has to admit it is not very accurate, for a variety of reasons; behind all of those reasons is an insufficient interest in these issues, and the hope is that drawing attention to the subject will contribute to raising awareness and, thus, help change the way these issues are managed. It seems as though it has, indeed, as this one was the first but not the last study which tackles the problem:

To improve the availability of statistical data for the creative economy, the International Publishers Association (IPA) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) conducted a pilot survey to compile publishing statistics in 2017. In all, 35 national publishers associations (NPAs) and copyright authorities shared their 2016 data covering the publishing industry. Results from the piloted survey were published in *The Global Publishing Industry in 2016* report. The following year in 2018, 53 countries/territories responded to the survey and shared their 2017 data with WIPO. (WIPO, 2019)

A relevant piece of information which emerges from Literature Across Frontiers' 2012 study is the fact that, if translation in general seems to be actually a bit below the 3% mark (2.5%), literary translation is a tad above (4.5%), and presented, at the time of the

⁴⁶ Donahaye teaches English Literature & Creative Writing at Swansea University, and this study seems to constitute an exception in her curriculum, since most of her work is related to Jewish Studies and Welsh Studies.

study, a tendency to grow.

A parallel to that initiative in the United States is the Three Percent project, launched in 2007 as a reaction to the growingly famous figure. It was created as a part of the University of Rochester's translation program and is closely linked to Open Letter, an imprint of Rochester's university press which specializes in translated literature. They issue the yearly Best Translated Book Award, and keep an exhaustive database on translated literature, which is one of our sources.

All these illustrate the growing awareness, in the English-speaking world, of how "to paraphrase the Irish writer Colm Toibín, the world's richest language, in economic terms – English – is also one of its most impoverished when it comes to taking in the literary wealth that exists beyond it" (Allen, 2007).

For the last few decades, the English-speaking world (or "the Anglo-American tradition") has played a growingly relevant role in the international dissemination of literature, which makes it all the more important that works written in languages other than English may be read and circulate in such venues. Gregory Rabassa's translations have played a capital role in what came to be known as the Latin American boom (Guzmán, 2010: 142). If, by the beginning of the 20th century, Paris was the world hub for the circulation of literature (cf. Casanova, 2004), that role has been superseded by the London-New York axis. And the literary scene of the United States, in the second half of the 20th century, gave a visible share of its attention to literary works written in Latin America.

Concerning the source languages of the translated books published in the U.K. and Ireland, French comes first, followed by German, and then Spanish. The time span analysed in the study ranges from 2000 to 2006 and, in that period, the number of translations from German was declining, while the number of translations from Spanish was going up, even though these source languages maintained their relative positions. (Donahaye, 2012: 48)

In a system in which translation plays a secondary role, it should come as no surprise that the position of translators mirrors this fragility: "As previous reports have shown, the status of the translators themselves is precarious in the UK, with reviewers, for example, sometimes even failing to mention that the work is a translation, and failing to name the translator." (Donahaye, 2012: 24-25) As we will see, this detail, which the author of the study links to the scarcity of translations, is a common trait the British Isles have with other environments where translation has a much bigger share of the cultural market.

More symptomatic of the marginality of translations is, in our opinion, the weight of publicly funded patronage: “Many literary translations – particularly those by independent presses – are only publishable with financial support, either from arts or literary organisations within the UK, such as Arts Council England or the Welsh Books Council, or by translation promotion agencies in the country of origin.” (Donahaye, 2012: 25)

A reflection prompted by this comment has to do with the difference of behaviour in the two types of production cycles defined by Bourdieu, the fields of “restricted production” and of “large scale production”. If we believe there is some truth to West III's words on the separate paths taken by the book industries in the U.S. and the U.K., and the philosophies that guide them, the old continent's way of doing things has always valued the small circuit, while in America the large production circuit has always had a great deal of weight in the book industry. Hence the British and Irish publisher's choice of resorting to external funding when publishing more risky materials.

Lobo Antunes' international career begins in the United States, with the publication of a translation of *Os Cus de Judas* by the Random House, a blatant example of the large production cycle. The Random House is now a part of the Penguin conglomerate, but it remains (as it was in 1983) a very prestigious publisher. Its first steps as a publishing house, in the early 1930s, included printing Joyce's *Ulysses* in American territory, a fact which largely contributed to forge their reputation. Over the next two decades, though, the Random House grew steadily and, as Robert L. Bernstein recalls, when he started working there, in 1956, “it was one of the leading American publishing houses” (Bernstein, 2016: 52-53).

It often happens that American publishers have European branches, or U.K. counterparts. That first translation (by Elisabeth Lowe) was also published by the Random House's London-based imprint Chatto & Windus. This ended up being the only translation of Lobo Antunes to be published by the Random House, but one can say that his pathway in the English-speaking world continued to be towed by the American system, as he went on to be published by Grove Press and, later, the Dalkey Archive Press. Both these publishers, while being U.S. based, either have London offices or a British branch (although, with all the merges and takeovers, the precise physiognomy of the British and U.S. Publishing scene may be hard to pen out).

That 1983 translation was a first attempt, made very early in Lobo Antunes' career – and one should maybe bear in mind how, in those early years, he was a best-selling author in Portugal. But as years passed, his style evolved, and the public's perception

of what it meant to read Lobo Antunes also unfolded. While, in Portugal, he went from a small label (Estampa) to a large publisher (Dom Quixote, now a part of the Leya conglomerate), his English translations seem to have travelled the opposite path: in the United States, he started out in the publishing giant Random House and ended up in the elitist world of university presses: Jeff Love's translation of *Até Que as Pedras Se Tornem Mais Leves Que a Água* was published in 2019 by Yale University Press. Even if we dismiss this as an exception, the evolution is discernible: this author's placement in the English-speaking system shows a slow but steady progress towards more specialized imprints.

After that first 1983 outburst, there was a standstill, until the 1990s, when several translations of Lobo Antunes' were published by New York's Grove Press (and republished by London's Secker & Warburg), authored alternately by the Americans Gregory Rabassa and Richard Zenith.

Grove Press was founded in 1947 in New York (on Grove Street, in Greenwich Village). It was an alternative book press, intent on publishing avant-garde literature. It played a capital role in bringing French literature to the United States, but it also brought the works of playwrights like Harold Pinter or Samuel Beckett into the country (Grove published *Waiting for Godot* in 1954, after it had been refused by more mainstream publishers). It merged with The Atlantic Monthly Press in 1991, and later became an imprint of Grove Atlantic Inc. Nowadays, Atlantic Books is the trading name of the British division of Grove Atlantic Inc. Back in the 1990's, though, Grove's translations of Lobo Antunes's novels were published by Secker & Warburg, a British company formed in 1935, when Martin Secker took over Fredric Warburg's business. It in turn merged with the Harvill Press in 2005, giving birth to Harvill Secker. The last of Grove Press's translations of Lobo Antunes was Richard Zenith's rendition of *Manual dos Inquisidores*, published in 2003.

In 2008, the Dalkey Archive Press published a translation of *Conhecimento do Inferno* by Clifford E. Landers. In that year, another translation of Lobo Antunes' by Gregory Rabassa bears the imprint of W. W. Norton (London and New York). From that point onwards, these two publishing houses have both published translations of Lobo Antunes: Norton's carry the name of the British Margaret Jull Costa, and Rhett McNeil became Dalkey Archive's voice for this Portuguese author.

Founded in Chicago in the 1980s, the Dalkey Archive Press now operates from Champaign and has close ties with the University of Illinois. With offices in London and Dublin, they specialise in translations of experimental works of fiction, and make it a

point to keep books in print in spite of sales. It is one of the “two outstanding examples” mentioned by André Schiffrin: he considers Dalkey Archive Press a pioneering instance of the role independent presses play on the dissemination of translated literature (Schiffrin, 1999: 15-16; see also Sapiro, 2014: 227).

Lobo Antunes's trajectory in the English-speaking system is remarkable: Random House in the 1980s was on its way to becoming the giant it now is; Grove Press is a solid and long-standing alternative publisher, known for its investments in avant-garde and politically engaged works, even though it has, on occasion, made some mainstream choices; W. W. Norton & Company is known for its Anthologies, but also for being owned by its employees since the 1960s; and Dalkey Archive Press is a nonprofit. The Yale University Press translation, even if it turns out to be an isolated event, is the culminating point of a migration from the large-scaled to the small-scaled circuit.

Donahaye has given us her input on the status of the translating profession in the U.K. To understand how it is to be a literary translator in the U.S., we have resorted to writings by American translators (and, incidentally, translators of Lobo Antunes).

Clifford E. Landers, once a teacher of Political Science at the New Jersey City University, has authored a large number of translations from the Portuguese, having rendered in English works by names such as Lobo Antunes, Jorge Amado, Nérida Piñon, Chico Buarque or Rubem Fonseca. In 2001, he published a work of his own (*Literary Translation: a Practical Guide*), in which he reflects on his career as a literary translator, sharing strategies and advise with those who are interested in following the same path. Landers describes literary translation as a labour of love, specifically because it is either underpaid or not paid at all. After listing a series of reasons why one might undertake this occupation, he writes:

There are many reasons for doing literary translation, but ultimately only you can decide which ones impel you. As for money, it has been omitted from these deliberations because if it's your primary motivation for doing literary translation, you should chose another field. (...) While it's a cliché that literary translation is a labour of love, basically it is. (...) (At this writing, even the most prolific of living translators of Spanish- and Portuguese-language literature, Gregory Rabassa, (...) has not given up his university day job.) (Landers, 2001: 6)

This is relevant as it provides insider information on what it is to be a literary translator in the USA. We find it telling that Landers' comment from 2001 – he, after all, belongs to a later generation of American literary translators – corroborates what Rabassa himself had let us know back in 1974 when, in his paper “If This Be Treason”, after a

series of cautious remarks, he finally decrees: “It is time for at least one definitive statement about translation: it is impossible to make a handsome living from it” (Rabassa 1974: 37-38). That no significant improvement has been reached in this respect, can be inferred from his account of the evolution that took place, in his lifetime, in the world of literary translation, from the times of being paid a flat fee to those of getting his share of the royalties when sales were high (too late for him, though, as his best-selling works were those he translated at the very beginning of his career):

One Hundred Years of Solitude and *Hopscotch* are the two books I have translated that have gone through the most editions and reprints. Even as I write this, *One Hundred Years* has suddenly appeared on the lists of best-selling paperbacks in both *The New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, a spot it never obtained when it first came out. This is quite heartening to me as a lover of good literature but saddening to me as a translator. This is because in earlier days translation was “work for hire,” like spreading manure on a suburban lawn, paid with a one-time fee. There was never any question of royalties unless the author involved was Homer or Virgil and the like. It is painful, therefore, to see an old translation surging along while I sit here and calculate what I might have been hauling in had I done it last year. (Rabassa, 2005: 93-94)

We learn in Rabassa's own words how even the one Landers deems “the most prolific” literary translator of Spanish and Portuguese cannot rely on his translating activity to make a living. A few years after he wrote this memoir, he stated it in one interview to Guzmán: “Even though the situation is getting a little better, I don't think translation is lucrative here in the States either”. (Guzmán, 2010: 144)

Landers' testimony may also be useful in helping us understand why, as he points out, “college faculties tend to be over-represented among literary translators” (Landers, 2001: 166). Reading about both these translators experiences, we come to the realization that it is unlikely that one with the necessary skills to be a literary translator will be found – or sought – outside the academia.

While it is not easy to identify consistent projects of dissemination of the Portuguese-language literature in the United States, there are a few imprints which have sought to publish foreign narrative fiction, like *New Directions* – an independent company founded in New York in 1936, it began with a very strong modernist orientation, but soon became a voice for foreign literature – and, more recently, projects like *Open Letter Books* (the University of Rochester's non-profit, literary translation press), or *Seagull Books*, founded in Calcutta in 1982, with the intent of publishing world literature in English translation; they now have offices in London and New York, as well.

In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, it is a different story. *Carcenet Press*, for

instance, had a relevant activity in what concerns the dissemination of Portuguese-language literature. Founded in 1969 by Michael Schmidt, it started out being specialized in poetry. As they grew, however, they diversified their activity. They were Sunday Times' "Small Publisher of the Year" in 2000, and they can pride themselves of having four Nobel prize winners in their catalogue (not to mention Pulitzer and other prestigious prizes). Carcanet can thus be seen as an example of the "worthy ideal that might be aspired to by a small house", to recall West III's words (West III 2012: 504). Even if, as of late, their interest in translations from the Portuguese seems to have faded away, Carcanet has a collection, named Aspects of Portugal, which offers several titles by Eça de Queiroz and Miguel Torga, and other books on Portuguese-related themes.

Dedalus is another publisher whose catalogue shows some degree of sensitivity to Portuguese literature. Founded in 1983, they specialise in European literature. But, as they say on their website, "Dedalus has invented its own distinctive genre, which we term distorted reality, where the bizarre, the unusual, the grotesque and the surreal meld in a kind of intellectual fiction which is very European."

Their volume *The Dedalus Book of Portuguese Fantasy*, edited by Eugénio Lisboa and Helder Macedo in 1995, bears witness to this calling. But Dedalus was also responsible for a series of new translations (by Margaret Jull Costa) of works by Eça de Queiroz.

The most detailed and affordable source of compiled data on translations is the Three Percent database. Broken down by language, they have counted 833 translations from French, 689 from Spanish, 524 translations from German, 292 from Italian, 187 from Russian, and 143 from Portuguese, giving us an image of the relative marginality of the Portuguese language, when compared to others.

However, if we look at the data relative to translation from the Portuguese by country of publication of the source text, what emerges is a clear predominance of Brazilian, rather than Portuguese (or Portuguese-speaking Africa) works: out of the total 143 translations, we have 94 from Brazilian against 43 from Portuguese source texts. This is the opposite of the general trend of the Italian context – which may be read as a simple effect of geographical proximity, and the diplomatic transits it favours, even in the cultural field. It does, however, raise an interesting point concerning the importance of the various Portuguese-language literary subsystems. Especially if we consider that the remaining 12 translations are renditions of African literary works, there is fodder for reflection, when comparing this system to the Italian one.

IV – Analysis of the Translations

Hofstadter's list

“Picture Holden Caulfield all grown up, now a university professor, writing a book about translation. Okay, don't. It's too silly” (Hofstadter 1997: xiii). In 1997, Douglas Hofstadter penned a book named *Le Ton beau de Marot: In Praise of the Music of Language*, of which the quote above is the opening line. It is a very personal reflection on translation, whose starting point is a poem by the sixteenth-century French poet Clément Marot.

Hofstadter not only did his own experiments in translating Marot's “Ma Mignonne”, but he also challenged many others to do the same: he invited students, colleagues, friends and acquaintances to try and render Marot's poem into English. When doing so, he always supplied a list of characteristics that he thought should be present in the target text:

(...) for the benefit of would-be translators, I once compiled a short list of formal or “syntactic” properties of “Ma Mignonne”, respect for which I felt would be crucial in any attempt to carry it over into another language. In posing the translation challenge to other people, I always supplied this list, obvious though its items were, because I did not want them to be overlooked. If someone *knowingly* chose to disrespect one or another of them, that would be all right — or at least far more justifiable, in my opinion, than doing so out of ignorance. Here, then, is my original list:

- (1) The poem is 28 lines long.
 - (2) Each line consists of three syllables.
 - (3) Each line's main stress falls on its final syllable.
 - (4) The poem is a string of rhyming couplets: AA, BB, CC,...
 - (5) Midway, the tone changes from formal (“vous”) to informal (“tu”).
 - (6) The poem's opening line is echoed precisely at the very bottom.
 - (7) The poet puts his own name directly into his poem.
- (Hofstadter, 1997: 1a)

As a result, he collected dozens of translations for this short, whimsical poem, on which he comments profusely, and which he uses as the basis for his reflections on translation. Hofstadter's list illustrates how translation is a process which involves a series of choices that often precede the translation work proper: a translator necessarily chooses the features he deems more relevant either of the target text, or for the translated text, or both. Although Hofstadter in this instance does so consciously, this is seldom the case (cf. Weaver, 1989 and Venuti, 2013: 33-56). In that

sense, more than criteria, we could more accurately speak of factors that influence such choices: we have, to begin with, the functional criteria dictated, either explicitly or implicitly, by the client and the specific translation situation (Nord, 1997: 25-38); there are the contextual factors that Lefevere (1992a: xvi and 1-9) calls constraints, and which can often be explained in terms of ideology and poetics; and there is, of course, a considerable degree of subjectivity.

Hofstadter's awareness of the fact that he is exerting personal discretion while compiling this list is conveyed by his choice of the verb "to feel" in his description of the process: "respect for which I felt would be crucial". Hofstadter's rationale for compiling this list is that he does it "for the benefit" of those who would be translating the poem for his experiment, but also because he "did not want" these features "to be overlooked", even if he considers them "obvious". Here, a set of considerations are in order.

First and foremost, it should be noted that Hofstadter lists a number of formal (what he calls "formal or 'syntactic' properties", putting "syntactic" between commas) traits of the poem. Even if it is often considered that "formal" aspects are "crucial" in poetry and in poetry translation, this is not always or universally the case. Let us recall, for instance, that the first translation into French of *Orlando Furioso* was in prose – while, in Spain, the first translation reproduced the Italian metrics (see Plagnard 2012); or, closer to the present, William Atkinson's 1952 prose translation of Camões' epic poem *Os Lusíadas*, made for Penguin classics.

Even if we consider that "formal" aspects such as metrics or rhyme are fundamental in poetry and should thus be reproduced in the target text, there is still considerable latitude within such framework.

Atkinson's remark, in his introduction to his 1952 translation, reframes the translational act in terms of conflict: "Few writers illustrate better than Camoens the essential dilemma that confronts the translator in every age. Loyalty to one's author is one thing, loyalty to one's public is another, and the greater the gulf between author and public the greater the conflict" (Camões, 1952: 31). The translator would thus be before a situation requiring mediation – and oftentimes in a position to decide in what terms will it be carried out.

Secondly, we would like to point out how, in spite of being conscious that this is his own opinion on what the "crucial" elements are, Hofstadter also considers them to be "obvious". Still, he confesses: "Several months after drawing up this list, I was shocked to learn that there were yet other tight formal properties of "Ma Mignonne" that had

eluded me, one of them extremely beautiful and yet quite subtle to spot, although after the fact it seems obvious” (Hofstadter, 1997: 1a). This testimonial illustrates how subjective and fallible is this assessment of the features deemed “crucial” for translation purposes.

Hofstadter's experiment highlights one of the key considerations that can be made about translation:

Hofstadter (...) got many dozens of responses (...). Each one of them was different, yet each one of them was without doubt a translation of Marot's little poem. By this simple device he demonstrated one of the most awkward and wonderful truths about translation. It is this: any utterance of more than trivial length has no one translation; all utterances have innumerable many acceptable translations.

You get the same result with ordinary prose as you do with a poem. Give a hundred competent translators a page to translate, and the chances of any two versions being identical are close to zero. (Bellos, 2011: 4-5)

A rose, by any other name

While it may seem too bold to say one would get “the same result” with prose, ordinary or not, since there would be so many elements to factor in, the fact that stands is that, even being provided guidelines or even harsher constraints, one would have (as the truism goes) as many different translations as translators. Hofstadter's example actually suggests that, given that possibility, one would end up with even more translations than the number of single translators – since many, if not forced to choose between two or more possibilities or versions of a translation, would prefer not to.

The claim that “ordinary prose” would warrant a comparable result is put to the test by Clifford E. Landers, in his 2001 work *Literary Translation. A Practical Guide*. Even if he sustains that, in literary translation, “*how* one says something can be as important, sometimes more important, than what one says” (Landers 2001: 7, his emphasis), the examples he uses to illustrate his point correspond to very simple sentences:

A simple SL phrase like Portuguese *Não vou lá* can be rendered in a variety of ways in English, from the highest grammatical register exemplifying “refined” speech to the solecisms usually associated in the public mind with incomplete education and lower social status. Restricting ourselves only to subject-verb-complement order (there are other, less common possibilities: I go there not, there I do not go, etc.) each variant slightly alters the effect:

I do not go there.

I don't go there.

I am not going there.

I'm not going there.

I shall not go there.

I shan't go there.

I will not go there.
I won't go there.
I am not going to go there.
I'm not going to go there.
I ain't going there.
I ain't goin' there.
(Landers, 2001: 8-9)

With this, Landers illustrates how a very short and simple sentence like “Não vou lá” can yield a number of different translations, all of them semantically very close to the source text and to one another. There is, then, a matter of register, which the translators must identify through their assessment of context. The objection that contractions such as the ones Landers uses in many of his possible translations is not possible in Portuguese⁴⁷ is beside the point, since one common strategy is that of compensation – which consists of reproducing a given effect in the target text in a different passage to that of its occurrence in the source text, when there seems to be no satisfactory solution for a given translation problem. This could thus be an option for a translator who, having been faced with an instance of low register or even dialect for which they had found no correspondent in the target text, decides to compensate by rendering a more neutral sentence with a stronger solution.

Landers then moves on to another instance, “one example of the heightened sensitivity to nuance that marks literary translation” (Landers, 2001: 9), the opening sentence of Leopoldo Lugones' short story “Un fenómeno inexplicable”, which is “Hace de esto once años”:

Selecting only from the high register that characterizes the work, here are some possible renderings of this seemingly straightforward phrase, each with a subtle if perceptible shading.

This happened eleven years ago.
This occurred eleven years ago.
This took place eleven years ago.
Eleven years have passed /gone by since this happened /occurred/ took place.

All these semantically interchangeable sentences convey the same information but differ significantly in aesthetic effect. *Each is defensible, and each would have its defenders, but the literary translator must make a choice, and from a succession of such choices emerges the final product.* (Landers, 2001: 9, our emphasis)

This idea of the translator's task as a myriad of choices is one we would like to underline. As Landers proves with his examples, the options are many, for each strand of text, sometimes for every single word, and “each variant slightly alters the effect”

⁴⁷ As he puts it, “there is no way to say 'ain't' (...) in Romance languages” (Landers, 2001: 9).

(Landers, 2011: 8). The variations are indeed subtle.

Some of these nuances can be attributed to the differences between languages. Often the translators will be faced with an indeterminacy in the source language that the target language does not allow, and hence will be forced to make a choice. This is the case, as Gregory Rabassa recalls, with the title *Cien años de soledad*, as with the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid*:

A simple declarative title like *Cien años de soledad* should offer no trouble whatsoever. Think again. We can pass *de* and *años*, they stand up fine (...) *Cien* is our first problem because in Spanish it bears no article so that the word can waver between *one* hundred and *a* hundred. There is no hint in the title as to which it should be in English. We are faced with the same interpretive dilemma as the translator of the *Aeneid* as he starts off with *Arma virumque cano*. *A man* or *the man*? By Latin standards it could be (and is) both: Virgil didn't have to decide but his translator must. (Rabassa, 2005: 95)

The problem Rabassa refers to here is one example of a very common event in a translator's pathway; it usually constitutes a minor hindrance, and a less attentive translator would not even have mentioned it. The issue is not so much that the translator must make a choice and introduce an element of determinacy in a particular point in which the author was not forced to do so by the source language. The difficulty is that much of what is at stake, in this situation as in others in the translation process, often takes place at a subconscious level:

What is troublesome, of course, is that both interpretations are conjoined subconsciously for the reader of the Spanish, just as in the Latin example they are for the Romans. But an English speaker reading the Spanish will have to decide subconsciously which meaning is there. They cannot be melded in his mind. (Rabassa, 2005: 95-96)

In a chapter named "A day in the life of a literary translator", Landers (2001: 38-44) minutely describes his working day, while translating Rubem Fonseca's *Bufo e Spallanzani*. He recounts how he is faced with quotations in a foreign language, allusions, loan words, colloquial discourse, etc., and how he tackles the issues at hand by consulting dictionaries, friends and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, so as to ascertain what are the implications and the effects of each passage of the source text he is translating. He reports researching, reflecting, hesitating, consulting with potential readers and the author himself and, for the sake of rigor, looking for the original quote in *The Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, instead of risking a back-translation. While he gives the reader the annotated version of his working day, Landers shows his erudition, as well as his knowledge of Brazilian life and institutions, and his dexterity in the use of

the tools of the trade, from his critical stance on the several dictionaries he used, to his ongoing communication with the various libraries he contacted in the process. His chapter ends with Landers' appraisal of the working day as it comes to an end: "It's been a full day. (...) my heart beat 4320 times, I expended 659 calories, breathed 10,450 times, and translated 10 pages, making 4289 decisions in the process. I'm tired" (Landers, 2001: 44).

Literary translation can be said to be a particular case of translation in which, arguably, how things are said is at least as important as what is being said. In this light, the nuances of the *how* are of the utmost importance. As the testimonials quoted above have shown, the daily life and work of the translator is filled with a great number of small decisions (when Landers states he has made 4289 decisions in translating ten pages, he is probably using the "word count" tool of his word processor, and counting one decision per word; but they could be more). Or, like Yves Bonnefoy put it, "Translating cannot be but interpreting. (...) Interpreting is an endless series of sometimes hazardous decisions"⁴⁸ (Bonnefoy, 2000: 133). Each one of these choices has a consequence; immaterial as they may be *de per se*, when put together they compose a picture, which is the translated text.

Selecting the excerpts for textual analysis

What Hofstadter did with his list finds a parallel in what we have done in Part I, compiling our own list of problems that the translator of Lobo Antunes would have to tackle. The method was the same: we departed from an analysis of the source texts, reading them against the backdrop of an imaginary translation situation, and identifying the traits and features that we felt could become problematic in translation. Afterwards, and with this list in mind, we have proceeded to compare the source texts with their translations – and, insofar as it was possible to do so, the translations among them: by comparing two translations of the same source text (and this was feasible only concerning the two English translations of *Os Cus de Judas*) or, more often, by comparing strategies (instead of linguistic solutions, in a stricter sense).

Having said this, we need to acknowledge that not only the list we have put together reflects a particular training and a set of beliefs on translation, but it also guides our analysis in such a way as to exclude or downplay traits and features that we are either

⁴⁸ "Traduire ne peut être qu'interpréter. (...) Interpréter est une suite sans fin de décisions parfois hasardeuses." (Bonnefoy, 2000: 133)

not trained or not inclined to see or to value. Other views and choices are not only possible but also legitimate. For instance, a work like the one undertaken by Saldanha (2005, 2011) could have looked for and analysed features such as the use of italics and source language words.

Since we consider it important, for the study of this author's style and its translations, to look into sentence structure and word order, we have selected excerpts of medium length – corresponding roughly to a paragraph or, when the paragraphs were too lengthy, a page of the source text. We have tried to choose units of text that could stand on their own or make sense separately, even if it was not always very apparent. The opening section of each book is always included in this selection, as it often works as a calling card for the potential reader, and sets the tone for the entire novel. Other snippets were chosen more or less randomly, in the sense that we believe them to be characteristic either of the author's prose or of that novel specifically. The main preoccupation was that the excerpt was of adequate length and could be isolated from the surrounding text without much damage to its understandability.

Reference editions

It often happens that a published work presents variations in its several editions; in some cases, it is the author who decides to make interventions in the text; in other cases these variations simply reflect the action of the editorial team. In the case of Lobo Antunes', there is the unusual circumstance of the existence of an authoritative version⁴⁹. In print since 1979, first under the Vega imprint and later under Dom Quixote, the author's books have been through several editions and reprints. But according to Maria Alzira Seixo's assessment, every single one of them had divergences from the author's manuscript. In Seixo's words, “there was not, from 1979 to 2003, any work of his without errors and infidelities to the original”⁵⁰ (Seixo et al, 2010: 18). Seixo averted the need for a genetic research work aimed at reconstituting the text such as Lobo Antunes had written it when she was preparing her own volume of analysis of the author's novels (Seixo, 2002). She thus put together a team of specialists (which

⁴⁹ Maria Alzira Seixo claims a similar operation had never been done in Portugal: “Há ainda um ponto importante (...) que é o facto de nunca se ter feito entre nós uma edição definitiva, para um autor vivo” (Seixo et al, 2010: 60-61).

⁵⁰ In Portuguese, “não existindo, desde 1979 até 2003, nenhuma obra sua sem erros e infidelidades ao original” (Seixo et al, 2010: 18). Her choice of words raises an interesting point regarding the status of the original; while it is seldom discussed, many contemporary authors have the habit of editing or revising their works when they are the object of reeditions, a fact that is not always explicit in the book's colophon or blurbs.

included, beside herself, Agripina Carriço Vieira, Eunice Cabral, and Graça Abreu). The first of the author's books to come out reflecting the team's intervention was *Boa Tarde às Coisas Aqui em Baixo*, in 2003. In 2004, marking the commemoration of the writer's 25 years of literary career, Dom Quixote started to republish all of his previous works in *ne varietur* editions.

While there are, therefore, strong reasons to use the available *ne varietur* texts as references when writing about Lobo Antunes and his works, there is a reason why we could not neglect to examine previous editions: given our corpus' timeline, most of the translators involved carried out their work before the first *ne varietur* saw the light. The exceptions are Margaret Jull Costa's translation of *Os Cus de Judas* (Antunes, 2011a) and Rhett MacNeil's translation of *O Esplendor de Portugal* (Antunes, 2011b), since these novel's *ne varietur* editions came out in 2004 and 2007, respectively. We thus consulted the first editions of the works under scrutiny, without neglecting, however, to compare them with their *ne varietur* counterparts, regarding the extracts that are the object of textual analysis.

Os Cus de Judas

This is the author's second novel and arguably the most popular one⁵¹. In Portugal, where *ne varietur* editions of each one of his works are being published since 2004⁵², it has been often reprinted and is widely available. It was the first of his works ever to be translated (into English), and was often the first choice for the subsequent translations for other markets. In English, it ended up being retranslated. And, in Italy, where it has been the first of the author's novels to be published, it is one of the few still in print.

The first novel by Lobo Antunes, *Memória de Elefante* (which never came out in either of the systems under analysis here), was published in the summer of 1979 by the small independent print Vega, after having been turned down by other publishers. An overnight success, it prompted the publisher to rush the publication of a second, and already submitted novel, *Os Cus de Judas*. Thus, two very peculiar novels by the same otherwise unpublished author came to stir the waters of the Portuguese literary milieu, by then on the aftermath of the revolution.

The oppressive regime overthrown by the 1974 coup had curtailed, for decades, aesthetic expression, with several artists and writers censored, imprisoned, persecuted, and / or exiled, and society at large was eager for a change whose coming seemed to be stalled. Lobo Antunes' first novel is thus perceived to fill in a gap felt by a generation whose experience had not been pictured in contemporary literary production. Theme wise, this can help account for its overnight success; but the stylistic component should not be overlooked either, as the French avant-garde's influence was somewhat ill-represented. *Memória de Elefante*, with its baroque ranting on the dire malaise of the protagonist, filled in such gap. Both in terms of content and style, thus, this novel ended up incarnating a possible mental discourse of a generation whose spokesperson had not emerged yet. Hence, in quick succession, a second novel was published, the one under appreciation here.

Like *Memória de Elefante*, *Os Cus de Judas* is the first-hand account of a doctor

⁵¹ To assert popularity, for these purposes, we are using criteria such as: number of translations, reissues, reviews and quotations, namely academy wise.

⁵² *Os Cus de Judas* was first published by Vega, in 1979, and from 1983 onwards it was published by Dom Quixote, who became Lobo Antunes' publisher. The first *ne varietur* edition of this novel (carried on by a team coordinated by Maria Alzira Seixo) is the 25th edition of the novel and was issued in November 2004.

who, having been in the colonial war, is rather lost and ill at ease in his skin, in a post-revolution Portugal, trying to come to terms with his wrecked marriage, his PTSD and his rampant feeling of inadequacy. Unlike the other one, however, this book consists of a long monologue in which the narrator tries clumsily (but, ultimately, successfully) to seduce a woman in a bar. In his utterances, though, he tends to digress: self focused to a fault, he tells her about himself, but his attention and narrative easily slip away from fond childhood memories to social commentary, and his monologue is often nothing more than a long rant about the horrors of war and the absurdity of life in general.

The title itself hints at this feeling of inadequacy and misplacement: “cu de judas” (singular) is an idiom meaning a distant and not easily accessible place; the (creative, non-standard) use of a plural form is ludicrous, and the recurring mention by the narrator to the war sceneries he has been to as “cus de judas” condenses the utmost contempt, a feeling which is not only his', but his generation's and, ultimately, a country's – the feeling that the African possessions were not only illegitimately taken, but also an absurd pretence of the government's was, while not universal, still widespread in the Portuguese society at the time of the war.

A title is a very important form of communication, and the public's response to a novel – and to this one in particular – certainly begins there. It was indeed ingenious and serendipitous of Lobo Antunes to come up with this neologism of the plural “cus de judas”, which brings together the audacity of the vulgar language with the biblical invocation of Judas.

Margaret Jull Costa (2011: 12) comments on how the name of “Judas” evokes the idea of treason, adding another hue to the idiom⁵³. This effect is arguably stronger for the foreign translator than it is for the native speaker, for whom the idiom is read and felt globally, and taken for its figurative meaning rather than broken down into independent syntagms. The translators of this novel have found several solutions, concentrating either on the meaning of the remoteness of the place, as in the case of both translations into English (*South of Nowhere* and *The Land at the End of the World*); on the coarseness of the register (like the Italian *In culo al mondo*); or on the idea of treason, keeping the biblical reference (such as the French *Le cul de Judas*, or the German, phonetically suggestive solution *Der Judaskuss*, literally “Judas' kiss”) or not (as does the Swedish *De förrådda*, “the betrayed”).

This mention to Judas in the title would thus reverberate the feeling, planted steeply in the heart and mind of the character, that he and his generation have been betrayed:

⁵³ Akin to “onde judas perdeu as botas”, used in Brazil.

the narrator expresses his pain for having been a part of the horrors he describes to the woman in the bar, intertwined with mundanities, memories and oddities, but also for what he considers to be the absurdity of it all, and the underlying feeling of having been betrayed: in the first place, for having been sent to fight a war to keep a territory in which everything was so alien to him it shouted out its foreignness; but also for the wall of silence he and the other veterans were met with, when coming back from the war.

In terms of style, the prose of the author's first novels is extremely dense, characterized by a profusion of metaphors, similes and images – sometimes of questionable taste or dubious effectiveness, but hardly ever trivial; the works of António Lobo Antunes (particularly those from the first part of his career, even those which do not consist of a monologue like the one now under query) are usually infused with the characters' streams of consciousness and feature an innovative use of language. In the words of Trela, whose basis is the 2011 translation by Margaret Jull Costa:

Published in 1979, *The Land at the End of the World* is a one-sided broadside aimed at Portuguese atrocities. Its pages are filled with a rolling, Manueline syntax that's studded with brutally vivid imagery and a feverish blooming of metaphor, a stylistic choice that allows the novel's shell-shocked narrator to vent his spleen in a continuous, rollicking combustion. But this elaborative technique, while adeptly deployed for surfacing the individual's latent rage, isn't particularly well-suited to the exploration of the Other — the sentences form a solipsistic loop that seems capable only of trapping subjective sense impressions and memories. (Trela, 2019)

This baroque⁵⁴ quality of the writing is an excess which, difficult as it may be to get away with in Portuguese, is surely an additional challenge for the translator – moreover, in case the translator (and/or their editor) is an adept of invisibility – as it is anything but neutral.

The ambiguity between author and narrator is strong, not so much because of biographic coincidences, but rather because of how the text intertwines what would likely be one's higher register and more sophisticated vocabulary, with the other's coarse, when not plain vulgar pitch, symptomatic of direct discourse. The language used thus shifts from the literary to the vulgar, sporting lyrical images side by side with others which are grotesque and abject: on the very first page of the novel (Antunes, 1979: 9), we go from “vozes de gaze” (“gauze voices”) and “sílabas de algodão” (“cotton syllables”), to the giraffe's “solidão de esparguete” (“spaghetti loneliness”) and, a little later, the “espirais moles de cagalhão” (“soft turd spirals”).

Another common trait of the early novels, which is very strong in this one in

⁵⁴ Trela's expression “Manueline” refers to a specifically Portuguese architectural style: also known as Portuguese late Gothic, it incorporates maritime elements, evocative of the Age of Discoveries, with those typical of the Late Gothic Flamboyant style.

particular, is the profusion of spatial and cultural references. In terms of geography, there is a great number of references to places in Portugal, namely detailed ones to particular spots in Lisbon, and also, since there are multiple flashbacks of the war sceneries, to regions of Angola. There are also many mentions to popular culture, often Portuguese culture, and some of them rather obscure, like Padre Cruz or Sãozinha: two well-known Portuguese, who have lived during the first half of the 20th century, they acquired an aura of sainthood and were revered by the people as saints, even if they have never been considered as such by the hierarchy of the Catholic church.

On the one hand, this copiousness of local references hinders the reading, mostly for the foreign reader – although it is indeed challenging for the Portuguese reader, especially if they are young or do not know Lisbon well; on the other hand, its overabundance is so intense it borders on kitsch, in such a way that their actual meaning ends up being relativized. Even because this profuseness of Portuguese-specific references is somewhat balanced by a slightly less exuberant, but nevertheless relevant, amount of references to a popular culture which is international.

For instance, on chapter A, the above mentioned “solidão de esparguete” (Antunes, 1979: 9) of the giraffe is compared to that of “um Gulliver triste” (Antunes, 1979: 9) (a sad Gulliver); the mothers on the restaurant are likened to “noivas volantes de Chagall” (Antunes, 1979: 10), (“Chagall's flying brides”); the narrator refers to the forehead of the woman he is talking to as a “testa de Cranach” (Antunes, 1979: 11), (“Cranach forehead”); a little further down the same chapter, we have “bustos do padre Cruz” (Antunes, 1979: 12), (“busts of father Cruz”) and a snarky remark evoking “capítulos de Máximo Gorki da Editorial Minerva” (“chapters of Minerva publisher's Maxim Gorki”); but the obscure “Sãozinha” is compared to Mae West (Antunes, 1979: 13), while an image of Christ is likened to Fairbanks (Antunes, 1979: 13). The aunts described in this chapter are said to live in Rua Barata Salgueiro, one of the most expensive in Lisbon (something that the foreign reader cannot possibly know, but may infer from the content of the narrative), and their very ancient water heaters are hyperbolically likened to Papin's steam digester; their houses are decorated with portraits of Portuguese personalities (Salazar and Cerejeira), but their china is the internationally recognized Sèvres instead of the local Vista Alegre. These are instances from the first chapter, but others could be taken from elsewhere: for example, the insertion of a stanza of a poem by Tomás Ribeiro in chapter L (Antunes, 1979: 84) can be said to be counterbalanced by the transcription of the entire lyrics for the Paul Simon song “Fifty Ways to Leave Your Lover”, in chapter G (Antunes, 1979: 54-55).

Some of the local references do not lose much for undergoing generalization, and some instances of translation do just that; but, many times, the local reference is kept and goes unexplained, creating maybe some displacement, if not confusion. For example, on the very incipit, the original text mentions the Lisbon zoo by its popular name of Jardim Zoológico (“zoological garden”), and every one of these translators opts for the general term zoo, without substantial loss to the reader. A bit later in the same paragraph, a mention to the smell of the “corredores do Coliseu”, the halls of an old, large concert hall in downtown Lisbon, which borrows its name from the original Colosseum, whose form it roughly replicates, is dealt with in different ways: Margaret Jull Costa and Maria José de Lancastre go for the explicitation (“passageways in the Coliseu concert hall” (Antunes, 2011a: 19), and “Coliseu, il circo d’inverno”, (Antunes, 1996: 9), while Elisabeth Lowe limits her choice to a “Coliseum” thus written (Antunes, 1983: 5). In either case, none of the three translators makes a domesticating choice to omit the name of the concert hall or to replace it with a more recognizable one.

This kind of occurrences are so ubiquitous they cannot but pose a problem, if not for the translators, at least for the readers, constantly reminded as they are of the narrator's very specific background. This is arguably one of the great strengths of the novel, since it adds consistency to the character and credibility to the setting, through the amount and modality of the details: if most foreign (and many Portuguese) readers do not know Rua Barata Salgueiro, or precisely the cost of real estate in that area, they still can conclude from other clues just how upscale and thoroughbred the narrator's family is – much better than if it had been plainly stated. And also much more strongly, if not more concretely, than if the author were to use a more recognizable setting – such as Avenida da Liberdade or Rossio, thus avoiding to invite the exoticization which characterizes a Lisbon whose symbolic dimension is emphasised, like the one we are presented with in Tabucchi's novels, for instance.

In English

As we have seen, *Os Cus de Judas* was the very first work by António Lobo Antunes to ever be translated. Due to the direct intervention of Thomas Colchie, New York's Random House took on the task of publishing this promising new author from across the Atlantic. The translation, under the title *South of Nowhere*, was carried out by Elisabeth Lowe.

Lowe, a former student of Gregory Rabassa's, was then an associate professor of Comparative Literature in Bogotá, Colombia, and was asked by the publishing house to translate this book. It ended up being published in January 1983, but an excerpt of Lowe's translation had already seen the light in the December 1982 issue of the influential *Granta* magazine. The critics reacted rather favourably, with reviews being published in prestigious newspapers such as the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*.

More than thirty years later, and numerous translations not only into English but into the most disparate languages, the British imprint W. W. Norton decided to commission a new translation and, in 2011, they have issued Margaret Jull Costa's *The Land at the End of the World*. By then (between 1983 and 2011), Lobo Antunes had been published in English language by 6 different publishers, both British and American, and 4 other translators.

A renowned and experienced translator, Jull Costa had been responsible for translations of Fernando Pessoa, Eça de Queiroz and Saramago, just to name a few, and had already translated a selection of Lobo Antunes' short prose (*crónicas*)⁵⁵ for the same publishing house. The decision to retranslate *Os Cus de Judas*, when a significant amount of the author's novels was yet to be translated at all into English, was due to his agent's opinion that a new translation was needed.⁵⁶ In any case, we know the agent's opinion echoes that of the author's, who had stated, in an interview, that Lowe's was "the only bad translation" of a book of his" (Arnaut 2008: 121). Its reception at the time, however, was not negative at all: a review in *The New York Times* comments on the translation (something that very seldom happens), deeming it "a lively translation by Elizabeth Lowe" (Cheuse, 1983).

It is, indeed, "lively": Lowe tries to capture the rhythm and whimsicality of the direct speech by adopting an exuberant but not particularly high-brow language; rich, colourful, sometimes peppy, sometimes gloomy, it does a good job of capturing both the maniacal verbosity of the shell-shock victim and the melancholic nostalgia of the lonely, recently divorced narrator.

The bad name this translation has made for itself has nothing to do with style, but with a different set of issues: it has been severely truncated. The omissions are not

⁵⁵ "Crónica" is a specific Portuguese-language form of short prose. Possessing a certain degree of hybridity, it has elements both of journalistic and of literary prose. It typically muses on daily topics, and it is usually published as a column in a periodical.

⁵⁶ "I had already translated a selection of Lobo Antunes's crônicas for Norton, and my editor there was really pleased with them, and is also a great fan of Lobo Antunes. I think he chose *Os cus de Judas* because ALA's agent at the time felt that it needed a new translation". (E-mail interview with Margaret Jull Costa, 14/06/2019)

occasional (like the one in the Italian translation), but reiterated, consistent and, we believe, deliberate: several sentences or pieces of sentences have been left out of the target text, even if they were chosen carefully not to weight too much on the global meaning and effect of the passages; the resulting text still makes sense and is, in loose terms, compatible with the original.

This procedure should be seen as strategy rather than oversight, and it is telling that, back in 1983 – when it was so utterly rare that any author whatsoever, let alone a Portuguese one, was translated into English – it has been considered adequate. Much has changed, since then, and the author grew more prestigious – making such a move unthinkable in the present context, a fact which would account for the perceived need for another translation of the same novel. But in 1983 a reputable publishing house in a hyper-central context decided to publish a novice author from a peripheral system, and this was the translation that made a version of that author's production available for those who could not read Portuguese – other publishers have used it as a sample, scholars and critics have elaborated on it.

With the choice of the title, we are before what Gregory Rabassa (a renowned translator, who rendered other works by Lobo Antunes) called “a beautiful tale of editorial timidity and orthodoxy” (Rabassa, 2005: 142). In fact, *South of Nowhere*, while it conveys the meaning of a remote, godforsaken place, does not have the provocative strength of *Os Cus de Judas*. Rabassa suggested in his memoir “*The Asshole of the Earth*”, an expression he got acquainted with during his days of the military – and which was probably more shocking in the prude 1980s United States than *Os Cus de Judas* was in post-revolution Portugal. Elizabeth Lowe would have preferred to keep the biblical reference, and told us⁵⁷ she had made several proposals, all of them refused by the publisher (among them, “*The Judas Hole*”).

While it is not a particularly domesticating one⁵⁸, this translation does avoid footnotes and any other kind of paratext to clarify the numerous references to Portuguese culture. The strategy adopted is not always the same but, in many cases, Lowe's choice was to resort to interpolations, like she does when confronted with historical figures which, being well-known to the Portuguese, would be rather obscure to the Random House readers: when, in Portuguese, there is “Salazar”, Lowe writes “Salazar, our glorious leader”; likewise, the mention to Cardeal Cerejeira is accompanied by the explicitation “childhood friend of our leader”; and padre Cruz is rendered as “father Cruz, rebel saint” (Antunes, 1983: 7), in a short, if not very

⁵⁷ E-mail interview, 17-06-2009.

⁵⁸ Some passages have been kept in Portuguese, as was the case with the lines by Tomás Ribeiro quoted by the highschool teacher (Antunes, 1983: 67).

accurate, explanation.

Venuti (1995) interprets the domesticating tendencies he sees in American translated prose as a byproduct of the quest for fluency. However, with Lowe's, we are before a translation which often does its best not to eliminate or tone down the marks of foreignness, even if fluency is an issue – we tend to understand the reiterated omissions under such light.

Margaret Jull Costa's translation, published almost 30 years later, has a whole different setting – both at the historical and the editorial level. Unlike Lowe, who was little more than a beginner when she worked on Lobo Antunes's *Os Cus de Judas*, Jull Costa was already a very experienced and acclaimed translator, being the English voice of contemporary writers like the Spanish Javier Marías, or the Portuguese José Saramago, and having worked on countless renderings of prestigious authors. A very respected professional, her translation was praised, for instance, by *The New York Times*' Larry Rother (as quoted on the back cover of the W. W. Norton 2011 edition), as she, in his opinion, “manages to capture, perfectly and faithfully, the bitter, hallucinatory and increasingly desperate tone” of the book.

If, in 1983, he was known but certainly not consecrated in Portugal, and utterly unknown elsewhere, by 2011 Lobo Antunes was a very prestigious writer, studied and translated in several countries. Margaret Jull Costa had already read several of the author's novels and translated a selection of crónicas of his for the same imprint (Lowe had, understandably so, never heard of Lobo Antunes when she was contacted by the publisher). So it is with this knowledge and experience that the Norton edition comes to be. The fact that it contains several footnotes to explain the numerous references other translators tend to tackle with an interpolation is telling, and hints at what kind of audience it is aimed at; as it is usual in this publishing house's, this edition includes a translator's preface, in which Margaret Jull Costa discusses her choice of the title.

If, on the text, the frequent allusions to the “cus de judas” where the soldier has been sent to are rendered as “assholes of the world”, the British translator deemed this expression “too flip, too superficial” for the title, “lacking, as it does, the suggestion of treachery in the name 'Judas.’” (Antunes, 2011a: 12) Therefore, she ends up choosing another phrase that she feels “echoes through the novel as well: 'The Land at the End of the World' (As Terras do Fim do Mundo), which is what Angolans call the remote, back-of-beyond part of Eastern Angola to which Lobo Antunes and his comrades were posted. This name perfectly captures the all-pervading sense of abandonment felt by Portuguese troops and Angolans alike, the sense that they had been swept into a far

corner of the world and forgotten, like so much dust and detritus.” (Antunes, 2011a: 12-13)

As far as we know, this is the one translation of a work by Lobo Antunes to include footnotes, a strategy the translator resorts to with relative parsimony, in order to clarify mentions like the ones we pointed out above: father Cruz, Cardeal Cerejeira, Sãozinha (but not Salazar, whom she presumes the reader knows); but also Alenquer (a small town near Lisbon), Manuelino (a typically Portuguese form of gothic style) or Papin.

Even though these two translations use different strategies for this kind of references, they share a common choice of foreignizing (there are instances of domestication, but they are not the norm). If there is no attempt to avoid or re-signify, in domesticating terms, these mentions which anchor the text to the Portuguese bourgeois milieu, the attitude towards the African context is somewhat different. Geographical references are always kept, they are neither omitted (unless they happen to be part of a sentence that has been sacrificed) nor adapted or substituted by more familiar or less specific ones. But there is a significant amount of Africa-specific words: either words from local languages that became usual in the Portuguese (such as “soba” or “quimbo”) or others which, even if “etymologically” Portuguese, are used exclusively to describe African experience, like “picada” or “chana”. This kind of vocabulary plays an important role, adding specifically African colour to the scenes set in Angola, setting the mood in a key of exotic land of plenty which is in critical contrast with the feelings of estrangement the narrator experiences. These instances tend to be neutralized in both English translations and, incidentally, also on the Italian one.

In Italian

It is in 1996 that the work of Lobo Antunes' penetrates the Italian market (rather late, as we have seen) and it does so through this second novel of his. His Italian debut was tightly connected to the name of a great name in the country's cultural landscape, that of Antonio Tabucchi, a well-known writer and an influent scholar: having specialized in Portuguese, the subject he taught for years at the Siena University, he had had a decisive role in the dissemination of the work of Fernando Pessoa, and was largely responsible for the poet's fame in Italy.

The first edition of the translation was published by the prestigious Einaudi, and it is credited to “Maria José de Lancastre, in collaboration with Antonio Tabucchi”.

Lancastre was his Portuguese wife and also a scholar, having worked with him in several other occasions.

Unlike other books by this author, some of them more recent, this one is still in print and has been often reissued. Halfway through its career in Italy, though, Lobo Antunes' books were taken on by another imprint, Feltrinelli; and, with that, the reference to Tabucchi vanished: the translation is now credited solely to Lancastre (even though it features an introduction by the more famous and influential Tabucchi).

The Feltrinelli edition presents the very same translation originally issued by Einaudi. No changes have been made, except for the occasional and strictly typographical details (commas substituted dashes in dialogues and a few graphical accents have been changed⁵⁹). But aside from these, no editing has been undertaken – so much so that this edition maintains what we take to be an involuntary omission: in chapter H, several pages of the original text are missing in the translation. In this kind of stream of consciousness style writing, such a gap can easily go unnoticed: the discourse is intermittent and convoluted enough to make it believable.

The title chosen was *In culo al mondo*, an idiom which would translate precisely the Portuguese “cu de judas”; if the reference to Judas is lost, there is the advantage that the coarse language is maintained, thus suggesting at least the contempt the narrator has in store for this land at the end of the world to which he was sent.

Concerning the paratext this translation is the only one in its linguistic context and one of the few worldwide to include a glossary. In it, the translator presents the reader with a selection of those terms she considered needed clarification. They can be local geographical references, but also other cultural and political references which are specific to the Portuguese context.

It would be unpractical (and probably counterproductive) to list all the particular references present in *Os Cus de Judas*, and Lancastre manages to be selective enough to limit her glossary to three pages. The political motivations underlying this reading of the novel become more obvious if we notice how the glossary is careful to include explanations for political instances, like the acronyms for the organizations and institutions of that time. This glossary explains the few Bantu words that were kept in the target text (“soba”, “sanzala”), several of the names of places in Portugal (for those in Angola we have a map), and a few of the personalities from Portuguese culture: in

⁵⁹ In Italian, the diacritical marks in use are mostly the acute and the grave (and in very rare cases, the circumflex). For the letters “i” and “u”, the general rule is that the grave is the accent used when necessary. However, the Einaudi publishing house has the editorial practice of using the acute accent in these cases. It is a peculiarity of their typographical style. The Feltrinelli edition uses the regular forms of accentuation.

the poets department, they list Antero de Quental, but not Camilo Pessanha, and Cesário Verde but not Tomás Ribeiro (the author of the verses quoted on chapter L); when it comes to politicians, the glossary includes Salazar but not Caetano and, among the toponyms which are explained, we will find Peniche but not Caxias (another place famous for its prison, and sometimes used metonymically).

It is hard to tell whether this is due to lack of time and attention or to space constraints. Be it with a glossary, like in the Italian edition, with footnotes like the British one, or even including interpolations, like the American translator did, one will have to make choices, and prioritize some references over others, as they are simply too many.

In the text itself, many problematic references are omitted, neutralized or explained through interpolations: for instance, even though a stanza of his is included (in translation), the name of Tomás Ribeiro (a minor poet) is left out, and the verses that the school teacher says out loud are, we are told, from “his favorite poet”, “il suo poeta preferito” (Antunes, 1996: 74); on page 87, “fatias de bolo-rei”, a typical Christmas treat, is neutralized as “fette di dolci”, and the “personagens de Vittorio de Sica à deriva no *Pátio das Cantigas*” (“Vittorio de Sica characters adrift in *Pátio das Cantigas*”) are clarified through an explanatory insertion: “personaggi di Vittorio de Sica naufragati in un popolare film portoghese che si chiama *Pátio das Cantigas*”, meaning “shipwrecked in a popular Portuguese movie named *Pátio das Cantigas*”, rendering “adrift” with the more final “shipwrecked” (Antunes, 1996: 87).

Analysis

For the purpose of translation analysis, we have selected a few instances we find revealing.

As we have seen, this text uses many words of Bantu origin (such as “cubata”, “sanzala”, “quimbo”, “jango”, “soba”, “camanga”, etc.) and others which refer specifically to the Portuguese presence in Africa, like “capim”, “chana” or “picada”. The long and lasting experience of occupation of African territories caused these words to become recurring in standard Portuguese and, if they do evoke a precise foreign setting, they are also familiar to the average reader (some more than others).

The Italian translation, as we have seen above, keeps “soba” (Kimbundo word for tribal chief) and “sanzala”⁶⁰, while in both English versions these loan words are always

⁶⁰ The Kimbundo word for “village” or “settlement”, ended up being used in Brazil among slave-traders as

translated. In Italian, “cubata” (Kimbundo for a specific kind of construction) is translated as “capanna”, corresponding to “hut”, which is the choice for both English-speaking translators (“hut” has a wider semantic extension) while they render “soba” as “chief” (Costa) or “chieftain” (Lowe). These translations sacrifice a dimension of African-related foreignness which is, in this book, particularly poignant.

We are particularly interested in the author's style. In order to analyze it, we will need to look at some excerpts, and we have selected a few we believe are representative of the prose of this book. We will start with the first lines of chapter A (which is named B in Lowe's translation⁶¹). It is not an entire paragraph, but it is roughly one page, the first one of the novel.

We transcribe below the Portuguese text, followed by the translations. In the annexes, you will find a table in which they appear side by side (Table 1).

Do que eu gostava mais no Jardim Zoológico era do ringue de patinagem sob as árvores e do professor preto muito direito a deslizar para trás no cimento em elipses vagarosas sem mover um músculo sequer, rodeado de meninas de saias curtas e botas brancas, que, se falassem, possuíam seguramente vozes tão de gaze como as que nos aeroportos anunciam a partida dos aviões, sílabas de algodão que se dissolvem nos ouvidos à maneira de fins de rebuçado na concha da língua. Não sei se lhe parece idiota o que vou dizer mas aos domingos de manhã, quando nós lá íamos com o meu pai, os bichos eram mais bichos, a solidão de esparquite da girafa assemelhava-se à de um Gulliver triste, e das lápides do cemitério dos cães subiam de tempos a tempos latidos aflitos de caniche. Cheirava aos corredores do Coliseu ao ar livre, cheios de esquisitos pássaros inventados em gaiolas de rede, avestruzes idênticas a professoras de ginástica solteiras, pinguins trôpegos de joanetes de contínuo, catatuas de cabeça à banda como apreciadores de quadros; no tanque dos hipopótamos inchava a lenta tranquilidade dos gordos, as cobras enrolavam-se em espirais moles de cagalhão, e os crocodilos acomodavam-se sem custo ao seu destino terciário de lagartixas patibulares. (Antunes, 1979: 9)

Italian translation by Maria José de Lancastre:

Quello che più mi piaceva allo zoo era la pista era la pista di pattinaggio sotto gli alberi, e il professore negro bello e dritto che scivolava all'indietro sul cemento in ellissi lente senza muovere neanche un muscolo, circondato da bambine dalle gonne corte e dagli stivaletti bianchi che, se avessero parlato, di sicuro avrebbero rivelato voci di tutte come quelle che negli aeroporti annunciano la partenza degli

the quarters where enslaved people were kept; in this novel, it usually stands for “village”.

⁶¹ Until the Portuguese Language Orthographic Agreement of 1990 (a spelling reform put forth by an international treaty, which the Portuguese government adopted in official documents in January 2012), it was considered that the Portuguese alphabet had only 23 letters. The letters K, W, and Y, only used in the spelling of foreign words, were not considered a part of the Portuguese alphabet. Lobo Antunes' *Os Cus de Judas* has 23 chapters, named after those letters. In face of the asymmetry between the Portuguese and the English alphabets, the first translation into English addresses the issue by inserting three other elements (not “chapters”, but images), in such a way that there are not 23 but 26 sections, one for each letter of the alphabet. Therefore, in Random House's edition, what we have under “A” is a drawing of the black skating instructor, and the first chapter is under the letter “B”.

aerei, sillabe di cotone che si dissolvono negli orecchi come lische di caramella nella conchiglia del palato. Non so se quello che sto per dirle le sembrerà una cazzata ma la domenica mattina, quando ci andavamo con mio padre, gli animali erano più animali, la solitudine da spaghetti della giraffa assomigliava a quella di un Gulliver triste, e dalle tombe del cimitero dei cani venivano fuori ogni tanto dei guaiti infelici di barboncino. L'odore era quello dei corridoi all'aria aperta del Coliseu, il circo d'inverno, pieni di strambi uccelli inventati, in gabbie di rete, struzzi simili a professoresse di ginnastica zitelle, pinguini gottosi con l'andatura di vecchi bidelli coi calli ai piedi, cacatoa com la testa inclinata come visitatori di musei; nella vasca degli ippopotami lievitava la lenta tranquillità della grassezza, i serpenti si attorcigliavano in molli spirali stronzesche, e i cocodrilli si abbandonavano com naturalezza al loro destino terziario di lucertole patibolari. (Antunes, 1996: 3)

English translation by Elisabeth Lowe:

What I liked most about the zoo was the roller-skating rink shaded by trees, and the erect black professor gliding backwards, effortlessly, tracing lazy ellipses, all the while surrounded by girls in short skirts and white boots.

I don't know if this will sound idiotic to you, but when we used to go to the zoo in Sunday mornings with my father, the animals showed themselves for what they were: the giraffe, in his lofty solitude, had the dimensions of a sad Gulliver; the ostriches resembled spinster gym teachers; the penguins waddled like office boys with bunions; the cockatoos tilted their heads to one side like viewers in a museum; the hippopotamus was swollen with slow, obese calm; the snakes squirmed in soft spirals that looked like mounds of shit; and the crocodiles, Tertiary lizards, easily accommodated themselves to their destiny of imprisonment. The frantic bark of poodles occasionally filtered up around tombstones in the dog cemetery. The aviary, full of strange, fantastic birds, smelled like the open-air galleries of the Coliseum. (Antunes, 1983: 5)

English translation by Margaret Jull Costa:

The thing I liked best about the zoo was the roller-skating rink under the trees and the very upright black instructor describing slow ellipses as he glided effortlessly backward over the concrete surface, surrounded by girls in short skirts and white boots, who, if they spoke, doubtless did so in the same gauzy tones as those voices you hear at airports announcing the departure of planes, cotton syllables that dissolve in the ear just as the remnants of a piece of candy do on the curled shell of the tongue. I know it may sound idiotic, but on Sunday mornings, when we used to visit the zoo with my father, the animals seemed more real somehow, the lofty long-drawn-out solitude of the giraffe resembled that of a glum Gulliver, and from the headstones in the dark cemetery there arose, from time to time, the mournful howls of poodles. The zoo had a whiff about it like the open-air passage ways in the Coliseu concert hall, a place full of strange invented birds in cages, ostriches that looked just like spinster gym teachers, waddling penguins like messenger boys with bunions, and cockatoos with their heads on one side like connoisseurs of paintings; the hippopotamus pool exuded the languid sloth of the obese, cobras lay coiled in soft dungy spirals, and the crocodiles seemed reconciled to their Tertiary-age fate as mere lizards on death row. (Antunes, 2011a: 19-20)

The narrator describes the zoo through his childhood eyes, with a vocabulary which ranges from a popular register (“bichos”, “cabeça à banda”, “à maneira”), not always

politically correct (“preto” is offensive), to a more formal one (“possuíam”, “assemelhava-se”), at times conjuring images which border on the poetic (“sílabas de algodão”), and convoluted, dense sentences with an evocative effect (“os crocodilos acomodavam-se sem custo ao seu destino terciário de lagartixas patibulares”).

The rhythm of the text is something that may be not very easy to replicate, with its run-down sentences organized in long paragraphs (this example does not include the whole paragraph, which was, like many others, more than one page long); these fluctuations of register are also a challenge.

The first thing that catches the eye is probably the gaps in Lowe's translation. This is one example of how her technique works. On this first page, after the first couple of clauses, the translation stops short, leaving the rest of the sentence (a relative clause speculating on the voices of the girls) out.

In a new paragraph (the rest of the book is filled with page-long paragraphs, consistent – but for the gaps – with the original text; we tend to believe this was a special treatment given to the first page), Lobo Antunes' discourse is resumed, then a few more clauses are missing from the enumeration of quirky things that could be found in the zoo. These, however, turn up at the end of the paragraph. This is an exception, though: throughout the book, no other instance of this kind of shift was detected – omissions, when they do occur, are definitive. In our table, though, for facilitating step-by-step comparison, we placed the pieces of Lowe's translation side by side with their counterparts in terms of content and not position.

One first problem the translator would have to tackle is the fact that this very positive image of the skating instructor is referred to as “preto”, “nigger”; the neutral word in Portuguese would be “negro”, “preto” is considered offensive; it may be argued that the narrator uses “preto” in a neutral way, due to lack of attention rather than prejudice, but it is a very slippery piece of argument, and a very hard one to sustain. Both Costa and Lowe chose “black”, probably based on the context, which presents this character as a favourite thing of the author as a child. Still, one can hardly blame Lancaster for going with “negro”, the depreciative word in Italian (the neutral one being “nero”). However, this “professore” becomes “beautiful” (“bello”) in the Italian translation. Lowe's choice of “erect” for “direito”, on the other hand, while not semantically very far from the source text, is not the most straightforward correspondent. Lancaster keeps the phrasing “sem mover um músculo sequer” (“without moving a single muscle”), but Lowe and Costa prefer to interpret this as “effortlessly”. More tricky can be the adjective for the ellipses he describes: “vagarosas” is indeed somewhere between Costa's “slow” and Lowe's

“lazy”, and Lancastre goes no further than the plain “lente”, “slow”.

At least as important as vocabulary and register is the peculiar syntax, an actual trademark of Lobo Antunes', an issue that arises with this relative clause, the first to make its appearance: this instructor was surrounded by young girls “que, se falassem, possuíam seguramente vozes tão de gaze como as que nos aeroportos anunciam a partida dos aviões, sílabas de algodão que se dissolvem nos ouvidos à maneira de fins de rebuçado na concha da língua”⁶².

Lowe, as we have seen, has skipped it altogether. Lancastre averts the need to be precise and, instead of saying, like the author, that if these girls spoke (“se falassem”) they would certainly have (“possuíam seguramente”) voices like the ones he goes on to describe, she changes the phrasing ever so slightly, stating that “if they had spoken” (“se avessero parlato”; one should not think too much of the choice of tense, as the Italian is particularly rigid with this) “they would have revealed”: instead of simply “having” such voices, they would “reveal” them by speaking; this consists of an adjustment of the writer's expression, picking on the logical sequitur that the girls would have had the same voices, had they spoken or not. Margaret Jull Costa also proceeds to a tiny adjustment, stating that “if they spoke, doubtless did so”. The voices themselves are said to be “tão de gaze”, an unusual image and an even more unusual way to put it: “so gauzy”, or “as gauzy as”; “gaze” in Portuguese is a kind of very light, see-through fabric; it is also the word for the sterilized material you would use to bandage a wound; this is arguably its most common use, and brings to mind thoughts of aseptic, healing care; Lancastre opts for “tulle”, the kind of net-like fabric used for veils, conjuring thoughts of mystery and sophistication. These voices would thus utter “sílabas de algodão”, “cotton syllables”, which would melt in our ears – like cotton candy does; but Lobo Antunes has another thing in store, and goes for the more poetic – if ludicrous – “fins de rebuçado na concha da língua”⁶³; he introduces this comparative term, though, with the unusually colloquial and slightly old-fashioned “à maneira de”, something like “in the fashion of”, and utterly hard to replicate in any language. Maybe because of this difficulty, the Italian translator decided to include an unusual and slightly old fashioned word to render the author's prosaic and rather clumsy “fins de rebuçado” (“ends of candy drops”), “lische”; and, in the next sentence, perhaps in order to compensate for another point in which she found it impossible to

⁶² Roughly, “who, if they spoke, would certainly have had voices as gauzy as those that announce the departure of planes on the airports, cotton syllables which dissolve on the ears the way the ends of candies do on the conch of the tongue”.

⁶³ In the *ne varietur* edition “fios de rebuçado”, “threads of candy drops”. Margaret Jull Costa's translation (“the remnants of a piece of candy”) suggests she was working with a version of the source text that preceded the *ne varietur* edition.

reproduce the ragged or, at least, popular tone of the author, Lancastre substitutes the Portuguese rather tame “idiota” (“idiotic”, and this is the choice of both English-speaking translators) with the slang “cazzata”.

What the narrator feared might sound “idiotic” was the revelation that, when he went to the zoo with his father, as a child, in his opinion “os bichos eram mais bichos”, “the animals were more animals”, a hint at the child’s saturated perception of the world, rendered in a weird reiteration. The Portuguese also includes “bichos” (it could be translated as “beasts”, at least in some of its uses) instead of the neutral “animais”, probably to reinforce the idea that this is a child’s mind speaking through an adult’s voice.

And here it begins: the uncanny menagerie of fantastic beasts, trapped in the boy’s imagination and summoned by the man’s pathetic soliloquy. This is one characteristic of this book: to blend so seamlessly the author’s prose with the character’s putative voice, to graft so effectively a monologue that pretends to be real with a language that cannot but be literary. The images go from the unexpected to the ridiculous: “a solidão de esparguete da girafa assemelhava-se à de um Gulliver triste”, inspired a literal rendering by Lancastre, “la solitudine da spaghetti della giraffa assomigliava a quella di un Gulliver triste”, while it triggered a different response in countries where spaghetti is not quite so popular; Margaret Jull Costa states “the lofty long-drawn-out solitude of the giraffe resembled that of a glum Gulliver”, using a circumlocution to help avoid the food reference. Her use of “glum”, however, seems to correspond to a higher register than just plain “triste”, “sad”; Elisabeth Lowe, on the other hand, feels the need to point out to the reader just how Gulliver is like the giraffe, and explains “the giraffe, in his lofty solitude, had the dimensions of a sad Gulliver”, making it clear it is a matter of size.

With this example we see how the words that defy translation and call for a less literal approach are not always, in the eyes of the actual translators, those with no obvious or direct parallel. On the following clause, it is the Italian translation to choose a term which is not the direct and obvious translation, and for no apparent reason: the “lápides”, “tombstones” for Lowe and “headstones” for Costa, are switched by Lancastre into the more general “tombe” (“tombs”), instead of the precise Italian equivalent “lapidi”.

As for the birds, notice how Lowe felt the urge to insert the term “aviary”, and how, on the “gaiolas de rede”, Costa drops the “rede”, while Lowe does without “gaiolas de rede” altogether. The poor gym teachers of the simile for the ostriches, go from the

neutral “solteiras” (“single”) of the source text to the hopeless “zitelle” in Italian and “spinster” in both English versions (what would be “solteironas” in Portuguese). Penguins do in fact waddle (a word with no direct equivalent in Portuguese), but what Lobo Antunes says about them is that they are “trôpegos”, which is a popular, colourful way of saying “unsteady”. For this, Lancastre goes for “gottosi”, “afflicted by gout”. Lobo Antunes' fantasy attributes their clumsiness to the fact that they would have “joanetes de contínuo”, and while “joanetes” is “bunions”, like in Lowe and Costa (Lancastre says “calli”, “callus”, probably for lack of a more specific word), “contínuos” is precisely “bidelli”, more like “ushers” than “office boys” (Lowe) or “messenger boys” (Costa).

In the following instance, “cacatuas de cabeça à banda como apreciadores de quadros”, no one managed to replicate the popular hue of “à banda”, a colloquial way to say “tilted to one side”, and the “apreciadores de quadros” was also not linear to address, with Lowe resorting to “viewers in a museum”, and Lancastre to “visitatori di musei”, which is roughly the same in Italian. Margaret Jull Costa was arguably the one who came closer to the tone of the source text, with her solution “cockatoos with their heads on one side like connoisseurs of paintings”. In the next few clauses, though, the tendency – or need – of the translators to adapt the writer's language begins to show through.

Lobo Antunes' “no tanque dos hipopótamos inchava a lenta tranquilidade dos gordos” (“in the hippopotamus's pool, the slow tranquility of the fat swelled up”) is an example of how he succeeds in creating very original images with everyday vocabulary. A tendency we have observed in the foreign translator is one to polish the language, bringing the register up when the author's is plain. Thus, for the verb “inchar”, “to swell”, Lancastre prefers the gentler “lievitare”, “to leaven”, instead of the blunt “gonfiare”; the straightforward “gordos”, plural for “fat”, is turned into “grassezza” (“fatness”) by Lancastre, and into “obese” by Lowe. Jull Costa's rendition, though, refines the prose in her formulation: “the hippopotamus pool exuded the languid sloth of the obese”.

Probably the strongest piece in this page, because of the foul “cagalhão”, “turd”, is “as cobras enrolavam-se em espirais moles de cagalhão” (literally, “the snakes whorled in mushy spirals of turd”), a word that presented no significant trouble for the translators (the most light-handed rendering is that of Costa, with “dung”); but it entails another difficulty, very typical of the author, which is that of the tacit comparison (“de cagalhão”); to solve this, Lancastre and Costa go for the adjective form, while Lowe

explicitly uses “like”.

Finally, for the crocodiles who “acomodavam-se sem custo ao seu destino terciário de lagartixas patibulares” (“effortlessly accommodated themselves to their Tertiary destiny of scaffolding lizards”), where we find a mix of very plain language (“acomodavam-se sem custo”) with a much more sophisticated one, the latter put together to compose a far fetched image, “destino terciário de lagartixas patibulares”, we will find a whole set of solutions. Lancaster's is the most literal one, stating “i coccodrilli si abbandonavano con naturalezza al loro destino terziario di lucertole patibolari”, in which “si abbandonavano con naturalezza” (“let themselves go with ease”) is the closest thing she could find to the Portuguese, since the Italian “accommodare” is something that you do with your body (one can “accommodare” to a chair but not to an idea, it does not have the same semantic extension it does in English). Lowe opts to mix and match the elements so as to obtain “the crocodiles, Tertiary lizards, easily accommodated themselves to their destiny of imprisonment”, addressing the inconvenience of “patibulares” with an approximation. And Costa, who writes “the crocodiles seemed reconciled to their Tertiary-age fate as mere lizards on death row”, introduces that degree of filtering that consists of adding “seemed” to the main verb, for which she chose “reconciled”, a slightly higher-brow equivalent of “accommodated”, and avoids the obsolete “scaffold” by using the contemporary “death row”. These last three clauses by Margaret Jull Costa illustrate how sophisticated her writing tends to be, even when the source text is not so much.

Another excerpt, this one from the beginning of chapter J (you will find these excerpts side by side in Table 2):

Deixe-me pagar a conta. Não, a sério, deixe-me pagar a conta e tome-me pelo jovem tecnocrata ideal português 79, inteligência tipo *Expresso*, isto é, mundana, superficial e inofensiva, cultura género *Cadernos Dom Quixote*, ou seja, prolixa, esquisita e fininha, opção política Fox-Trot, Pedras d'El Rei e Casa da Comida, uma gravura de Pomar, uma escultura de Cutileiro e um gramofone de campânula no apartamento, mantendo uma relação emancipada, sinuosa e repleta de curtos-circuitos tempestuosos com uma arquitecta paisagista, que, ao deixar à noite as lentes de contacto no cinzeiro, perde com esse strip-tease de dioptrias o encanto brumoso do olhar das atrizes americanas de Nicholas Ray, para se transformar numa nudez sem mistério de Campo de Ourique, à procura, às apalpadelas, na carteira, da embalagem de *Microginon*. (Lobo Antunes, 1979: 75)

Italian translation by Maria José de Lancaster:

Permetta che il conto lo paghi io. No, davvero, mi lasci pagare, e mi consideri il giovane tecnocrate portoghese ideale del 1979, intelligenza livello settimanale “Expresso”, vale a dire mondana, superficiale e inoffensiva, cultura livello

“Cadernos Dom Quixote”, vale a dire prolissa, contorta e snobbina, scelte politiche fox-trot, bianco seco d.o.c. e ristorante à la page, un disegno di Pomar, una scultura di Cutileiro e un grammofono di tromba fra le pareti di casa, una storia sentimentale emancipata tutta curve e cortocircuiti tempestosi, lei un'architetta di giardini che la sera, nel lasciare le lenti a contatto nel portacenere, con il suo striptease ottico perde l'incanto nebbioso degli occhi delle attrici americane di Nicholas Ray per conquistare la nudità senza mistero dei quartieri piccolo borghesi, mentre cerca a tentoni nella borsa le pillole di salvataggio. (Antunes, 1996: 67)

English translation by Elisabeth Lowe:

Let me pay the bill. No, seriously, let me pay the bill so you can take me for the ideal Portuguese '79 technocrat with the café-society intelligence, that is, mundane, superficial and inoffensive, garrulous, strange and slight. I maintain an open, often tempestuous relationship with a landscape architect who, when she removes her contact lenses and puts them in the ashtray at night, loses with that striptease of diopters her smoky charm derived from Nicholas Ray's American actresses to become a crass Campo de Ourique nude groping in her bag for a Valium. (Antunes, 1983: 59)

English translation by Margaret Jull Costa:

Let me pay the bill. No, seriously, let me pay and pretend to be the ideal young Portuguese technocrat, circa 1979, someone with the intelligence of the average *Expresso* reader, namely, materialistic, superficial and inoffensive, with a taste for the kind of books published by, say, *Cadernos Dom Quixote*, wordy, weird and rather superficial, the politics of swish bars, restaurants and resorts, someone who would have in his apartment an etching by Júlio Pomar, a sculpture by João Cutileiro, and an old-fashioned phonograph, someone enjoying an emancipated, tortuous relationship full of stormy short circuits with a landscape gardener, who, when she performs the dioptric striptease of taking out her contact lenses and placing them in the ashtray, loses the fuzzily charming gaze of those American actresses who appear in Nicholas Ray movies and is transformed instead into boring suburban nakedness, rummaging in her purse for her contraceptive pills. (Antunes, 2011a: 19-20)

At this point in the story, the narrator prepares to leave the bar with the woman he has been talking to, and insists on paying. “Allow me to pay the bill” instantly degenerates into one of those long verbose litanies of which this novel is made of: in this case, with a sardonic piece of social commentary, in which he sketches a portrait of a certain social class – his own: by all accounts, both the character's and the author's, and this enhances the irony.

The translators are thus confronted with a series of codified references to the Portuguese culture of the time (late 1970s), and their reactions are diversified. Here, the author brings to mind: *Expresso*, a reputable newspaper, founded in the early 1970s, inspired by the English model of quality broadsheet Sunday papers; *Dom Quixote* is a prestigious publishing house (ironically, it is now Lobo Antunes' publisher),

founded in the 1960s; now mostly known for their contemporary fiction catalogue, they had a collection of informative books on current events named “*Cadernos Dom Quixote*”, whose first issues were apprehended by the political police; Fox-Trot is a cocktail bar, one of four opened shortly after the Revolution by an antiquarian whose whimsical taste and antique collection contributed much to the fascination of the venues; they were attended by artists, writers, and a technocrat class, pretty much the same clientele as Casa da Comida, a high-brow popular restaurant at the time; Pedras d’El Rei was a popular holiday venue in Algarve; Júlio Pomar and João Cutileiro (respectively, a painter and a sculptor) were by then all the rage in the Portuguese artistic milieu; and Microginon, not exclusively Portuguese, was the commercial name of a popular birth-control pill.

Elisabeth Lowe's is the bluntest phrasing: lively and fast-paced as usual, she ends up being a bit more cruel towards the “arquitecta paisagista” that the author had been: she ends up “a crass Campo de Ourique nude”, an utterance even less flattering than the milder “nudez sem mistério”, “nakedness without mystery”, of the source text. Lowe starts by following the original very closely until the *Expresso* mention, which she tackles by translating “the café-society intelligence”; she then omits *Cadernos Dom Quixote*, but lists together the adjectives the author used to translate these types: “mundana, superficial e inofensiva” becomes “mundane, superficial and inoffensive”, and is followed by the “prolixa, esquisita e fininha” rendered “garrulous, strange and slight”. She then omits everything including the mentions to Lisbon restaurants and Portuguese artists and, after a full stop, begins a sentence in which she switches the author's hypothetical (actually, ideal) romantic interest for an actual one: we go from “let me pay the bill so you can take me for the ideal Portuguese '79 technocrat” to “I maintain an open, often tempestuous relationship with a landscape architect”, in the first person. Lowe has no problem with keeping Campo de Ourique in the text, with no interpolation, but bizarrely mistakes the pills for Valiums. (Incidentally, these pills seem to be tricky, as Lancastre's rendering as “pillole di salvataggio” hints at some kind of misinterpretation.)

Margaret Jull Costa chooses the more general “contraceptive pills” but, once again, our comment focuses on her choice of language, when transforming the conversational “à procura, às apalpadelas” in “rummaging”. Campo de Ourique is omitted and the clause rendered as “boring suburban nakedness”. She chooses to break down the author's more snappy “inteligência tipo *Expresso*” into “someone with the intelligence of the average *Expresso* reader”, and deals with *Cadernos Dom Quixote* with another

circumlocution, being careful to include marks of spoken language: “with a taste for the kind of books published by, say, *Cadernos Dom Quixote*”. For the sets of adjectives, she is all in all quite literal, except for the fact that she chooses to render “mundana” as “materialistic”. In Costa's translation, Pomar and Cutileiro have their full names in the text, and a footnote explaining who they are. The mentions to the famous bars, resorts and restaurants of that time are substituted by the generalization “the politics of swish bars, restaurants and resorts”, summarizing the author's idea of a smart and fashionable lifestyle – but, again, her register is higher than the source's.

Lancastre is also more explicit that the author, making it clear that *Expresso* is a weekly paper by translating “inteligência tipo *Expresso*” as “Intelligenza livello settimanale *Expresso*”, going on to specify that this means “mondana, superficiale e inoffensiva” (quite literally “mundana, superficial e inofensiva”), and also keeps the mention to *Cadernos Dom Quixote*, interpreting “prolixa, esquisita e fininha” as “prolissa, contorta e snobbina”; if “fino” (“thin”) has a figurative use meaning “refined”, it is very unlikely that one would use it in diminutive form – “fininho” stands, most likely, for “thin” or, as Margaret Jull Costa has put it, “rather superficial”. She then keeps Pomar and Cutileiro (whose names are not in the glossary), but tries to generalize “opção política Fox-Trot, Pedras d'El Rei e Casa da Comida” by rendering it “scelte politiche fox-trot, bianco seco d.o.c. e ristorante à la page”. Effective as this phrasing may be in conveying the high-end way of living the narrator describes, it seems to have stumbled upon a couple of details, as it misreads Fox-Trot, the bar, for the dance (hence the lack of capitalization), and Pedras d'El Rei for a wine (“Terras d'El Rei”, from the Reguengos region).

It should be noticed that these references are not the only challenging elements for the translator, and sometimes the most unexpected details emerge in the translator's behaviour: for instance, “strip-tease de dioptrias” is met with ease by both English-language renditions (“striptease of diopters” for Lowe and “dioptric striptease” for Costa), but Lancastre decides to generalize by resorting to the adjective “ottico”, avoiding the technical – and humorous in the context – “diottrie”. Both Lowe and Costa, on the other hand, when dealing with the succinct “ao deixar à noite as lentes de contacto no cinzeiro” (“when leaving, at night, their contact lenses on the ashtray”), feel compelled to make it explicit how they took them off first. This is the kind of tiny and relatively innocent intervention often performed by the translators of Lobo Antunes.

We have tried, whenever possible, to select excerpts of text that made sense on their

own: either a paragraph or, at least, a passage ending with a full stop. In the next instance, that was not the case. The selected text begins after a period break, but ends with a comma; it is part of a very long paragraph (in chapter N) which corresponds to one of the many rants the main character indulges in, venting about the traumatizing experience of war. Please refer to Table 3 to see the excerpts side by side.

Éramos peixes, somos peixes, fomos sempre peixes, equilibrados entre duas águas na busca de um compromisso impossível entre a inconformidade e a resignação, nascidos sob o signo da Mocidade Portuguesa e do seu patriotismo veemente e estúpido de pacotilha, alimentados culturalmente pelo ramal da Beira Baixa, os rios de Moçambique e as serras do sistema Galaico-Duriense, espiados pelos mil olhos ferozes da PIDE, condenados ao consumo de jornais que a censura reduzia a louvores melancólicos ao relento de sacristia de província do Estado Novo, e jogados por fim na violência paranóica da guerra, ao som de marchas guerreiras e dos discursos heróicos dos que ficavam em Lisboa, combatendo, combatendo corajosamente o comunismo nos grupos de casais do prior, enquanto nós, os peixes, morríamos nos cus de Judas uns após outros, tocava-se um fio de tropeçar, uma granada pulava e dividia-nos ao meio, trás!, o enfermeiro sentado na picada fitava estupefacto os próprios intestinos que segurava nas mãos, uma coisa amarela e gorda e repugnante quente nas mãos, o apontador de metralhadora de garganta furada continuava a disparar, chegava-se sem vontade de combater ninguém, tolhido de medo, e depois das primeiras baixas saía-se para a mata por raiva na ânsia de vingar a perna do Ferreira e o corpo mole e de repente sem ossos do Macaco, os prisioneiros eram velhos ou mulheres esqueléticos menos lestos a fugir, côncavos de fome, [...] (Antunes, 1979: 101-102)

Italian translation by Maria José de Lancastre:

Eravamo dei pesci, siamo dei pesci, siamo sempre stati dei pesci, in equilibrio in uno spartiacque alla ricerca di un impossibile con promesso fra l'inconformismo e la rassegnazione, nati sotto il segno della Gioventù Salazarista, e del suo stupido e veemente patriottismo da paccottiglia, alimentati culturalmente dalla rete ferroviaria delle regioni portoghesi, dai fiumi delle colonie e dal sistema orografico del nord del Portogallo, spiati dai mille occhi feroci della polizia politica, condannati al consumo di giornali che la censura riduceva a lodi malinconiche con l'odore di sacrestia provinciale del regime, e alla fine scagliati nella violenza paranoica della guerra, al suono di marce bellicose e dei discorsi eroici di coloro che restavano a Lisbona, combattendo, combattendo coraggiosamente contro il comunismo nelle riunioni parrocchiali, mentre noi, i pesci, morivamo in culo al mondo, uno dopo l'altro, si toccava un filo steso per terra, una mina scoppiava e ci spezzava in due, zac!, l'infermiere seduto in mezzo al sentiero guardava stupefatto i propri intestini che reggeva fra le mani, una cosa gialla e grassa e ripugnante e calda fra le mani, il mitragliere con la gola ferita continuava a sparare, al nostro arrivo nessuno aveva voglia di uccidere nessuno, eravamo terrorizzati, e poi, dopo le prime perdite, ci inoltravamo rabbiosamente nella boscaglia col desiderio di vendicare la gamba del Ferreira e il corpo molle del Macaco, i prigionieri erano vecchio o donne scheletriche, non erano svelti a scappare, erano concavi di fame, [...] (Antunes, 1996: 93-94)

English translation by Elisabeth Lowe:

We searched for a compromise between unconformity and resignation. Born under the sign of the Portuguese Youth and its vehement and stupid jingoism; culturally nourished by the Beira Baixa railroad, the rivers of Mozambique and the mountains of the Galaico-Duriense range; spied on by the thousand fierce eyes of the PIDE; condemned to read censored newspapers praising Salazar's New State; we were finally thrown into the paranoid violence of the war to the tune of military marches interrupted by the heroic speeches of those who remained in Lisbon to fight, courageously to fight Communism at staid evening functions. We died in this asshole of the world one after the other, tripping on wires, being blown up by grenades, zap! The medic sitting on the dirt road looked stupefied at his own intestines that he was holding in his hands, a yellow, fat, repugnant hot thing in his hands, next to him a soldier with a hole in his neck continued to fire his machine gun. Another man came back without the will to fight, paralyzed with fear, and after the first casualties we went back to the bush in anger to avenge Ferreira's leg and Macaco's limp body. The prisoners were old people or skeletal women less inclined to escape, dying of hunger, [...] (Antunes, 1983: 82-83)

English translation by Margaret Jull Costa:

We were fish, we are fish, we were always fish, caught between two currents, in our search for an impossible compromise between rebellion and resignation, born under the sign of the Portuguese Youth Movement and its stupid, cheap, trenchant brand of patriotism, nourished culturally by the Beira-Baixa railroad line, the rivers of Mozambique and the Galaico-Duriense Massif, spied on by the thousand ferocious eyes of the PIDE, condemned to read newspapers that the censors reduced to glum, provincial, pious, hymns of praise for the Estado Novo, and then flung at last into the paranoiac violence of war, to the sound of martial music and heroic speeches given by those who stayed behind in Lisbon valiantly doing battle against Communism from the safety of church halls, while we, the fish, were dying one by one in the asshole of the world, touch a trip wire and a grenade flies up at you and splits you in two, the nurse sitting in the path staring in astonishment at the sight of his own intestines in his hands, a plump, yellow, disgusting thing hot in his hands, beside him, the machine gunner with a hole in his neck continuing to fire, you arrived in Angola not wanting to fight anyone, crippled with fear, but after the first few losses, you went out into the jungle feeling angry, wanting to avenge Ferreira's leg and Macaco's limp and suddenly boneless body, our only prisoners were old men and skeletal women too feeble to escape, concave with hunger, [...] (Antunes, 2011a: 117-118)

This snippet begins with “Éramos peixes, somos peixes, fomos sempre peixes” (“We were fish, we are fish, we have always been fish”), a metaphor that is being exploited from before.

The first thing that is visible when comparing source and target texts, is that Lowe omits the reference to fish. Until now we have always had difficulty in understanding the reasons behind Lowe's omissions; in this case, though, the piece left out seems to correspond to a more extreme image, and this may be why it was excluded, in the first

place. Of course such choice practically forces the translator to omit subsequent occurrences of that image.

This fish metaphor depicts the Portuguese soldiers as pawns in someone else's game, stressing the young men's impotence and disenfranchisement vis à vis their fate. Leaving it out makes the text more accessible and less strange, but it also subtracts drama to the narrator's account. By omitting "we were fish", Lowe necessarily leaves out another fragment that logically depends on that first one: "equilibrados entre duas águas" ("in balance between two waters") is even more unusual than the idea of being "fish"; writing "we were fish" instead of "like fish" makes the image stronger but does not stray significantly from formal conventions, while "equilibrados entre duas águas" is downright absurd, as "balancing" is not something one can do underwater. This kind of awkwardness, that repeats itself in Lobo Antunes' writing, is distinctive. In this novel specifically, it enhances the effect of authenticity, conferring credibility to the character: too literary a narrator would be harder to believe; and his less than rigorous expression is consonant both with the spoken register of the monologue, and with his agitation and discomfort.

Margaret Jull Costa renders "equilibrados entre duas águas" with the more neutral "caught between two currents", while Lancastre chooses "in equilibrio in uno spartiacque", maintaining the awkwardness of "equilibrio" ("balance"), in this context, and substituting the unconventional "entre duas águas" ("between two waters") with the standard "spartiacque". "Spartiacque" is the technical term for watershed line, but it is very commonly used in Italian; like in English, it is often used as metaphor, as in "watershed moment", to signify a defining moment or critical point. Subtle as it is, this connotation may act subliminally in the minds of readers of the Italian version. In this instance, it conveys the idea of a decisive moment, while the implication of the source text is precisely the opposite: that of indecisiveness, of a constitutive, unsurmountable conundrum. Which is precisely what is conveyed by the next clause, "na busca de um compromisso impossível entre a inconformidade e a resignação" ("in search of an impossible compromise between unconformity and resignation"); this is very literally translated by both Lowe and Lancastre, while Costa chooses "rebellion" for "resignação".

As you may see by comparing the target texts in table 3, they mostly reproduce the source text's punctuation (variations are due to the specific rules of each target language), except for Lowe's, who introduces four full stops and three semicolons, whereas the source text uses commas throughout.

The narrator then sketches a portrait of his generation, starting with “nascidos sob o signo da Mocidade Portuguesa” (“born under the sign of Mocidade Portuguesa”). Mocidade Portuguesa was an organisation founded under Salazar's regime, akin to Hitler Youth and its Italian counterpart, Opera Nazionale Balilla. Lowe translates Mocidade Portuguesa rather literally, with “Portuguese Youth”, and Costa explicitates “Portuguese Youth Movement”; Lancastre, trusting that the reader will be familiar with Salazar's name, chooses “Gioventù Salazarista”. For “patriotismo veemente e estúpido de pacotilha” (roughly, “vehement, stupid, two-bit patriotism”), Lancastre goes with the literal “stupido e veemente patriottismo da paccottiglia”, given that in Italian one can use the word “pacotilha”, albeit with a different spelling. “De pacotilha” is an idiom whose range includes “cheap”, “fake”, “tacky” or “of bad taste”. Lowe interprets this utterance as “jingoism”, using the expression “vehement and stupid jingoism”, while Costa writes “stupid, cheap, trenchant brand of patriotism”.

The list of things with which the narrator and his peers are “alimentados culturalmente” (“culturally nourished”) is a comment on the education system of the time, in which schoolchildren were required to know by heart lists of geographical features and infrastructures, both of the Portuguese territory and that of the colonies, like “ramal da Beira Baixa, os rios de Moçambique e as serras do sistema Galaico-Duriense” (“Beira Baixa's railway branch, the rivers of Mozambique and the mountains of the Galaico-Duriense mountain system”). This passage combines references to three of the items schoolchildren would chant, as a result of their education. The fact that the author juxtaposes this enumeration with the expression “alimentados culturalmente” encloses an instance of criticism, suggesting that he feels that their cultural education was replaced by the parroting of information that he deems expendable. The superfluosness of this kind of knowledge is hinted at by the very detailed references he gives – a degree of detail that is sacrificed to generalization by the Italian translation. Lowe uses “Beira Baixa railroad”, and Costa “Beira-Baixa railroad line”, to translate “ramal da Beira-Baixa”; in rigorous terms, “ramal” applies to an extension or a secondary branch. Both English translations forsake this detail. The Italian translation, on the other hand, does for “ramal da Beira-Baixa” what it does with the other two items in the list, generalizing the first into “rete ferroviaria delle regioni portoghesi” (“railroad network of Portuguese regions”), “rios de Moçambique” into “fiumi delle colonie” (“rivers of the colonies”) and “as serras do sistema Galaico-Duriense” into the more general “sistema orografico del nord del Portogallo” (“orographic system of Northern Portugal”). Thus, where the English renditions opt for maintaining unknown

toponyms such as “Beira Baixa” and “Galaico-Duriense” (the latter is an adjective that translates as “pertaining to Galicia and the Douro”), Lancastre explains the references by including them into identifiable categories.

This enumeration precedes the consideration that they are “espiados pelos mil olhos ferozes da PIDE”, “spied on by the thousand ferocious eyes of the PIDE”, as Costa writes, whereas Lowe substitutes “ferocious” with “fierce”; Lancastre substitutes PIDE by the explanation “polizia politica” (“political police”), even if the acronym had appeared several times before (the first of which on page 15 of the Feltrinelli edition), and is broken down in the glossary. This leaves one wondering why the double criterion, and prompts one comment: not every occurrence of a word in the source text is given the same treatment in the target text.

The use of the verb “consumir” (roughly the parallel of “intake”, but more common in Portuguese, in this use that often stands for “ingesting” or simply “buying”), in the expression “condenados ao consumo de jornais” is possible to replicate in Italian – and that was Lancastre’s choice (“consumo”) – but hardly in English, which led both translators to render it with “read”. These newspapers that existed under fascist rule were said by the narrator to be dominated by censorship. His expression is “que a censura reduzia a louvores melancólicos ao relento de sacristia de província do Estado Novo” (“that censorship reduced to melancholy praises of the Estado Novo’s cold and damp feeling of a provincial sacristy”). The characterization aims at suggesting a narrow-minded (“provincial”) and unpleasant atmosphere, tinged with religious tones. “Relento” is a word which describes the moistness brought on by the night – hence the choice of “cold and damp” in our very debatable back-translation.

The censorship would thus reduce (“reduzia”) these papers to “louvores melancólicos”, “melancholy praises”; in Italian, Lancastre uses “odi malinconiche” (“melancholy odes”); and, in English, Margaret Jull Costa chooses “hymns of praise” whereas Lowe opts for a verbal form. As can be expected due to the possibilities allowed by the languages’ structures and histories, the Italian rendition of this snippet follows the Portuguese in very close and literal terms, with the difference that it has trouble with “relento”, which is thus replaced with “odore” (“scent”); since the meaning was figurative, Lancastre focuses on atmosphere and chooses another compatible concept, a more common one to describe ambience or mood and causing, therefore, a neutralising effect. On the other hand, both English translations decide against maintaining “censorship” as the sentence’s subject; Costa replaces it with “the censors”, while Lowe’s simplified solution sacrifices a few of the elements: her version

is “condemned to read censored newspapers praising Salazar's New State”, omitting the melancholy quality of this praising, as well as the author's sarcastic characterization of the regime, equating it, as we have seen, with the unpleasant atmosphere of a cold, damp night, and a provincial sacristy. Costa tackles this difficulty by interpreting the elements of the simile with “glum, provincial, pious”. As for “Estado Novo”, the name by which became known the Second Portuguese Republic, is the regime instituted in Portugal from 1933 to the 1974 revolution. Margaret Jull Costa leaves it untranslated, as it is usual, while Lowe translates it literally, with the addition of a clarification: “Salazar's New State”; Lancastre generalizes it into “regime”, even if “Estado Novo” is one of the glossary's entries. This raises once again the question of the criteria used when choosing the terms to be part of the glossary, and what to translate and what to leave untranslated in the target text. One hesitates to attribute such inconsistencies to a fluid set of criteria or to a less than thorough proof-reading process.

The character's lament goes on saying that they were “jogados por fim na violência paranóica da guerra” (“finally thrown out into the paranoid violence of war”), an expression in which “jogados” (instead of the more current “atirados” or the slightly more literary “lançados”) is a mark of oral discourse, if not of regionality – that “local color” we have discussed, invoking the example of Faulkner, even if here the effect is very subtle. To tackle it, Lancastre chooses “scagliati”, which is not dialectal nor regional, but arguably more vigorous than the more common “lanciati” (“thrown”); Lowe employs the neutral “thrown”, and Costa a more emphatic “flung”. The expression “marchas guerreiras” (literally “warrior marches”) yields a number of different solutions among the translators: Lancastre uses “marce bellicose” (“bellicose marches”), whereas Lowe chooses the more recognizable “military marches”, and Costa interprets it as “martial music”.

As for those “que ficavam em Lisboa”, “who remained In Lisbon”, as Lowe puts it, or “stayed behind”, in Costa's version, they are evoked with a special kind of contempt, manifested in the sneering remark “combatendo, combatendo corajosamente o comunismo nos grupos de casais do prior” (“fighting, courageously fighting Communism in the parish priest's couples' groups”), contrasting the situation of risk of those who took part in the war with the one of those whose only role in fighting for the ideals of the regime was as their participation in church-organised reunions. These “grupos de casais do prior” may refer either to the specific marriage preparation course that customarily precedes Catholic weddings, or to any other group that is restricted to married couples. What is important, in this formulation, is that they do not even go

alone to these meetings: the contrast is between the loneliness and the feeling of being forsaken that dominates the soldiers, “flung” into a war situation and separated from their families, and those whose “fighting, courageously fighting” takes place in meetings to which they go in the company and with the support of their spouses. All of the translators decided to circumvent this ambiguity by choosing a more general formulation: Lancastre with “riunioni parrochiali” (“parish meetings”), Lowe with “staid evening functions”, while Costa interprets “from the safety of church halls”; this last choice makes explicit a contrast that was only implied in the author’s expression; another detail in which Margaret Jull Costa distances herself from her peers is by omitting the repetition; she writes “valiantly doing battle”, relying solely on the adverb to convey the irony the source text stresses with a repetition (“combatendo, combatendo”).

As the narrator repeats his fish simile “enquanto nós, os peixes,” (“while we, the fish”), Lowe once again omits it, and registers only the remainder of that sentence, “morriamos nos cus de Judas uns após outros (“we died in the *cus de Judas* one after the other”), which brings to the body of the text the title of the novel. As we have seen, “cu de Judas” is an idiom, but does not usually allow a plural form, and Lobo Antunes’ use of the plural is provocative and innovative. The Italian translation uses the same idiom it did on the title. Since the English translations had not kept the idiom in the title, that effect is not at work in this passage. But they both resort to using the expression that Rabassa thinks “editorial timidity” (Rabassa, 2005:142) had precluded. Hence, with slight variations in the phrasing of the sentence, both Lowe and Costa translate “cus de Judas” in this instance with the coarse “asshole of the world”⁶⁴.

If until now the narrator has been describing the circumstances in which these youngsters are “thrown into the paranoid violence of the war”, at this point he starts recalling war itself. After saying that they, “the fish”, were sent to die, the veteran details a few of the ways in which they met their demise. The source text uses past tense imperfect throughout (“tocava-se”, “pulava”, “fitava”, “segurava”, “continuava”), and so does the Italian translation (“si toccava”, “scoppiava”, “guardava”, “reggera”, “continuava”). The English translations, even though they present several different solutions, both resort mostly to present participle and past tense perfect. For the initial reflexive form “tocava-se” (“one would touch”), Lancastre uses the parallel Italian “si toccava”; given its impersonal use, Lowe chooses a gerund, “tripping”, while Margaret Jull Costa uses an impersonal conjugated form, “touch a trip wire”. This section of text

⁶⁴ Rabassa’s suggestion was actually “The Asshole of the Earth”, an expression he tells us he learned in the army (Rabassa, 2005:142).

is particularly crude, and Lobo Antunes' expression is deliberately shocking.

The first image is “tocava-se um fio de tropeçar, uma granada pulava e dividia-nos ao meio, trás!” (“one would touch a trip wire, a grenade would jump up and divide us in half, zap!”). “Trás!” is an onomatopoeic interjection, similar to the English “Wham!” and others. Used here for emphasis, it is rendered with “zac!” by Lancastre and “zap!” by Lowe; Costa is the only one who omits this element. Aside from that, her rendition follows the original closely in terms of structure and effect, saying “touch a trip wire and a grenade flies up at you and splits you in two”, using “flies up” for “pulava”, a way of saying “to jump”. Likewise, the Italian rendition also tries to follow the source text closely, with the difference that it substitutes the inexact “uma granada pulava” for the more accurate “una mina scoppiava”, “a landmine would blow up”; if we interpret the event of the “grenade” as a direct consequence of tripping a wire, the correct phrasing would be the one chosen by Lancastre, since tripwires detonate landmines, while grenades are typically thrown by hand, and their detonation depends on the removal of a safety pin. Jull Costa follows Lobo Antunes' phrasing in English, while Elisabeth Lowe's succinct solution suggests these are two separate events: “tripping on wires, being blown up by grenades, zap!”.

The next tableau is more detailed and bleak, describing a paramedic holding his bowels in his hands: “o enfermeiro sentado na picada fitava estupefato os próprios intestinos que segurava nas mãos, uma coisa amarela e gorda e repugnante quente nas mãos”. The Portuguese “enfermeiro” usually stands for “male nurse” (the Portuguese word is not neutral, and has feminine and masculine forms, as does its Italian counterpart); Costa writes “nurse” and Lancastre “infermiere”, but Lowe uses “medic”, a term employed in the United States to refer to a paramedic in a military context. “Picada”, as we have seen, is one of those words which evokes the colonial war when used in Portuguese, but seems to have no obvious counterpart in the target languages. The word appears repeatedly, and the translators use several solutions, according to the passage it is in; in this case, Lancastre and Costa went for the most neutral options, stating simply “path” or “sentiero” (“footpath” or “pathway”); Lowe chose the more specific “dirt road”. This nurse “fitava estupefato” (“stared in awe”, or “stunned”) “os próprios intestinos” (“his own intestines”); this section of text is rendered more or less literally into Italian, a language that includes a word very close to the source text “estupefato”. “Estupefato”, literally “made stupid”, is used to signify a reaction of great surprise, sometimes bordering on incredulity. A slight fluctuation overlooked (or downplayed) by Lowe and Lancastre has to do with the fact that the

nurse is said to “fitar” what he had in his hands: “fitar” is more like “to stare” (Costa's choice) or “to gawk” than it is simply “to look”. Regarding the description of the bowels “uma coisa amarela e gorda e repugnante quente nas mãos”, it is rendered very literally by Lancastre as “una cosa gialla e grassa e ripugnante e calda fra le mani” (“a yellow and fat and repulsive and hot thing in his hands”); by Lowe as “a yellow, fat, repugnant hot thing in his hands,” and by Costa as “a plump, yellow, disgusting thing hot in his hands”. The fluctuations are minimal, but illustrate how even a common word like “fat” can have more than one translation option, and how enumeration is treated differently according to target languages – the English preferring to use commas instead of the conjunction.

The third portrait in this gallery of war horrors is the machine gunner who, even with his throat pierced, continues to fire: “o apontador de metralhadora de garganta furada continuava a disparar”; “apontador de metralhadora” is indeed an infantry “machine gunner”, as Costa writes, or “mitragliere”, in Italian; Lowe opted for the more general “soldier”. His “garganta furada” (“pierced throat”) is rendered in both English translations as “with a hole in his neck”, and with the expression “con la gola ferita” (“with a wounded throat”) in Italian. We would argue that, in every instance, the formulation of the target text is milder than the source's.

The author's (through the narrator's) recollections on the experience of war continue with the revelation “chegava-se sem vontade de combater ninguém” (“one would get there without the will to fight anyone”). This impersonal construction is rendered in Italian as “al nostro arrivo nessuno aveva voglia di uccidere nessuno” (“upon our arrival, no one had the will to kill anyone”); Margaret Jull Costa uses an impersonal conjugated form and a present participle, “you arrived in Angola not wanting to fight anyone”; Lowe's translation at this point is likely due to a misreading of the source text: “another man came back without the will to fight”. “Tolhido de medo” is a formulation in which the use of “tolhido” (“hampered”) can be interpreted as Lowe (“paralyzed with fear”) or Costa (“crippled with fear”) did; Lancastre would not risk such an interpretation, and settled simply for “eravamo terrorizzati” (“we were terrified”), without mention to them being hampered or impeded by their terror. One detail about this snippet of text is the fact that, while the source text says “chegava-se” (“one would arrive”), Costa adds an explication: “you arrived in Angola”.

A different attitude, though, emerges with the permanence in the war scenario, in dire contrast with this feeling that dominated the soldiers upon their arrival: “e depois das primeiras baixas saía-se para a mata por raiva na ânsia de vingar a perna do

Ferreira e o corpo mole e de repente sem ossos do Macaco” (“after the first casualties one would go out into the woods out of rage, eager to avenge Ferreira's leg or Macaco's limp and suddenly boneless body”). Jull Costa's translation is very close to our back translation: “but after the first few losses, you went out into the jungle feeling angry, wanting to avenge Ferreira's leg and Macaco's limp and suddenly boneless body“, with a few details worth commenting on. “Baixas” in this context, stands for “war casualties”; Lowe writes “the first casualties”, but Lancastre, like Costa, uses the less specific “perdite”, or “losses”. The word “mata” has a wide semantic extension, and is used to refer to a forest-like environment, which can be smaller in size than a “floresta” (“forest”); Lancastre's choice of “bosaglia” is perhaps closer to Lowe's “bush”; Costa, knowing the set is that of Angola, interprets “mata” as “jungle”, a word closer to the Portuguese “selva”.

The source text's “por raiva” means “out of rage”, or “driven by rage”; this idea of rage as a motor to their actions is somewhat toned down in the translations, from Lancastre's “rabbiosamente” (“angrily”), to Lowe's “in anger” and Costas's “feeling angry”. The allocution “na ânsia” expresses a very strong, visceral wish; arguably stronger than Lancastre's “col desiderio” (“wishing”), or Costa's “wanting”; in Lowe's translation, this bit is omitted (unless “in anger” translates “na ânsia”, in which case “por raiva” is omitted in the target text). The image of Macaco's body, “mole” in Portuguese, “molle” in Italian, or “limp” in English, is complemented in the source text by the revelation that it was, as Costa puts it, “suddenly boneless”, a literal rendition of “de repente sem ossos”; the image is suggestive, but Lowe and Lancastre choose to do without it.

A word about the prisoners lets the reader know “os prisioneiros eram velhos ou mulheres esqueléticos menos lestos a fugir, côncavos de fome” (“the prisoners were old people or skeletal women, less swift in escaping, concave with hunger”). Having used “prisioneiros” in its masculine form, as it is the rule whenever it is not the case that all of the elements are female, the narrator creates an ambiguity in knowing whether “velhos” here means they were old and the masculine form is the one by default, or that they were old men; in Italian, this indecisiveness can be maintained by using the same structure, and that is what Lancastre does (“i prigionieri erano vecchi o donne scheletriche”). But in English this may not be so obvious, and Lowe decides the prisoners were “old people or skeletal women”, while Costa states “our only prisoners were old men and skeletal women”. Costa's reading probably makes more sense, but it is based on her interpretation, it is not an information provided by the source text.

These prisoners were “menos lesto a fugir”, “less quick to escape”; “lesto” is a somewhat quaint adjective that means “swift” or “nimble”; the Italian “svelto” is perhaps less colourful but has a very close semantic value; in English, this word seems to have posed a problem, leading Costa to explain they were “too feeble to escape”, and Lowe to decline it as “less inclined to escape”. The problem with these renditions is that it ignores the irony condensed in the euphemistic “menos lesto”, “less swift”, with its derisive effect. “Côncavos de fome” is an unexpected image, that both Lancastre (“concavi di fame”) and Costa (“concave with hunger”) decide to render literally; Lowe, on the other hand, opts for the more neutral and customary “dying of hunger”.

The complexity and density of language which are usually present in the works of Lobo Antunes is particularly visible in this one, also because of that filigree of references which granted him the accusation of “cultural nouveau-riche”. If it is, in some ways, easy to read (unlike more recent ones, it has no polyphonic interferences), it can be also very challenging to deal with that forest of references, many of which are foreign and unknown to the reader. The expression is indeed heavily quilted, with a very ostensibly inventive use of the language, including severe changes of register and an array of metaphors and unusual images with which the author made a name for himself.

While they are very different from one another, each one of the translations under analysis here tend to hinder that immoderate vitality. In the case of Lowe's heavy editing, not so much the style but the actual content is simplified through surgically performed omissions. Margaret Jull Costa's prose, rich as it is, is often set in a higher register. None of the translators have refrained from manipulating syntax to make it more palatable, or downplaying the expressiveness of the author's writing by choosing more neutral or more general words and expressions, or simply by uniforming the register.

***As Naus* (1988)**

As Naus is the second novel we chose to analyse, and it is the author's seventh. It is a very peculiar work, insofar as it is different from those written before it, and also from those which came afterwards. Not that size matters much in these issues, but it is also the shortest book by an author who later came to be known for the sheer length of his novels. Incidentally, it also was the one that took him more time to write (Arnaut, 2008: 109)⁶⁵: in an interview he gave to Inês Pedrosa, the author explains how it had taken him three years to write *As Naus*, and he briefly dwells on the process – commenting, namely, how it was the first novel he had written “sem um plano muito definido, muito minucioso” (“without a very defined, very thorough plan”) (Arnaut, 2008: 109).

An utterly bizarre historic novel, it could be described as an allegory which intertwines two narrative levels. The action is set in Lisbon, in the 1970s, and follows the steps of a set of characters which correspond to the Portuguese notion of *Retornados* (“Returnees”): the name given to the settlers who came from the former colonies to Portugal (what was called, in colonial times, “metrópole”, or “metropolis”), due to the process of independence of the African territories, spurred by the 1974 Revolution. But – and this is the second diegetic level – the world they come back to is, at least intermittently, described as the 16th century. Furthermore, and this is what emphasizes the allegoric dimension, the main characters bear the names of historical figures from what is known as the Age of Discoveries, mostly navigators. Or, as the American translator puts it: “Here he has boldly blended the homecoming of veterans and colonists from Africa with the return leg of Vasco da Gama's voyage to India. Cervantes and Camões both appear out of the past in a modern setting” (Rabassa, 2005: 143).

In the same interview quoted above, Lobo Antunes explains how this idea came along rather late in the process: “In the first versions, it was just a story about retornados, with normal names; only by the third or fourth version did I have the idea of using the navigators and putting them in the present time, so as to try and give the

⁶⁵ At least that far; but subsequent data suggest that books written afterwards also took less than three years to write.

story a multiplicity of meanings” (Arnaut, 2008: 109)⁶⁶. By then, the writer had consciously embraced the intertextuality with Camões’s epic poem *Os Lusíadas*: “[I]t wasn’t until later that I began to muse with the idea that I might do *Os Lusíadas* part two” (Arnaut, 2008: 109)⁶⁷.

Some of the foreign critics were aware of this dialogue⁶⁸. But it was the Portuguese philosopher Eduardo Lourenço who first commented on this book by focusing on its potential cathartic quality: “Actually, the first book in which I found an echo of many of the concerns of my generation, and my own, as well, was *As Naus*. With *As Naus*, I found the first book, the first fiction, in which all Portuguese History as a fiction of itself is exorcised (it was not always fiction, but it soon began to be fiction” (Lourenço, in Cabral et al, 2003: 353)⁶⁹.

One could argue that this kind of intertextual reference corresponds to just one level of understanding, which is not the only one. All in all, the foreign reader can probably do without this kind of therapeutic revisiting of the narratives on recent Portuguese history. While it is debatable whether or not this disparity hinders fruition for this audience, though, the failure to appreciate the interconnection of the plot with those details from Portuguese history is guaranteed to be an obstacle to understanding; and even more so if we take into account the fact that most of these details are not actually mentioned in the text – very often, they are hinted at, with a kind of hermeticity that makes this novel an uncanny choice for translation. The issue is not so much that the characteristics of this work pose an added challenge to the translator, but that it is indeed peculiar to select this novel, in which so much of the meaning is contextual, for translation; particularly when others from the same author, arguably more palatable, and certainly less impervious, were left untranslated. We are thus led to conclude that *As Naus*, for some reason, appeals – if not to foreign audiences – to foreign agents.

These issues of interplay could be tackled by the use of a simple paratextual device, like a glossary or an introductory note; or even through the inclusion of interpolations in the text, so as to avoid footnotes. But none of the translations under analysis here have

⁶⁶ “Nas primeiras versões, era só uma história de retornados, com nomes normais; só para a terceira ou quarta versão é que me apareceu a ideia de aproveitar os navegadores e pô-los nos dias de hoje, para tentar dar uma multiplicidade de sentidos à história” (Arnaut, 2008: 109).

⁶⁷ “[...] depois é que me começou a surgir a ideia de que podia fazer a segunda parte d’ *Os Lusíadas*: enquanto *Os Lusíadas* é um crescendo, eu faria o decrescendo. O livro até estava dividido nas partes d’ *Os Lusíadas*: Proposição, Invocação, Dedicatória e Narração. Bom, depois a determinada altura isto foi muito subvertido” (Arnaut, 2008: 109).

⁶⁸ For instance, the French newspaper *Le monde* named the text in which the French translation of *As Naus* is discussed “Le retour des *Lusiades*” (Zand, 1990).

⁶⁹ “Na verdade, o primeiro livro no qual encontrei um eco de muitas preocupações da minha geração, e minhas também, foi *As Naus*. Com *As Naus*, eu encontrei o primeiro livro, a primeira ficção, onde toda a História portuguesa como ficção de si mesma se exorciza (não foi sempre ficção mas cedo começou a ser ficção)” (Lourenço, in Cabral et al, 2003: 353).

either a translator's note or a glossary (let alone footnotes), and these references go vastly unexplained. The English translation published by Grove Press does include short explanations of this intertwining of narrative levels and historical settings, both on the back cover, and on the excerpts of reviews transcribed in the first pages. In the Italian edition, there is no prefatory material; the few explanatory words are those on the book flaps, whose emphasis is on the 1970s *retornados* crisis: they almost omit the 16th century interconnection, limiting it to a brief mention, at the very end of the piece, that the names of the characters coincide with those of historical figures.

What constitutes an additional difficulty for the foreign reader, however, is that these allusions to Portuguese history are seldom explicit: if, in *Os Cus de Judas*, we devise the portrait of a bourgeois Lisbon, with mentions to a way of life which corresponds to the confined experience of the narrator, in *As Naus* we are confronted with encrypted allusions to episodes and characters which are familiar only to those who have knowledge of Portuguese history, beyond the mainstream clichés of “Vasco da Gama” and “Salazar”, or “Age of Discovery” and “Carnation Revolution”. For instance: one of the main characters is a man who is named Luís and has lost one of his eyes; the problem is that he is introduced to the audience in the following terms: “Era uma vez um homem de nome Luís a quem faltava a vista esquerda” (“Once upon a time there was a man named Luís whose left eye was missing”) (Antunes, 1988: 19) and, but for once, halfway through the novel (Antunes, 1988: 103), is referred to simply as “o homem de nome Luís” (“the man named Luís”).

The average Portuguese person will have no difficulty in identifying in him the 16th century poet Luís de Camões, “the Portuguese Dante”, whose depictions show him lacking his right eye (and not his left); others may or may not recognize the reference, even when the character takes possession of a waiter's ballpoint pen and notepad to write a few octaves on a bar table⁷⁰.

The lack of paratext – or any other kind of way to convey this background information – prompts this consequence, on both translations. Michael Pye, in his book review on *The New York Times*, protests this choice:

It is so particular that if you're not Portuguese you may need a little help – for example, to recognize the Luis who's lumbered with his father's body, sitting at a cafe table writing his "octaves," as Camões, poet of the 16th century, composer of eight-verse stanzas that tell of storms and jousts and a distant Isle of Love. In Gregory Rabassa's translation, the help never comes. Antunes makes the reader

⁷⁰ “Então afastei a garrafa de água das pedras para um canto da mesa, agarrei na caneta e no caderno do criado sem ossos, sacudi-me melhor na cadeira, apoiei o cotovelo esquerdo no tampo, e de ponta da língua de fora e sobranceiras unidas de esforço, comecei a primeira oitava heróica do poema”. (Antunes, 1988: 97)

work at the text, a hard but pleasurable business, and Rabassa actually makes things more difficult. (Pye, 2002)

This author is increasingly known for his whimsical choices of titles, usually inventive, often bizarre, sometimes consisting of quotations⁷¹; yet, this novel is simply named *As Naus*. “Nau” is a word which seems to have been used consistently only in Portuguese and Genoese (in this last case, written “nao”) to denote a particular kind of vessel: a merchant ship, larger than a caravel, and the forefather of the galleon, it can be described as a particular type of carrack, with a neat commercial intent – while the galleon is a war ship. Portuguese “naus” were a key player in the slave trade, hence the word resonates more of this trafficking than the word “caravela” would: caravels were lighter, faster ships, specially fit for exploratory voyages.

However, aside from the Italian translation, which opted for the more general *Le navi* (the common term for “ships” of any sort⁷²), as did the Spanish one (*Las naves*), foreign translations tend to be called like the English one, *The Return of the Caravels*: such is the case of the French *Le retour des caravelles*, the German *Die Rückkehr der Karavellen*, or the Swedish *Karavellernas återkomst*. There is a reason behind this, and it goes further than the American translator supposes. In his memoir *If This Be Treason: Translation and Its Dyscontents*, Gregory Rabassa lets us know that he was not involved in the choice of the title:

As for *The caravels*, the editors more than likely picked up on the French title, as that translation had come out first: *Le retour des caravelles*. The title in Portuguese is *As Naus*, deceptively simple. It might mean nothing but *The Ships*, but nau implies a larger craft, a man-of-war or a merchantman. (...) The ships of Columbus and Vasco da Gama were caravels, so I find the title well-chosen.” (Rabassa, 2005: 145)

Even though Rabassa's reasoning is inaccurate⁷³, his conclusion is reasonable: sacrificing historical rigour for familiarity can be an option, and even more so regarding the title. But, as it turns out, he did not know the whole story. In an interview Lobo Antunes gave to Inês Pedrosa in 1988, just when *As Naus* was to be published, we are

⁷¹ To name just a few: *Exortação aos Crocodilos* (1999), literally “Exhortation to the Crocodiles”, *Que Cavalos São Aqueles Que Fazem Sombra no Mar?* (2009) meaning “What Horses Are Those that Cast a Shadow Over the Sea?”, a quotation from an obscure traditional Portuguese folk song, or *Não Entres Tão Depressa Nessa Noite Escura* (2000), an obvious reference to Dylan Thomas' “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”.

⁷² In Italian, “navi” is the plural of “nave”, the word derived from the same latin origin which in Portuguese spawned “nau”.

⁷³ Vasco da Gama's fleet consisted of the carracks (hence, “naus”) S. Gabriel, S. Rafael and S. Miguel, and a caravel called Berrio (according Köpke and Paiva, 1838). Columbus', on the other hand, according to his own journals (Jane, 1930), included the carrack Santa Maria and the caravels Pinta and Santa Clara.

informed that the book was supposed to be called “O regresso das caravelas”; however, due to a copyright mishap (in the meanwhile, someone else had registered the title), the writer was forced to change it. (Arnaut, 2008: 98)

While this experimentation with the allegoric dimension is unprecedented in the author's career, in terms of style this novel is not radically different from those which came before. With time (and we are talking about roughly ten years time, and the initial ten in the career of this writer), Lobo Antunes' style evolved, consolidating some features and dimming down others. He persevered in writing long, convoluted sentences, and in resorting to vivid imagery. He maintains what came to be called the baroque quality of the writing, rich in similes and metaphors, but he undertakes a conscious effort to avoid adjectivation he perceives as excessive (Arnaut, 2008: 110). Another component which has been sternly attenuated by this evolution is the number of references to local and to popular culture we complained about when commenting on *Os Cus de Judas*: even if he is an author whose work is mostly focused, one way or the other, on his community and his experience, and which remains to this day very much steeped in local culture, the profusion of mentions to cultural objects which were sometimes too specific or too obscure is not present in this novel.

A demanding detail of Lobo Antunes' style, however, is very blatant in this work: the habit of changing grammatical person halfway through a sentence, without warning or apparent motive. This is a peculiarity which can confuse readers, and may fuel the suspicion that proof-reading might not have been accurate.

Specific to this novel is the option to write a few words – mostly toponyms – using an ancient orthography: Lisboa becomes “Lixboa”, and Luanda becomes “Loanda”; in addition, every reference to Portugal has been substituted by “reyno”. The role of these words is, we would argue, to introduce an element of estrangement, to cause disturbance, to infuse the names of these places with drama, and to summon that second timeframe to the narrative. This spelling is a graphic sign of that juxtaposition of story plans, namely by insinuating that time lag, and hinting at the underlying incompatibility between the two worlds.

Faced with this state of affairs, the translator has a set of options: (1) to keep the author's spelling; (2) to try and reproduce the effect in the target language; or (3) to just ignore it. Gregory Rabassa chose the second method, writing “Lixbon” and “Loanda” instead of Lisbon and Luanda; and, for the occurrences of “reyno”, he resorted to the archaism “realme”, thoroughly parallel of the Portuguese. Martinetto, when translating into Italian, had different responses to the same dilemma: she kept “Lixboa” unaltered,

(even though Italian would allow for the same gameplay that Rabassa chose, transforming the canonic Lisbona into a hybrid “Lixbona”); “Loanda” is kept as “Loanda” (the Italian spelling for Luanda is the same as the current Portuguese one); and she ignores the archaism, every time the source text contains “reyno”, by rendering it with the Italian, current, neutral word for kingdom, “regno”.⁷⁴

Another instance in which the Italian version hesitates between strategies is that of the city's toponymy: right at the incipit, the narrator mentions the “discussões dos pais na pensão do Conde Redondo” (“his parents' bickering fights on the boardinghouse of Conde Redondo”), to which the Italian translator added “via” (“street”); she also translated the title, hence the formula she used was “alla pensione di via Conte Redondo” (“in the boardinghouse of Count Redondo Street”); further along, on the same paragraph, in which “uma manada de ambulâncias assobiava Gomes Freire fora na direção do Hospital de São José”, she once again specifies “via Gomes Freire”⁷⁵ and translates “hospital”, but not the name of the saint: “ospedale São José” (instead of “ospedale di San Giuseppe”). Rabassa chooses the same option concerning the name of the hospital, while, on the other two cases, he just writes “the boardinghouse on Conde Redondo” and “along Gomes Freire”. This translation keeps the same pattern throughout the novel, following the source text very closely, and including the name of the artery only when the Portuguese does so: “in the Rossio”, “Rua do Norte”, “Rua do Loreto”, “Avenida Vinte e Quatro de Julho”; the exception is Cais do Sodré, to which the translator refers to as “the Sodré Docks”. The Italian rendition, after that first chapter, decides to keep the Portuguese naming, “Rua de Arroios”, “Rua do Norte”, etc.

A curious detail of the Italian translation is the fact that the occurrences of “bairro” (“quarter”) have, in all instances, been substituted by the Spanish “barrio” (“Barrio das Colónias”, “Barrio Marçal”, “Barrio Prenda”). Rabassa does not use the same solution throughout: the Luanda neighborhoods (“Bairro Marçal”, “Bairro Prenda”, “Bairro da Cuca”) become districts (“Marçal district”, “Prenda district”, “Cuca district”), while “Bairro das Colónias” or “Bairro Alto” in Lisboa are left unchanged.

⁷⁴ There are other instances of archaisms, like *Algarbe* (both translations use *Algarve*), and *Manoel* (which both kept).

⁷⁵ Debatable interpretation, though: it is usual, for some important city arteries, to use the name of a street to designate the zone; to say “a Conde Redondo” (“the Conde Redondo”) would definitively mean “the Conde Redondo street”; the fact that the author writes “no Conde Redondo” (“at Conde Redondo”) may refer to the area rather than specifically the street.

In English

As we have seen before, the first book by this author to be translated into English was *Os Cus de Judas (South of Nowhere)*, in 1983. Nine years and four translations later (one other by Rabassa, and three from Richard Zenith), Grove Press published Gregory Rabassa's translation of *As Naus*.

In spite of the proverbial invisibility of translators, over the years a few names have come into dire conspicuousness – and such was the case of Gregory Rabassa. Having studied Spanish and Portuguese, he became a translator, as he likes to put it, “by chance” (Guzmán, 2010: 144). He taught at Columbia College when a few colleagues invited him to collaborate in a literary magazine focused on contemporary literature. His mission was that of finding works, originally written in Spanish or Portuguese, which were worth disseminating. This implied the need not only for research but, of course, translation, a task which Rabassa, a polyglot with a stout literacy⁷⁶, took on with gusto.

Years later, Pantheon Books approached him to translate a book by a (then) young Argentinian writer: it was Cortázar's *Rayuela*, and it won him the first National Book Award for translation⁷⁷. From then on, his fame and appreciation only grew, and this is why he ended up being contacted by Lobo Antunes' agent, Thomas Colchie. Even though his first translations were from Spanish, he has also studied Portuguese, and was competent in both⁷⁸.

Rabassa states: “I first became aware of António when one of my former students, Elisabeth Lowe, translated his novel *South of Nowhere*”. (Rabassa, 2005: 142) When Colchie approached him, he let him choose which novel he would like to translate and, on that occasion, he settled on *Fado Alexandrino*. A few years later, he took on the task of rendering *As Naus* into English. On this matter, he comments as follows:

Lobo Antunes belongs to that large array of writers I have done who can be called “difficult”. As with the others, my advice to readers is simply to read, approaching him once again as though he were Góngora or as though they were listening to one of Beethoven's late quartets through sheer hearing. These problems or difficulties (I'm not sure which they were, and there is a difference) show up in an

⁷⁶ “The young Mr. Rabassa studied French and Latin in high school; then at Dartmouth, he said, he 'began collecting languages'. There he studied Portuguese, Russian and German. In conversation, his voice wanders seamlessly among the five he still speaks”. (Bast, 2004)

⁷⁷ This was Rabassa's first, but much of his success as a translator is due to another book he translated, Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*.

⁷⁸ He became a Lecturer in Columbia University in 1946, and Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese in 1968. Since 1968, he held a position as Professor of Romance Languages and Comparative Literature at Queens College, City University of New York, and continued to translate literature after he retired from teaching.

even more severe form in the second novel of his that I did, *The Return of the Caravels*. (Rabassa, 2005: 143)

We are thus before a translator who was experienced, highly regarded, acquainted with the author's prose, and by no means ill equipped to cope with "difficult" writers, whatever it may mean. Yet, he considers this particular work to be quite challenging.

His work is usually praised by critics, and so it happened with this translation – with one exception, though, the one we have mentioned above, by Michael Pye. Aside from the remarks quoted above, Pye has others:

An odd selection of ordinary Portuguese words goes untranslated – for lobster, clothespin, buffalo. And a selection of odd words goes unexplained. Does everyone else know that a vernier has to do with an astronomical instrument? That an aptha is a cold sore? There's an impossible pun when congers (as in conger eels) pluck "sardine flowers from balconies with their teeth," since "sardine flowers" could have to do with fishing for sardines; but English speakers might not guess that sardinheiras da varanda are less surreal than they seem. They can only be balcony geraniums.

The effect is of a translation in which you are never quite sure if you are concentrating furiously on Antunes's genius or Rabassa's problems. (Pye, 2002)

His list goes on, and it includes at least two different sets of issues. One corresponds to what Guzmán, who studied Rabassa's style, identified as criticism for being "too foreign" or "not smooth enough" (Guzmán, 2010: 83), which she states some impute to Rabassa's renditions. But there is more to it, in this particular case: the "odd selection" of untranslated "ordinary Portuguese words" (Pye, 2002) is indeed puzzling. On the other hand, the "odd words" that Pye complains "go unexplained" are English words, that he reckons too high-brow for the average reader – and, more importantly, introducing an asymmetry towards the source text⁷⁹.

We have studied Rabassa's translations elsewhere (Mourinha, 2020a), and our conclusion was that, in the case of this book, Rabassa's distinctive style shows through Lobo Antunes' narrative. And this would be why the vocabulary of the translation can be said to be too sophisticated, with "odd words" that Pye feels would need clarification.

Another matter, though, has to do with that "odd selection of ordinary Portuguese words" (Pye, 2002) that are left untranslated⁸⁰. Since it is rather hard to explain why an

⁷⁹ From Pye's remarks, it becomes clear he knows Portuguese and has an understanding of the source text, which is something that seldom happens to reviewers.

⁸⁰ On page 7, "agora veja là", a line of direct speech woven into a torrent of several simultaneous streams of consciousness, but translatable as something that in the context appears to be between a warning and a threat, loosely ranging from "don't screw up" to "it's up to you", or more simply from "don't you forget" to "mind you"; on page 8, the unexplainable "with the clothes basket das molas", corresponding to "cesta das molas da roupa" in the original, which is a prosaic "basket of clothespins" and, a little further down the same page, another italic stating "à torreira", an idiom that conveys the idea of being

experienced translator would leave in the original language simple, everyday expressions like these, we tend to consider that it has more to do with insufficient proofreading than with controversial translation choices. Michael Pye may have had the same impression, since he concludes: “The rockiness is shameful, since one more draft could have cured it.” (Pye, 2002)

In Italian

While in the United States there was a gap between the publishing of the first and the second translation of Lobo Antunes, in Italy the departure, though late, was more steady: two years after *In culo al mondo*, the Italian publisher Einaudi issued another novel by the same writer; this time, it was Vittoria Martinetto's rendition of *As Naus, Le navi*. Others followed, in subsequent years, more or less at the same rhythm.

Martinetto is a teacher at the University of Turin and a renowned translator: having specialized in Spanish, she is known as the translator of popular Spanish-speaking writers, such as Luis Sepúlveda. If she was no beginner then, her resume has grown in length in importance over these years and, in time, she became the Italian voice of Lobo Antunes, even if he is the only Portuguese-speaking author in her curriculum.

At this point, we recall the considerations from the chapter on context, and evoke two of the points that have been discussed: (1) the tendency, namely in the Italian context, to assign translations from the Portuguese to those who are fluent in Spanish, and (2) the perceived proximity of the two languages, an effect that is enhanced by the vicinity of literary translation of minor languages within academia. A further remark, commenting directly on this posture by this translator, is how such a statement denounces a predisposition towards a domesticating behaviour.

Analysis

Once again, we have selected some excerpts for analysis, and the incipit is the first one of those. You will find the transcripts below, and the translated texts side by side with the source text on Table 4:

Passara por Lixboa há dezoito ou vinte anos a caminho de Angola e o que

“under the very warm sun”.

recordava melhor eram as discussões dos pais na pensão do Conde Redondo onde ficaram entre tinir de baldes e resmungos exasperados de mulher. Lembrava-se da casa de banho colectiva, com um lavatório de torneiras barrocas imitando peixes que vomitavam soluços de água parda pelas goelas abertas e da altura em que topou com um senhor de idade, a sorrir na retrete de calças pelos joelhos. À noite, se abria a janela, via os restaurantes chineses iluminados, os glaciares sonâmbulos dos estabelecimentos de electrodomésticos na penumbra, e cabeleiras loiras no lancil dos passeios. De forma que urinava nos lençóis por medo de encontrar o cavalheiro do sorriso atrás dos peixes oxidados ou as cabeleiras que rebocavam notários corredor adiante, baloiçando a chave do quarto no mindinho. E acabava por adormecer a sonhar com as ruas intermináveis de Coruche, os limoeiros gémeos do quintal do prior e o avô cego, de olhos lisos de estátua, sentado num banquito à porta da taberna, ao mesmo tempo que uma manada de ambulâncias assobiava Gomes Freire fora na direcção do Hospital de São José. (Antunes, 1988: 9)

Italian translation by Vittoria Martinetto:

Era passato da Lixboa diciotto o vent'anni prima andando in Angola, e quello che ricordava meglio erano le discussioni dei genitori alla pensione di via Conte Redondo dove si erano alloggiati fra cozzare di secchi e rimbrotti esasperati di donne. Rammentava la stanza da bagno comune, con un lavabo dalle rubinetterie barocche a forma di pesce che rigurgitavano singhiozzi di acqua marroncina dalle gole aperte e la volta in cui si era trovato faccia a faccia con un signore anziano che sorrideva sul vaso della latrina, con i pantaloni alle ginocchia. La notte, se apriva la finestra, vedeva i ristoranti cinesi illuminati, i frigoriferi sonnambuli nella penombra dei negozi di elettrodomestici, e capigliature bionde su bordo dei marciapiedi. Così pisciava nelle lenzuola per la paura di incontrare il signore del sorriso dietro ai pesci ossidati o le capigliature che rimorchiavano notai nel corridoio, facendo dondolare la chiave della stanza sul dito mignolo. E finiva per addormentarsi sognando le vie interminabili di Coruche, i limoni gemelli del giardino del curato e il nonno cieco, con gli occhi lisci da statua, seduto su uno sgabello davanti alla porta dell'osteria, mentre una mandria di autoambulanze spiegava le sirene lungo via Gomes Freire in direzione dell'ospedale São José. (Antunes, 1997b: 3)

English translation by Gregory Rabassa:

He'd passed through Lixbon eighteen or twenty years earlier on the way to Angola and what he remembered best were his parents' rooms in the boarding house on Conde Redondo where they were staying in the midst of a clatter of pots and women's exasperated grumbling. He recalled the communal bathroom, a washbasin with a set of baroque faucets in imitation of fish that vomited out sobs of brownish water through their open gills, and the time he came upon a man on in years smiling on the toilet with his pants down around his knees. At night the window would be open and he'd see the illuminated Chinese restaurants, the sleepwalking glaciers of electrical-appliance stores in the shadows, and blond heads of hair above the paving stones of the sidewalks. So he'd wet his bed because he was afraid of finding the smiling gentleman beyond the rusty fish or the blond heads of hair that dragged clerks along the corridor, twirling room keys on their pinkies. And he'd end up falling asleep with dreams of the endless streets of Coruche, the twin lemon trees in the prior's grove, and his blind grandfather, with blank statue eyes, sitting on a bench by the tavern door as a flock of ambulances wailed along Gomes Freire on their way to São José Hospital. (Antunes, 2002a: 1)

This paragraph recounts the childhood memories of a, so far, unidentified character, making it clear it is someone who is not from Lisbon, but had been there a long time ago, on their way to Angola: the usual route of those who would come to be known as “retornados”, after the Revolution. The language is arguably a bit more tame than what we have seen in *Os Cus de Judas*, but still there is a considerable use of inventive or unusual imagery: “os glaciares sonâmbulos dos estabelecimentos de electrodomésticos” (“the sleepwalking glaciers of the stores of home appliances”), “as cabeleiras que rebocavam notários corredor adiante” (“the heads of hair that towed notaries down the hallway”), “uma manada de ambulâncias” (“a herd of ambulances”). Once again, the author alternates popular register (“topou com um senhor de idade, a sorrir na retrete”, in English “he spotted an elderly gentleman, smiling in the can”) with a lyricism which emphasizes the unreal, oneiric atmosphere that spans across the novel.

In this initial excerpt, the most distinguishing figure seems to be a difficulty in keeping up with the author's tone, especially in the case of the Italian translation. For example: the first sentence says “o que recordava melhor” (“what he remembered best”), and the second one goes on to state “Lembrava-se” (“He recalled”); in English, Rabassa has no trouble in using two different verbs (“to remember” and “to recall”) which grosso modo correspond, both semantically and pragmatically, to those used in Portuguese; Martinetto, probably aiming at avoiding a repetition, chooses, respectively, the verbs “ricordare” and “rammentare”; the latter, while perfectly adequate in semantic terms, throws the register off towards a more pompous one.

This same effect is operated on the translations of that very first sentence; when the author describes how a child recalls the atmosphere in the boarding house where he and his parents had been long ago, he tries to convey meaningful details: for instance, the sound effects of that place are said to include “tinir de baldes e resmungos exasperados de mulher” (“the clinking of buckets and the exasperated grumbles of women”); Rabassa opts for “a clatter of pots and women's exasperated grumbling”, and Martinetto for “cozzare di secchi e rimbrotti esasperati di donne”. As a result, the English version, even if it changes “buckets” for “pots”, mostly keeps up with the register of the Portuguese, though it renders the more musical, sharp-sounding (onomatopoeic, actually) “tinir” (which is more like “clinking” or “chiming”) with “clatter”; in the Italian text, however, the choice of “cozzare” for “tinir” and “rimbrotti” for “resmungos”, is an example of how the translator's choices tend to be more formal than

its source text counterparts; in this particular case, the choice cannot be justified with semantic equivalence, since “rimbrotti” is more like “scolding” than actually “grumbling”; it is also less usual than “rimprovero” (“reproach”) or “brontolio” (“grumble”); similarly, “cozzare” (“to clash”) refers more to the physical act of collision than to the sound it makes, while the source text “tinir” is closer in meaning to the Italian “tintinnare” (“clinking” or “chiming”).

Maybe the strongest image in this section under examination here is the depiction of the episode in the communal bathroom, with the description of the peculiar faucets, and the impression it causes on the child: “lavatório de torneiras barrocas imitando peixes que vomitavam soluços de água parda pelas goelas abertas” (“washbasin with baroque faucets imitating fish that vomited sobs of brown water through their open throats”) may not be easy to translate, with the nuances of “pardo” (a word used to designate an indistinct colour, loosely linked to “brown”) and the coarseness of “goelas” (popular word for “throat”) to deal with; with no corresponding word to convey the subtleties enclosed by the natural ambiguity of “pardo”, the translators resort to using “brownish” and “marroncina”, its Italian counterpart; and, to tackle “goelas”, they used the neutral “gole” (“throats”) in Italian, and the English “gills”, whose anatomical adequacy makes it literarily dull⁸¹.

As for the rest of that sentence, the ludicrous image “da altura em que topou com um senhor de idade, a sorrir na retrete de calças pelos joelhos” (“the time he came across an elderly gentleman, smiling in the can with his trousers around his knees”), unsettling and scary for the child, poses the same problem, with words like “topou”, slang for “saw” or “came across”, and “retrete”, not the most euphemistic or elegant word for toilet; in this regard, Martinetto's choice is puzzling, with “vaso della latrina” combining elements of euphemism (“vaso”) and the evoking of precarious sanitary facilities.

Other modulations of Lobo Antunes' use of Portuguese which may be challenging to convey in translation include the fact that he used “estabelecimentos” instead of the more customary “lojas” (“stores” in English, or “negozi”, in Italian), and the nowadays less common “prior” for “priest” (instead of the neutral “padre”), which became “curato” in Italian, more or less equivalent, and “prior” in English, almost as out of date as “abbot” – and even less used. Less troubling should be the author's choice of the verb “urinar”, a perfect parallel of the English “to urinate” and the Italian “urinare”; instead, “urinava” is translated with the coarse “pisciava” and the euphemistic “wet his bed”.

In the expression “uma manada de ambulâncias assobiava Gomes Freire fora” (“a

⁸¹ In Italian, “gozzo” is a popular word for throat; in English, the colloquial “windpipe” comes to mind.

herd of ambulances whistled along Gomes Freire”), the image combines a grotesque simile (the dysphemetic animization of the ambulances) with a playful personification (the fact that they are said to whistle⁸²). This feature was tackled by the English translator with “a flock of ambulances wailed along Gomes Freire”, resorting to the more consensual “wailed”, instead of a slightly cheeky “whistled”, and then substituting the “herd” with the more poetic “flock”; the Italian translator opted for “una mandria di autoambulanze spiegava le sirene lungo via Gomes Freire”, in which “mandria” is the literal translation of “manada”, and the verb “spiegare” (literally, “to unfold”) is the one commonly used with “sirene” (“sirens”); however, putting together “mandria” and “autoambulanze” (technical, rigorous term) instead of the more colloquial “ambulanze”, the word people use when not writing a report, constitutes a doubtful choice in this instance.

Another excerpt, this one from the chapter which introduces “the man who was named Luís” (side by side excerpts in Table 5):

Dera aos estivadores, a um sargento português bêbedo e aos empregados da alfândega a escritura da casa e o dinheiro que trazia, vira-os içar o frigorífico, o fogão e o Chevrolet antigo, de motor delirante, para uma nau que aparelhava já, mas recusou separar-se da urna apesar das ordens de um major gorducho (Você nem sonhe que leva essa gaita consigo), um féretro de pegas lavradas e crucifixo no tampo, arrastado tombadilho fora perante o pasmo do comandante que se esqueceu do nóio e levantou a cabeça, tonta de cálculos, para olhá-lo, no momento em que o homem de nome Luís desaparecia no porão e encaixava o morto sob o beliche, como os restantes passageiros faziam aos cestos e às malas. Depois estendeu-se no cobertor, poisou a nuca nas palmas e entreteve-se a seguir o crochet meticuloso das aranhas e o cio dos ratos nas vigas do tecto cobertas de caranguejos e percebes, sonhando com os braços nocturnos das negras carecidas. Ao segundo almoço conheceu um reformado amante de biscoitos e suecas e um maneta espanhol que vendia cautelas em Moçambique chamado Dom Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, antigo soldado sempre a escrever em folhas soltas de agenda e papéis desprezados um romance intitulado, não se entendia porquê, de Quixote, quando toda a gente sabe que Quixote é apelido de cavalo de obstáculos, e ao fim da tarde puxavam o caixão e batiam trunfos lambidos no tampo de verniz, evitando tocar no crucifixo porque dá azar às vazas e altera as manilhas, e erguendo os sapatos de fivela sempre que os balanços do barco derramavam na sua direcção o vomitado dos vizinhos, que adquirira um palmo de altura e os obrigava, de meias ensopadas, a agarrarem-se às pegas a fim de que o cadáver não lhes escapasse, à deriva num caldo em que flutuavam lavagantes, transportando consigo os valetes e os ases da partida decisiva. (Antunes, 1988: 19-20)

Italian translation by Vittoria Martinetto:

⁸² “Assobiar” is very close to “apitar”, and they would both translate “to whistle”; we argue that “assobiar” is typical of people and has a musical resonance to it, while “apitar” is the neutral and more usual word for the sounding of a siren; it is not a highly original expression, but it is more “colorful” than its translations.

Aveva consegnato agli stivatori, a un sergente portoghese ubriaco e agli impiegati della dogana i suoi titoli di proprietà e l'indirizzo e il denaro che aveva con sé, li aveva visti issare il frigorifero, la cucina e la vecchia Chevrolet, dal motore singhiozzante, su una nave che si apprestava a salpare, ma si era rifiutato di separarsi dalla cassa, malgrado gli ordini di un maggiore corpulento (Si tolga dalla testa di portarsi dietro quell'arnese), un feretro dalle maniglie cesellate, con un crocefisso sul coperchio, che lui aveva trascinato sul cassero di poppa con grande stupore del comandante il quale, dimenticando il nonio, aveva alzato la testa, stordita di calcoli, per guardarlo, nel momento in cui l'uomo di nome Luís si eclissava nella stiva e incassava il morto sotto la propria cuccetta, come gli altri passeggeri facevano con le ceste e con le valige. Poi, si era sdraiato sulla coperta, le mani incrociate dietro la nuca, e si era divertito a seguire con lo sguardo l'uncinetto meticoloso dei ragni e la fregola dei topi sulle travi del soffitto coperte di granchi e di lepade, sognando le braccia notturne delle negre in calore. Durante il pranzo, aveva fatto la conoscenza di un pensionato amante della briscola e dello scopone e di un monco spagnolo che vendeva biglietti della lotteria in Mozambico e si chiamava Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, un ex soldato che passava il tempo a scrivere su fogli strappati di agenda o su qualunque altro pezzo di carta un romanzo intitolato, Dio sa perché, Chisciotte, quando tutti sanno benissimo che Chisciotte è il nome di un cavallo da corsa, e, verso sera, tiravano fuori la bara e lanciavano le carte sul coperchio verniciato, evitando di toccare il crocefisso perché porta male, e sollevando le scarpe con la fibbia tutte le volte che il rullio della nave faceva colare nella loro direzione il vomito dei vicini, che aveva raggiunto una spanna e li obbligava, con le calzemaglia fradice, ad aggrapparsi alle maniglie della bara per paura di vedersi sfuggire il cadavere, alla deriva in un brodo dove fluttuavano gamberi portandosi via i fanti e gli assi della partita decisiva. (Antunes, 1997b: 11-12)

English translation by Gregory Rabassa:

He'd given the stevedores, a drunken Portuguese sergeant, and the customs officials the deed to his house and all the money he had, he'd seen them hoist the refrigerator, stove and ancient Chevrolet with a ranting motor on board a ship that was already being made ready, but he refused to leave the casket in spite of the orders of a chubby major (You can't be dreaming of taking that crap with you), a coffin with carved handles and a crucifix on the lid, dragged tilting along to the amazement of the commandant, who forgot about his vernier and lifted his head, dizzy with calculations, to look at him at the moment the man called Luís was disappearing below and was stowing the dead man under his bunk, the way the other passengers did with their baskets and suitcases. Then he stretched out on the blanket, put his hands behind his neck, and amused himself by following the meticulous crochet work of the spiders and the zeal of the mice on the ceiling beams covered with crabs and barnacles, dreaming about the nocturnal arms of absent black women. At the second lunch, he met a retired cardsharp and a one-handed Spaniard who'd been selling lottery tickets in Mozambique named Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, a former soldier, always writing on the pages torn out of a ledger and discarded scraps of paper a novel untitled, no one knew why, Quixote, when everybody knew that Quixote is the nickname of a steeplechase horse, and at the end of the afternoon they pulled out the coffin and played some fine blackjack on the varnished cover, avoiding touching the crucifix, because it's risky in cards and can affect your hand, and lifting up their buckled shoes whenever the listing of the ship spilled the vomit of their neighbors in their direction; it had reached a depth of six inches and obliged them, sopping their stockings, to hold on to the handles so the corpse wouldn't get away from them, adrift in a soup where lavagantes fluttered, carrying off the jacks and aces of the winning hand. (Antunes, 2002a: 9-10)

Here the irony which is characteristic of this novel is remarkably displayed: the man named after the national poet, whose epic poem sang the Portuguese as heroes, is depicted here in a grotesque oneiric delirium, trying to bring his father's corpse back to the metropolis, following the debacle of the colonial empire. The ship and the clothes are those of the 16th century, while the appliances he brings back from the colony are those the *retornados* would own and transport. To magnify the impact of the episode, he plays cards with the ferocity of a card shark, in a ship whose conditions are far from salubrious, and his counterpart in the game is no other than his Spanish correlate, Miguel de Cervantes.

The translations have, as always, a few oversights, as when “a escritura da casa e o dinheiro que trazia” (“the house deed and the money he had on him”) is rendered in Italian with “i suoi titoli di proprietà e l'indirizzo e il denaro che aveva con sé” (“his title deeds and address and the money he had on him”), and a few inventive solutions, like when the enthusiasm of the card game is described by saying “batiam trunfos lambidos no tampo de verniz” (“they slammed licked trump cards on the varnished lid”), and Rabassa cuts through this Gordian knot by stating “played some fine blackjack on the varnished cover”.

The Portuguese card games were bound to be a problem. In fact, those mentioned by Lobo Antunes (“biscas e suecas”) are domesticated into “blackjack” in the American edition, and into “briscola” and “scopone” in the Italian one; the card playing jargon was adapted according to this choice, turning “valetes” (“jacks”) into “fanti” (“knives”) in the Italian text, since the games Martinetto mentions are played with different decks of cards than the Portuguese “bisca” or blackjack.

The man named Luís had paid a few officials and customs authorities to carry his belongings on board a ship. In Portuguese, the expression is “uma nau que aparelhava já”, “a carrack already being equipped”; maybe for lack of nautical jargon, the translators chose to write “a ship that was already being made ready”, and “una nave che si apprestava a salpare” (“a ship that was about to set off”); here, more relevant than the correct use of specific seafaring lingo, would be to include something in the translated text which hinted at the past narrative level, that of the 16th century: either by using “carrack” and “caracca” to name the ship, or by detailing that it would “sail away”.

We are told “he had seen them hoist the refrigerator, the stove, and the ancient Chevrolet with a delirious motor” (“vira-os içar o frigorífico, o fogão e o Chevrolet

antigo, de motor delirante”) but the Chevrolet’s motor, “delirante”, is toned down to “ranting” and “singhiozzante” (“hiccupping”), not to mention the clumsy rendering of “fogão” (“stove”) with “cucina”, instead of “stufa” or “fornello”.

The “chubby major” (“major gorducho”) who wanted to separate Luís from his coffin has his condition euphemized to “corpulento” in Italian, and his utterance “Você nem sonhe que leva essa gaita consigo” (“Don’t you even dream of taking that crap with you”) is rendered in English with “You can’t be dreaming of taking that crap with you”, with the choice of “crap” for the vulgar “gaita”, but is met with a ludicrous rendition by Martinetto, who not only was too shy to go for a bit of profanity (“arnese” is more like “contraption”, not in the least bit vulgar), but also made the contemptuous verdict of the major into a polite admonition: “Si tolga dalla testa di portarsi dietro quell’arnese” (“Get it out of your head, to take that contraption with you”).

The nautical jargon is indeed a difficulty: when confronted with the account of how the poet transported the coffin into the ship, “arrastado tombadilho fora” (“dragged through the deck”), “tombadilho” seems to puzzle the translators. Martinetto goes with “trascinato sul cassero di poppa” (“dragged through the forecastle”), inexplicably detailed and narratively unlikely (“ponte” is the more probable correspondent), and Rabassa omits the word (or completely misunderstands it), stating simply “dragged tilting along”⁸³.

An unpleasant slip was that of Martinetto when translating “sonhando com os braços nocturnos das negras carecidas” (“dreaming of the nocturnal arms of the needy black women”) with the offensive “sognando le braccia notturne delle negre in calore” (“dreaming of the nocturnal arms of negro women in heat”), far from anything suggested anywhere in the Portuguese text: the neutral word for black person is “nero”, in Italian, and it corresponds to the Portuguese “negro”; the Italian “negro” would be more fit to render the Portuguese “preto”, and is parallel to the English “nigger”; furthermore, “carecidas” means “needy” or “deprived”; it can be interpreted loosely as “willing”, but “in heat” (“in calore”), typically applied to animals in their mating season, seems excessive. Rabassa, in turn, favours an interpretation in which “carecidas” is substituted by “absent” (“dreaming about the nocturnal arms of absent black women”); while not against the information we have in the original, this divergence is rather incomprehensible.

The account is tinted with hues of the abject, and the last few lines of this paragraph

⁸³ A suspicion comes to mind, seeing Rabassa’s introduction of the word “tilting” which seems to have no counterpart in the source text, and the omission of a translation for “tombadilho” in the target text: that he somehow interpreted the sound of “tombadilho” as a reference to the verb “tombar” (“topple”), and hence used “tilting” to suggest lack of balance or steadiness.

portrait an uncanny and gruesome scene, describing the ship's floor flooded by the vomit of the voyagers: “erguendo os sapatos de fivela sempre que os balanços do barco derramavam na sua direcção o vomitado dos vizinhos, que adquirira um palmo de altura e os obrigava, de meias ensopadas, a agarrarem-se às pegas a fim de que o cadáver não lhes escapasse, à deriva num caldo em que flutuavam lavagantes”. The author profits from the occasion to insert a faint reminder that they are in the 16th century, detailing the shoes they lifted from the floor were “sapatos de fivela”, “buckled shoes”, or “scarpe con la fibbia”; after these very literal renditions, at the mention of “meias ensopadas” (“drenched socks”), both translators feel the need to be rigorous with the wardrobe description; to be fair, the Portuguese “meias” may translate “socks”, “stockings” and even, on occasion, “pantyhose”; Rabassa carefully chooses “stockings”, as “socks” could sound anachronistic; but Martinetto feels the sudden urge to step up her period terminology, and opts for the meticulous and archaic “calzemaglia”.

One of the words Michael Pye complained was left untranslated was “lavagantes”, at the end of this snippet. “Lavagante” is a kind of lobster (Portuguese are very careful to distinguish between “lavagante”, the regular lobster, or “European lobster”, and “lagosta”, “rock lobster”), and it should have been easy to translate; but, in fact, the Italian translator also appears to have had trouble, and rendered it “gamberi” (“shrimps”), instead of “astici” (or “astici blu”, “blue lobsters”).

When the characters resort to “agarrarem-se às pegas” (“hold on to the handles”, in the literal translation of Rabassa), the Italian translator considers prudent to make it explicit that it is the handles of the coffin we are talking about: “aggrapparsi alle maniglie della bara”. This is an instance of a temptation in which translators, and namely this one, tend to incur: the propensity to neutralize the writer's prose, making it less ambiguous – but also more conventional.

In the next piece of text we have selected for analysis (broken down in Table 6), the man named Luís is with his new found friend Garcia da Orta. Garcia de Orta is the name of a 16th century physician, who was a pioneer of tropical medicine; with his experimental approach to botanical research, he was revolutionary for his time and is considered a key scientist in his area. The character in *As Naus* who borrows his name (with a slightly divergent spelling⁸⁴) “criava plantas medicinais na varanda” (Antunes, 1988: 157) and was an amateur radio operator. He turns out to be the waiter from whom the poet had borrowed the ballpoint pen with which he was writing his octaves.

⁸⁴ The spelling chosen by the author is actually convergent with the *vox populi*.

Luís stayed for quite some time at that table, with his father's remains (by then in a cardboard box and no longer in a casket) by his side and, at a certain point, the two men make their acquaintance. Garcia da Orta had offered to help with the father's corpse and, as soon as he ends his shift, he invites Luís to his home in Bairro Alto.

No fim do turno de Garcia da Orta, às sete da manhã, quando a noite zarpara devagarinho para escurecer noutra país, levou-me ao esconso de copa onde dependurou o casaco dos botões e das nódoas e o trocou por um blusão de crocodilo fingido, dos que encolhem para metade à segunda lavagem, abrimos a caixa de cartão e o seu clima de guano, separámos a serradura, e como nas farmácias entornámos o meu pai, com a espátula de uma faca de peixe, numa garrafa de leite, cartilagens, tendões, falanges, pedacitos aquosos de carne, a dentadura postiça em bom estado que guardei na algibeira das calças para quando fosse tão idoso e sem bochechas como ele, condenado a chupar asas de frango pela desilusão de uma palhinha. Ao alcançarmos, de garrafa no sovaco, o largo, ou o que eu pensava um largo, diante da estação dos comboios, vi apenas uma humidade de gaivotas, espiões castelhanos sob as camionetas de descarga junto ao rio, e dezenas de Fernandos Pessoas muito sérios, de óculos e bigode, a caminho de empregos de contabilista em prédios pombalinos de beirais de loiça, roídos pelo cancro do caruncho e por baratas envernizadas semelhantes a sapatos de casamento com antenas. (Antunes, 1988: 158-159)

Italian translation by Vittoria Martinetto:

Finito il turno, alle sette del mattino, quando la notte era salpata lentamente per oscurare un altro paese, Garcia da Orta mi portò nello sgabuzzino del retro dove appese la giacca con i bottoni e le macchie sostituendola con un giubbotto di coccodrillo finto, di quelli che si restringono al secondo lavaggio, aprimmo lo scatolone con la sua atmosfera di guano, separammo la segatura e, come nelle farmacie, con la spatola di un coltello da pesce, abbiamo travasato mio padre in una bottiglia del latte, cartilagini, tendini, falangi, pezzetti acquosi di carne, salvo la dentiera in buono stato che misi via nella tasca dei pantaloni per il giorno in cui fossi stato vecchio e senza guance quanto lui, condannato a succhiare ali di pollo con nostalgia degli stuzzicadenti. Arrivati in piazza, o a quello che credevo fosse una piazza, davanti alla stazione ferroviaria, con la bottiglia sotto il braccio, non vidi altro che un umidità di gabbiani, spie castigliane sotto i camion delle consegne vicino al fiume, e decine di Fernando Pessoa serissimi, con baffi e occhiali, che si recavano al loro impiego di contabili in edifici costruiti all'epoca del marchese di Pombal con gronde di ceramica, intaccate dal cancro della tignola e da scarafaggi di vernice simili a scarpe da nozze con le antenne. (Antunes, 1997b: 119-120)

English translation by Gregory Rabassa:

At the end of Garcia da Orta's shift, at seven o'clock in the morning, when night sailed slowly off to darken some other country, he took me to the back of the pantry, where he hung up the jacket with buttons and lumps and changed into one of fake crocodile skin, the kind that shrinks to half its size with the second washing, we opened the cardboard box and its guano atmosphere, pushed the sawdust back, and the same as in pharmacies, we poured my father, using the blade of a fish knife, into a milk bottle, cartilages, tendons, joints, watery little pieces of flesh, the false teeth were in good shape and I put them in my pants pocket for when I'd

be just as old and cheekless as he was, condemned to sucking on chicken bones like a disappointed faggot. When, bottle under my arm, we reached the square, or what I thought was a square, in front of the train station, all I could see was a dampness of gulls, Castilian spies under trucks beside the river, and dozens of Fernando Pessoa, very serious, with glasses and mustaches, on the way to their jobs as bookkeepers in Pombaline buildings with ceramic eaves gnawed at by the cancer of dry rot and varnished cockroaches that were like wedding shoes with antennae. (Antunes, 2002a: 129-130)

The shift ends at seven, when daylight is already set in; this is described by the narrator – in this case, the man named Luís, who is using the first grammatical person – in the following terms: “quando a noite zarpara devagarinho para escurecer noutro país” (“when the night had slowly sailed off to darken in another country”); both Martinetto and Rabassa use the same nautical metaphor, “era salpata lentamente”, and “sailed slowly off”, and they both present a slight divergence with the source text, since whereas Lobo Antunes writes “para escurecer noutro país”, “to darken *in* another country”, they both interpret it as “to darken *some* other country”, or “per oscurare *un* altro paese” (our emphasis).

Ending his shift, the waiter takes his friend into the personnel area and changes his clothes: “levou-me ao esconso de copa onde dependurou o casaco dos botões e das nódoas” (“he took me into the garret of scullery where he hung up his jacket with the buttons and the stains”). This is an example of how a lexical item embodies cultural information that may not be familiar to the target culture. Being a Romance language as well, Italian has many features in common with Portuguese, and many of these are lexical. In this case, what may be challenging to convey with an English vocabulary is no less difficult with an Italian one. The Portuguese word “esconso” is used to designate a place with a sloping ceiling, either because it is under the roof, or under a staircase; it seems to have no direct correspondent in either target language. On the other hand, “copa” is an area, usually adjacent to the kitchen, whose function is that of providing support to the kitchen proper; when the man named Luís says he was taken “ao esconso de copa”, he refers to an area close to the kitchen and, in this case, with a sloping ceiling. In Italian, the word for “copa” would be “tinello”; even if the concepts cannot be juxtaposed entirely, in this case they are compatible. In English, the meaning of “copa” is perhaps closer to “scullery kitchen” or to “butler's pantry”. Rabassa's option was “he took me to the back of the pantry”, focusing mostly on the storing function of the “copa”, and solving the difficulty of “esconso” by suggesting some hidden, out of the way corner, “the back of the pantry”. Martinetto writes “nello sgabuzzino del retro” (“in the closet in the back”); “sgabuzzino” is a storage space that, like a pantry or a walk-in closet, is small and windowless; they are often built under the stairs or in other

awkward, inconvenient spaces, that would otherwise be unused; therefore, the Italian “sgabuzzino” would be a natural match for the Portuguese “esconso da copa”, which suggests a makeshift space where the staff hung their clothes; “del retro” can be read as suggesting the same idea of a “hidden” or “out of the way” space; this option is somewhat unexpected, especially if you consider that, in Italian experience, sloping ceilings are often found “sottoscala”, “under the stairs”: contrarily to what happens in Portugal (and England, or France), in Italy it is not customary to use the attic; garretts are, at best, used as storage spaces, and they are not habitable.

The waiter thus hangs up his coat or jacket, which was filled with stains (“nódoas”); Rabassa, for some reason, translates “nódoas” with “lumps”; Martinetto manages to use two different words (“giacca” and “giubotto”) to reproduce the effect given by “casaco” and “blusão” in the source text; Rabassa, having decided that the first “casaco” was a “jacket”, avoids the repetition by writing “changed into one of fake crocodile skin”, while according to Martinetto he substituted the “giacca” “con un giubotto di cocodrillo finto” (“with a fake crocodile skin jacket”); here the narrator adds that it would be one “of those that shrink to half their size by the second washing” (“dos que encolhem para metade à segunda lavagem”); Rabassa writes “the kind that shrinks to half its size with the second washing”, while Martinetto simplified by saying solely “di quelli che si restringono al secondo lavaggio” (“one of those that shrink with the second washing”), without detailing that they would shrink “to half their size”.

And here begins the transfer of the mortal remains of the poet's father: “abrimos a caixa de cartão e o seu clima de guano, separámos a serradura, e como nas farmácias entornámos o meu pai, com a espátula de uma faca de peixe, numa garrafa de leite”. In the translation of this excerpt, two unusual things are to be found: unlike it often happens, the translators do not adjust the author's phrasing; furthermore, the Italian translation does not strictly follow the order of the clauses in the source text. Rabassa translates “abrimos a caixa de cartão e o seu clima de guano” with “we opened the cardboard box and its guano atmosphere”, without correcting the inaccuracy of the expression, as translators often do, and as Martinetto does here: “aprimmo lo scatolone con la sua atmosfera di guano”, switching ever so slightly from saying that they have opened the cardboard box *and* its atmosphere (how does one open an atmosphere?) to “we opened the cardboard box *with* its guano atmosphere”.

Word and clause order is usually similar in Portuguese and Italian, while the rules and conventions of English language often forces rearrangements. In this case, Rabassa follows the same order as the source text, and it is Martinetto who does

differently. For the snippet “abrimos a caixa de cartão e o seu clima de guano, separámos a serradura, e como nas farmácias entornámos o meu pai”, the English version is “we opened the cardboard box and its guano atmosphere, pushed the sawdust back, and the same as in pharmacies, we poured my father”, and the Italian one interpolates the parenthetical clause “com a espátula de uma faca de peixe” (“con la spatola di un coltello da pesce”): “aprimmo lo scatolone con la sua atmosfera di guano, separammo la segatura e, come nelle farmacie, con la spatola di un coltello da pesce, abbiamo travasato mio padre”. Rabassa is less literal in translating “separámos a serradura” (“we separated the sawdust”, “separammo la segatura”) and uses the phrasal verb “to push back”.

The source text says they have “poured” the father “com a espátula de uma faca de peixe”, literally “with the spatula of a fish knife”; Martinetto translates close to the letter “con la spatola di un coltello da pesce”, but Rabassa introduces small corrections; since fish knives are not sharp, they are more like a spatula than like a blade, but Rabassa preferred writing “using the blade of a fish knife”, employing the correct terminology, on the one hand, and also specifying that they have used the knife to help pour the contents of the cardboard box, instead of literally following the source text which says “entornámos o meu pai, com a espátula de uma faca de peixe” (“we poured my father with the spatula of a fish knife”). This operation is likened to one that would happen in a pharmacy (echoing the real Garcia de Orta's research area and methods), with the expression “como nas farmácias” (“like in pharmacies”); this is rendered literally in Italian as “come nelle farmacie” and, in English, with “the same as in pharmacies”.

The gruesome list of the elements that constituted the contents of the box presents no difficulty, even if Rabassa prefers to render the more specific “falanges” (“phalanx”) with the more general “joints”: “cartilagens, tendões, falanges, pedacitos aquosos de carne” becomes “cartilagini, tendini, falangi, pezzetti acquosi di carne” in Italian and “cartilages, tendons, joints, watery little pieces of flesh” in English. The enumeration continues including an item that the narrator decides not to pour into the milk bottle, in another imprecise phrasal construction “a dentadura postiça em bom estado que guardei na algibeira das calças para quando fosse tão idoso e sem bochechas como ele” (“the denture in a good condition which I put away in my trouser pocket for when I would be as old and cheekless as he was”). In this case, both translators slightly corrected the phrasing so as to be less awkward; the source text is a list of the elements that went into the bottle, seamlessly followed by an element that did not; but

the latter is listed as if logically connected by the same action of being poured into the bottle, and the fact that it did not is revealed in a relative clause. Rabassa writes “the false teeth were in good shape”, but uses a conjunction to introduce the clause in which he lets the reader know the teeth did not have the same fate: “*and* I put them in my pants pocket for when I'd be just as old and cheekless as he was” (our emphasis); Martinetto follows the source phrasing, except that she introduces a preposition (“salvo”, “except”): “salvo la dentiera in buono stato che misi via nella tasca dei pantaloni per il giorno in cui fossi stato vecchio e senza guance quanto lui”.

Judging by the results, it is the next fragment that causes the most poignant problem. It is a surreal and unexpected image, but what seems to baffle the translators is after all a simple word for a common everyday item: “palhinha”, which is a “straw”, or “cannuccia” in Italian, in the sentence “condenado a chupar asas de frango pela desilusão de uma palhinha” (“condemned to suck chicken wings through the disappointment of a straw”). That an old person would be forced to suck such a bony piece as a chicken wing through a straw that is adequate for liquids is absurd and suggests inadequacy and disenfranchisement; it is a portrait of old age (or of human condition) as an irredeemable mismatch between life and the individual, and one of those images we say may be a challenge to translate, not because of linguistic difficulty, but for their sheer conceptual unorthodoxy. It may present an additional difficulty the fact that the author uses one of his staple constructions, a way of establishing comparison with an unusual way of managing a hypallage mechanism, in this case by saying “a desilusão de uma palhinha” (“the disappointment of a straw”) instead of “uma palhinha desiludida” (“a disappointed straw”), which would be the common construction for transferring an epithet.

The problem, however, seems to have been with the word “palhinha” (“straw”), that Martinetto translated as “stuzzicadenti” (“toothpick”) and Rabassa interprets as “faggot”. Their sentences thus become, in Italian “condannato a succhiare ali di pollo con nostalgia degli stuzzicadenti” which would mean “condemned to suck on chicken wings with toothpick nostalgia”; and in English “condemned to sucking on chicken bones like a disappointed faggot”⁸⁵.

They then go out, taking the bottled remains with them: “Ao alcançarmos, de garrafa no sovaco, o largo, ou o que eu pensava um largo, diante da estação dos comboios”

⁸⁵ This is one puzzling translation choice. The only possible hint of an explanation we envisage is a confusion due the fact that the Portuguese “palhinha” is the diminutive form of “palha” (“straw”), or “paja” in Spanish; in some Spanish-speaking countries, “paja” is used as slang for “masturbation”. Semantically, this does not account for the direction Rabassa chose in his translation, but it may help explain why he opted for this kind of slur.

(“When we reached, bottle stuck in the armpit, the square, or what I thought was a square, in front of the train station”). Both translators forsake the ludicrous “armpit” for the more palatable “under the arm” (“sotto il braccio”, in Italian). They also rearrange the order. Rabassa writes “When, bottle under my arm, we reached the square, or what I thought was a square, in front of the train station”, and Martinetto “Arrivati in piazza, o a quello che credevo fosse una piazza, davanti alla stazione ferroviaria, con la bottiglia sotto il braccio” (“Gotten to the square, or what I thought was a square, in front of the train station, with the bottle under the arm”).

The following snippet also presents slight fluctuations: “vi apenas uma humidade de gaivotas, espiões castelhanos sob as camionetas de descarga junto ao rio” (literally, “I saw only a humidity of gulls, Castillian spies under the unloading trucks by the river”). Both translators render “vi apenas” with their more idiomatic counterparts, “all I could see”, and “non vidi altro che” (“I have seen but”); this time they have no trouble with the unusual imagery, and translate “un'umidità di gabbiani”, and “a dampness of gulls”; the somewhat quaint “camionetas” is neutralized as “camions” and “trucks”; the fact that these were delivery (“descargas”, literally “unloading”) trucks is omitted in the English version. The hallucinatory mood is given by the idea that “Castillian spies” hid under these trucks, and enhanced by a final image of “dezenas de Fernandos Pessoas muito sérios, de óculos e bigode, a caminho de empregos de contabilista” (“tens of very serious Fernando Pessoas, with glasses and moustache, on their way to their accountant jobs”); the “dezenas” (rigorously, “tens”) can be used in Italian (“decine”), but not in English: refractory to the decimal system, the usual utterance is to say “dozens”, and that is what Rabassa does. He translates “contabilista” as “bookkeeper”, restoring what is usually said to be not Fernando Pessoa's, but his semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares' occupation (“guarda-livros”); Martinetto writes “impiego di contabili”; while semantically very close, and virtually indistinguishable from the alternatives (“lavoro” for “emprego”, and “commercialista” for “contabilista”), this expression has a very formal ring to it, and a suggestion of times of old; hence, where Lobo Antunes with very casual and contemporary language invokes Fernando Pessoa, the translators complement the image with a touch, even if subtle, of quaintness. This makes perfect sense in a translation since, as Borges (1957: 270) famously noted, there are no camels in the Koran: some realities are as pervasive and familiar in their natural occurring environments that they need not even be mentioned; but the translator, who looks at the source text with foreign eyes, has a differently calibrated sensitivity to some details – in this case, they seem to be over sensitive to the mention of Fernando

Pessoa.

This paragraph closes with a description of the building where these Pessoas would work: “prédios pombalinos de beirais de loiça, roídos pelo cancro do caruncho e por baratas envernizadas semelhantes a sapatos de casamento com antenas”. Rabassa uses an anglicized version of pombalino⁸⁶ “Pombaline”) to say what Martinetto preferred to explicitate: “costruiti all’epoca del marchese di Pombal” (“built during the time of the marchese of Pombal”); “beirais de loiça” is imprecise, as “loiça” usually means “glazed ceramics” and roof tiles and eaves are made of ceramics; both translators thus agree in translating it as “gronde di ceramica”, or “ceramic eaves”; the next image “roídos pelo cancro do caruncho” (“gnawed by the cancer of weevils”) does not make sense if applied to the ceramic eaves (weevils attack wood), but one can just as well assume it refers to the buildings. To translate “caruncho”, the name of the wood-eating coleoptera that is said to gnaw at these old buildings⁸⁷, Martinetto uses “tignola” (“moth”), choosing a different kind of animal, and Rabassa uses “dry rot”, focusing on the decaying effect more than on its cause. Finally, for “baratas envernizadas semelhantes a sapatos de casamento com antenas” (“varnished cockroaches like wedding shoes with antennae”) Rabassa writes “varnished cockroaches that were like wedding shoes with antennae”, and Martinetto “scarafaggi di vernice simili a scarpe da nozze con le antenne”.

In conclusion, the common trait to these two translations is the difficulty both Rabassa and Martinetto seem to have in successfully shifting back and forth from literary to colloquial register. The author's vocabulary, though not exactly difficult, is way too rich for the translators to be able to follow its nuances in the translated text. Rabassa, either because he is more resourceful or less conservative, manages to create a text fairly compatible, effect wise, with the original; Martinetto, on the other hand, is either incapable or unwilling to do the same, and mostly tones down the prose into a quaint, rather stiff writing style.

⁸⁶ “Pombalino” is the name given to the architectural style that was used when rebuilding Lisbon after the 1755 earthquake. It is named after the Marquis of Pombal, who was the head of government at the time (under King Joseph I). It can be described as a very tame Neoclassical, with particular emphasis on anti-seismic structural features.

⁸⁷ Notice that Camões was dead in 1580. As *Naus* is set cummulatively in the 16th century, when the Jerónimos monastery was being built (the construction began in 1502 and took roughly a hundred years), and in the post-revolution period, and “pombalino” is the style used in the aftermath of the 1755 earthquake.

O Esplendor de Portugal

Our third choice was *O Esplendor de Portugal*, which is the author's 12th published novel. Issued in 1997, it readdresses the theme of the *retornados* we had seen in *As Naus*, although in a completely different key. It also goes back to the Angolan setting that was intermittently present in *Os Cus de Judas*, this time to take a look not so much at the colonial war, but rather at the armed conflicts which took place around the time of independence, and the subsequent civil war.

Entirely set in one Christmas eve, the narrative goes back and forth following the memories of each one of the members of a family of colonizers, a mother and her three children. The actual facts, occurring in Lisbon in 1995, are plain and easy to summarize: Carlos, who lives with his wife Lena in the Ajuda neighbourhood, has invited his brother Rui and his sister Clarisse he had not seen in 15 years for dinner on Christmas eve, but they never come; before the night is over, his wife leaves him. This account, however, is but a pretext to tell the story of this family for three generations: through the eyes and memories of these three siblings, and also their mother, Isilda, the reader has the chance to peer into several decades worth of colonization and decolonization. The book is structured as a kind of mock journal, allowing for a register of soul-searching that begets a degree of sincerity unusual to find in any other, less introspective approach. Thus, the account of the actual events of one Christmas eve is complemented by the memories and reveries of the different "voices" narrating the diary-like entries.

If the events of the diegetic present are easily recounted, the flashbacks which reveal the family's colonial past constitute the bulk of the novel, and their story may be considered the main narrative thread: from the initial settling in Angolan territory, to Isilda's ultimate demise, throughout a pathway of decadence that is no doubt social and economical but also, and at least to the reader's eyes, mostly moral.

The novel has three parts, composed of several chapters each. Every chapter bears the indication of a date, spanning from 1978 to the diegetically speaking present day, and is narrated, in turns, by Carlos and Isilda in Part 1, Rui and Isilda in Part 2, and Clarisse and Isilda in Part 3. Since the mother remained behind in Angola, their records

coincide only up to a certain point, and we have to depend on Isilda's accounts to know what transpired in that territory after the independence and her children's departure.

If it can be read as a family saga, *O Esplendor de Portugal* is rather cruel in its depiction of family relations: Isilda's marriage to Amadeu is dysfunctional to say the least, with betrayal on both sides and very little self-respect, particularly on the husband's side; pictured as a weak and dependent man, he is counterpoint to Isilda's strength and determination. The children mostly resent their mother, for one motive or another, and Isilda is ashamed of them, for multiple reasons: Carlos, the illegitimate fruit of an extra-conjugal affair of Amadeu's with a black employee of the family's company, is mixed-race and living proof of his father's indiscretions; Rui, of whom there is speculation he might be the result of his mother's affair with the chief of police, is mentally ill; and Clarisse, whose memories contain innuendos of an incestuous relation with her father, has a bad reputation from early on, due to her sexual behaviour. Or, like Isilda's mother puts it in one of her mental discourses, "a mulatto, an epileptic, and a whore" (Antunes, 2011b: 303).

In terms of style, *O Esplendor de Portugal* is considerably far from the first novels, and does not suffer from the problem we identified in *Os Cus de Judas* as an excess of local references (they are present, but not so profusely), nor does it feature the hesitations in verbal person we have found in *As Naus*. It is usually considered that this is the last novel of the "first Lobo Antunes", while the following (*Exortação aos Crocodilos*, 1999) would delineate the beginning of the second phase of his career, with what came to be known as the polyphonic style that is the author's hallmark. We have argued elsewhere that this kind of prose, with less colourful language and particularly unhinged syntax may be harder to read but easier to translate (Mourinha, 2020a).

The American translator Rhett McNeil, while reflecting on his experience of translating Lobo Antunes, complained more about the emotional toll "of saying these often hauntingly sad things for the first time in English" than of any linguistic difficulties; commenting on the syntax, however, he remarked "there aren't really sentences in any proper sense in this book" (McNeil, 2011).

In our opinion, this is the less accomplished of the works we analysed: with a very powerful "story", in the sense that it depicts events that are impressive in themselves, and are based in actual historic occurrences, it is not particularly well rendered in terms of style and narrative technique; unlike earlier and even longer books (such as *Fado Alexandrino*, from 1983, beautifully orchestrated and hardly ever losing its momentum),

it becomes repetitive and dull⁸⁸.

It is interesting to note that both a very enthusiastic review (such as Chad W. Post's) and a rather deprecatory one (David Single's) point out the same weak point: Post, a great fan of Lobo Antunes who has very encomiastically commented on his work on more than one occasion (Post, 2011a, 2011c), curiously imputes the same accusation to other novels of this author: "The one drawback to this book—the same drawback to most of Antunes's books—is that once he establishes his technique, it remains pretty much unchanged throughout the novel" (Post, 2011b). Also telling is the fact that both Post and Single compare Lobo Antunes to William Faulkner: "It has been said that one of Antunes's influences as an artist is William Faulkner, and the most immediate and obvious reference point is Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*. One soon realises however that that book succeeds where Antunes's does not.", writes Single (2011) about *O Esplendor de Portugal*. His review is one of the harshest we have encountered, and thus worth dwelling on, even if the touchstone of his criticism seems to rest upon the comparison with Faulkner:

It becomes clear early in the 536-page book that where Faulkner so ably rendered in prose the ceaseless flow of the human mind, Antunes has failed. *The Sound and the Fury* is distinguished by Faulkner's consummate psychological distinction between one Compson family member and another, a rich and variegated work made striking by the juxtaposition of Benjy's simple, repetitive, declarative observations and the shadowed, dense, allusive chambers of Quentin's mind. *The Splendor of Portugal* is a thin soup, flat, and with only a shred of meat here or there to spice the broth. The two works are structurally similar, oscillating between two times and several narrators, though Portugal is by far the more restless with thirty parts to Fury's four. (Single, 2011)

Partial as he is as a Lobo Antunes' sustainer, Chad Post also establishes the very same parallel:

Part of the brilliant of *The Sound and the Fury* is the range in tone and style between Benjy's part and Jason's. It's like four completely different consciousnesses expressed on the page. In Antunes's works, he frequently uses that general technique of having each character speak their piece, but they all do so in very similar ways. The content, the individual tragedies, are all unique, but the style of presentation doesn't change from Carlos to Rui to Isilda to Clarisse. It's an effective strategy, one that poetically paints the portrait of these four people, but it can come off as a limitation in a 500+ page book. (Post, 2011b)

The reference to Faulkner is not new: the American author had been used as a term for comparison before, namely when commenting on a later, but previously translated

⁸⁸ The reason for choosing this novel over others is, as we have stated in previous chapters, its post-colonial content and the way in which it dialogues with the other works of the corpus. Literary value was never a criterion.

work, *What Can I Do When Everything's on Fire?*⁸⁹. Consider Thane Rosenbaum's review of it in *The Los Angeles Times*: "The debt owed to Faulkner is apparent, with his cerebral self-awareness and utter disregard of narrative and grammatical convention. Yet, this is most assuredly not your grandmother's Faulkner – Lobo Antunes is Faulkner on crack" (Rosenbaum, 2008).⁹⁰ Since it pertains to a novel from 2001, it is fair to say that this Faulknerian quality of the author's prose is most characteristic of his second phase of literary production, of which *Que Farei Quando Tudo Arde?* is a blatant example, and *O Esplendor de Portugal* may be considered a precursor.

The title *O Esplendor de Portugal* has particular significance for the Portuguese reader, not only for its obvious literal meaning, but because it is a quotation from the first and most well-known stanza of the Portuguese national anthem, which is called *A Portuguesa*, and is based on a poem by Henrique Lopes de Mendonça. The Portuguese edition reproduces this first stanza in the frontispiece, without mentioning its author or the name of the poem – understandably, since for a Portuguese or Portuguese-savvy audience the lyrics to the national anthem are self-evident as such. The Italian edition does the same, but in Italian: before Part I is initiated, there is a page with the translation of the first stanza of the anthem, with no indication as to what it is. However, the paratext in the front book flap explains how *O Esplendor de Portugal* is "un titolo ironico che riecheggia le parole dell'inno nazionale portoghese" ("an ironic title which echoes the lyrics to the Portuguese national anthem"). The American edition presents us with a translation of the same verses, adding an explanatory line at the end, that reads "Portuguese national anthem".

Hence, if translating the title is not a problem in itself (it is not an idiom, and a vulgar one at that, like *Os Cus de Judas*, nor includes a word that hardly exists in most languages, like *As Naus*), it does need some context, and both translations use different strategies regarding this matter.

Once again, with large portions of the narrative being placed in Angola, or recalling past times in Angolan territory, the translator will need to tackle the question of the specifically African words and the references to Angolan history, aside from the ones pertaining to Portugal.

Neither translation is clad with footnotes, or any other kind of device that could help situate the reader concerning the geography of Angola (or Lisbon, for that matter) or its history. The readers must thus either decide to ignore such references, do their own

⁸⁹ Published in 2008 by W.W. Norton of New York, it is a translation by Gregory Rabassa of the 2001 book *Que Farei Quando Tudo Arde?*

⁹⁰ Peter Conrad in *The New Yorker* also muses on the influence of Faulkner in Lobo Antunes (Conrad, 2009).

research, or simply try to gradually infer from context information that is neither known to them nor provided by the text.

One category of Angola-specific words would have to do with toponyms, and these are arguably not all that familiar to the average Portuguese reader; another one, more important for the plot, though, would include references to war factions and political parties, such as UNITA and MPLA; and we think that, while reading of the encounter with UNITA men in the first chapter, it would make a difference to know what this acronym stands for (“União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola”, or “National Union for the Total Independence of Angola”) or, more to the point, who backed them up (the U.S.), or who was in government, after independence (not them). With this in mind, we would have preferred that these translations had either provided some background context, or simply added an interpolation that briefly helped situate those not familiar with the context: for instance, translating UNITA as “American-backed UNITA”, or their men as “the UNITA rebels”, or substituting a mention of the MPLA (diegetically set in 1980) for “the government party”.

Another kind of what we have been calling Africa-specific words are those that come from Kimbundu and ended up being commonplace in Portuguese. As we have seen in our analysis of *Os Cus de Judas*, these words tend to be neutralised in translations, since neither English nor Italian underwent the same process and would have no Bantu counterpart available. Faced with the impossibility of reproducing the effect these terms cause in Portuguese, the debate thus becomes whether they are to be treated as any other Portuguese words, or as any other foreign ones.

We would say that, from those that constitute our corpus, this novel is the one which creates less problems for the translator and/or the foreign reader. In a way, it presents the same difficulties as the other two, but in a much smaller scale: while having some notions of Portuguese and Angolan history enrich the understanding of this novel, the way in which it dialogues with past events is more loose than it is in the case of *As Naus*, in which, as we have seen, the interplay becomes at times borderline hermetic. Similarly, *O Esplendor de Portugal* includes several references to very specific details of the Portuguese (and/or Angolan) experience, but much less so than we have found in *Os Cus de Judas*.

An issue in which the translator will have to take sides is concerning the rendering of racially charged words. They have appeared in *Os Cus de Judas*, but they are a constant in this novel, since most of it is placed in Angola, and they become all the more important as one of the main characters is mixed-race and, in colonial and post-

colonial Angola and Portugal, this is obviously an issue.

Another trait of Portuguese writing which will always pose a challenge for translators is the delicate question of the forms of addressing people: this may be particularly difficult for English speakers, due to the lack of choice their language offers in this matter. Portuguese has, as other romance languages, several ways of addressing an interlocutor which vary according to age, social status, relationship and context; even when translating to other languages that allow for these differences, the several formulae used in the various languages do not overlap exactly, and there are always some adjustments to be made; when the target language is English, though, it may be especially hard to convey the social distances these ways of treatment reflect⁹¹. This is true of every text written in Portuguese, but we argue that it is particularly so in this novel, in which the friction between classes is so manifest.

In English

The Splendor of Portugal is the translation of a 1997 novel, and it came out in English in 2011. It was the first translation of Lobo Antunes to be signed by Rhett McNeil, and the second one to be published by Dalkey Archive Press⁹². This publishing house was founded in Chicago in the 1980s. They now operate from Champaign, and have close ties with the University of Illinois; they are committed to disseminating innovative, thus by definition unconventional literature, with an emphasis on foreign – translated – fiction, and typically keep books in print in spite of sales. The fact that their translations of Lobo Antunes' works have been at least partially funded by national and foreign state agencies evinces what kind of operation they are running. In other words, for this imprint “readability” is not a concern, and this is how we would explain the absence of a glossary, preface, or footnotes in their editions of Lobo Antunes: not out of fear of scaring off readers, but driven by a belief that “foreign” means just that, and that some degree of unfamiliarity should be expected.

Having taught Spanish and Portuguese at the Penn State University, where he got his PhD, Rhett McNeil is a scholar (he has also taught at the University of Illinois, the Arizona State University, and the University of Tulsa). His performances as a translator have won him a fair degree of recognition, with his translation of Gonçalo M. Tavares'

⁹¹ English does have ways of marking these differences, but they are syntactic or pragmatic, while in all Romance languages they are also morphemic.

⁹² The first had been *Knowledge of Hell*, a translation by Clifford E. Landers published in 2008 (of the 1980 original *Conhecimento do Inferno*).

Joseph Walser's Machine long-listed for the Best Translated Book Award, and his rendition of João Almino's *Enigmas of Spring* distinguished with the Jabuti Prize in Brazil.

His translation of *O Esplendor de Portugal* is praised even by those who chastise the book, like David Single, whose castigating review we have mentioned above:

The Splendor of Portugal for all my animadversion is not wholly without merit. Translator Rhett McNeil provides a few prosaic diamonds in the rough: Antunes writes of the "silk- flower rustle of the bats returning to the mango trees" (168); a misty halo around a lamppost is a "dewy wig of light that oscillated" (192). But its frequent verbal dazzle is the novel's best quality and it is not enough to save the work from serious and insurmountable shortcomings. (Single, 2011)

Chad Post, in his already quoted review, refers to McNeil's work as a "caustic, accomplished English translation" (Post, 2011b); and Megan Eardley (2011) thinks that "McNeil has interpreted Lobo Antunes's [sic] thick, cruel prose beautifully". Very politicised in her reading, she complains that "so far English-language critics have focused on the technical challenges of translating Antunes, as though they were somehow isolated from the text's socio-political and ethical questions", and thinks that "Particularly provocative is his decision to translate the Portuguese racial slur 'escarumba' as 'nigger.'" (Eardley, 2011) What Eardley seems to ignore or at least oversee is the fact that McNeil does not render "preto" as "nigger" which, as we will see, could be a more justifiable option than his choice of "black".

In Italian

In Italy, *Lo splendore del Portogallo* came out in 2002, in a translation by Rita Desti for Einaudi, the publishing house that issued the first translations of Lobo Antunes (as we have seen, Feltrinelli is now publishing this author).

One of the few translators from Portuguese who do not teach in the University, Rita Desti is an experienced and renowned Italian translator, who translates exclusively from the Portuguese. She is responsible for most Italian translations of the books of Saramago and Paulo Coelho (the two best-selling Portuguese-language authors), but she has also rendered into her language works by Lídia Jorge, Clarice Lispector, Mário Cláudio and Machado de Assis – *Memorie postume di Brás Cubas*, issued by UTET in 1983, was her first translation.

She can thus be considered a veteran of Portuguese letters in Italy, and she lent her

voice to Lobo Antunes, as well, for a period; in time, Vittoria Martinetto became the author's regular translator, while Desti continued to translate Saramago⁹³.

This is similar in everything to the other Einaudi editions of Lobo Antunes: it is included in the Coralli collection, in which the paratext is that of the book flaps, and it had been out of print until very recently. In 2019, though, Feltrinelli proceeded to undertake the same operation it had conducted in 2009 with *In culo al mondo*, and it republished, now under their own imprint, Rita Desti's translation. This caused the Italian press to react, and it is due to this reissuing that we have access to a few responses to *O Esplendor de Portugal*.

Virginia Caporali, in the newspaper *Il Manifesto*, summarizes the plot, while providing the historical framework for the narrative, and she very briefly comments on the “bellissima traduzione di Rita Desti” (“wonderful translation by Rita Desti”) (Caporali, 2019). In *Mescalina*, a cultural webpage which features reviews of books, movies, and other cultural products, Corrado Ori Tanzi (s/d) also comments on this reprint, welcoming this opportunity for the Italian reader to have access to Lobo Antunes' “pagine ostiche ma vieppiù poderose su temi che la più stretta contemporaneità accoglie con grande empatia” (“tough but ever more powerful pages on themes which the closest contemporaneity welcomes with great empathy”). No assessment is made on the translation, but the author's prose is praised as “nobile e corposa” (“noble and full-bodied”); the oenological terminology strikes us as hinting at a taste that needs to be acquired, educated and cultivated, rather than being spontaneous and immediate.

Analysis

As with other works under appreciation, we have selected a few excerpts for analysis, beginning with the incipit of the novel (you will find the three texts side by side in Table 7):

24 de Dezembro de 1995

Quando disse que tinha convidado os meus irmãos para passarem a noite de

⁹³ As Martinetto herself explains: “In Italia, Lobo Antunes ha avuto tre voci: quella di Antonio Tabucchi, in collaborazione con Maria José de Lancastre, per il primo romanzo pubblicato nel nostro paese, *In culo al mondo* (1996); poi di Rita Desti – che traduceva anche José Saramago – e la mia. Per ragioni editoriali, ma pure logiche vista la distanza fra i due autori, Rita Desti ha continuato a tradurre Saramago mentre Lobo Antunes è rimasto interamente affidato a me.” (Martinetto 2015, “Tradurre – La grande sfida di Lobo Antunes”).

Natal conosco

(estávamos a almoçar na cozinha e viam-se os guindastes e os barcos a seguir aos últimos telhados da Ajuda)

a Lena encheu-me o prato de fumo, desapareceu no fumo e enquanto desaparecia a voz embaciou os vidros antes de se sumir também

— Já não vês os teus irmãos há quinze anos

(a voz ao cobrir os caixilhos de vapor levou consigo os morros de Almada, a ponte, a estátua do Cristo a bater sozinha acima da bruma o desamparo das asas) até que o fumo se diluiu, a Lena regressou a pouco e pouco de dedos estendidos para o cesto do pão

— Já não vês os teus irmãos há quinze anos

de forma que de repente me dei conta do tempo que passara desde que chegámos de África, das cartas da minha mãe da fazenda primeiro e de Marimba depois, quatro cubatas numa encosta de mangueiras

(lembro-me da moradia do chefe de posto, da loja, de ruínas de quartel a naufragarem no capim)

os envelopes que guardava numa gaveta sem os mostrar a ninguém, os abrir, os ler, dúzias e dúzias de envelopes sujos, cobertos de carimbos e selos, falando-me do que não queria ouvir, a fazenda, Angola, a vida dela, o empregado dos Correios entregava-mos no patamar e uma extensão de girassóis murmurava campos fora, girassóis, algodão, arroz, tabaco, não me interessa Angola cheia de pretos na fortaleza, no palácio do Governo e nas cabanas da ilha refastelados ao sol a julgarem-se nós, fechava a porta com a carta segura por dois dedos como quem transporta um bicho pela cauda

cartas iguais a bichos malcheirosos, mortos

a baía de Luanda, esquecida de coqueiros, reduzia-se a um vestibulo diminuto a necessitar de pintura decorado por um bengaleiro e uma cómoda, a Lena enchendo-me o prato de fumo e apagando o mundo

— Puseste-os na rua e agora passados quinze anos queres os teus irmãos de volta

sentada à minha frente usando o abano da mão para afugentar o vapor

— Se fosse a ti não esperava visitas logo à noite Carlos (Antunes, 1997a: 11-12)

Italian translation by Rita Desti:

24 dicembre 1995

Quando ho detto che avevo invitato i miei fratelli a passare la notte di Natale con noi

(stavamo pranzando in cucina e si vedevano le gru e le imbarcazioni al di là degli ultimi tetti dell'Ajuda)

Lena mi ha riempito il piatto di fumo, è scomparsa nel fumo e mentre scompariva la voce ha appannato i vetri prima di dileguarsi anch'essa

— Non vedi i tuoi fratelli da quindici anni

(nel ricoprire i vetri di vapore la voce ha portato via con sé le colline di Almada, il ponte, la statua del Cristo che solitaria al di sopra della bruma agitava le ali abbandonate)

finché il fumo si è stemperato, Lena è ricomparsa a poco a poco con le dita tese verso il cestino del pane

— Non vedi i tuoi fratelli da quindici anni

sicché all'improvviso mi sono reso conto del tempo che era passato da quando eravamo tornati dall'Africa, delle lettere che mia madre mandava, prima dalla fazenda e poi da Marimba, quattro casupole su un pendio ricoperto di manghi

(mi ricordo della casa del capoposto, della bottega, delle rovine della caserma che naufragavano nella vegetazione)

quelle buste che riponevo in un cassetto senza mostrarle a nessuno, senza aprirle, senza leggerle, dozzine e dozzine di buste sporche, coperte di timbri e francobolli, che mi parlavano di cose che non volevo udire, la fazenda, l'Angola, la sua vita, il postino me la consegnava sul pianerottolo e una distesa di girasoli sussurrava nei campi, girasoli, cotone, riso, tabacco, non m'interessa l'Angola piena di negri nel forte, nel palazzo del Governo e nelle capanne dell'isola tutti lì affastellati sotto il sole a giudicarci, chiudevo la porta tenendo la lettera con due dita come se trasportassi un animale per la coda
lettere tali e quali ad animali maleodoranti, morti
la baia di Luanda, dimentica delle sue palme da cocco, si riduceva a un minuscolo ingresso che aveva bisogno di una tinteggiatura arredato con un attaccapanni e un comò, mentre Lena mi riempiva il piatto di fumo e cancellava il mondo
— Li hai cacciati via e ora che sono passati quindici anni ricerchi i tuoi fratelli seduta davanti a me sventagliando con la mano per dissolvere il vapore
— Se fossi in te non mi aspetterei visite stasera Carlos
(Antunes, 2002b: 7-8)

English translation by Rhett McNeil:

24 December 1995

When I said that I had invited my siblings to spend Christmas Eve with us
(we were eating lunch in the kitchen and you could see the cranes and the boats
back behind the last rooftops of Ajuda)
Lena filled my plate with smoke, disappeared in the smoke, and as she
disappeared her voice tarnished the glass of the window before it too vanished
“You haven’t seen your siblings in fifteen years”
(as her voice enveloped the window frame it took with it the hills of Almada, the
bridge, the statue of Christ alone beating its helpless wings above the mist)
until the smoke dissipated, Lena reappeared little by little with her fingers
outstretched toward the breadbasket
“You haven’t seen your siblings in fifteen years”
so that all of a sudden I was aware of the time that had passed since we arrived
here from Africa, of the letters from my mother, first from the plantation and later
from Marimba, four little huts on a hillside of mango trees
(I remember the regional administrator’s house, the store, the ruins of the barracks
shipwrecked and sinking in the tall grass)
the envelopes that I kept in a drawer without showing anyone, without opening
them, without reading them, dozens and dozens of dirty envelopes, covered with
stamps and seals, telling me about things I didn’t want to hear, the plantation,
Angola, her life, the mailman delivered them to me on the landing of the stairway
and an expanse of sunflowers murmuring in the fields outside, sunflowers, cotton,
rice, tobacco, I don’t care about Angola, a bunch of blacks in the barracks, in the
government palace, and in the huts on the island laying out in the sun as if they
were us, I closed the door with the letter held between two fingers like someone
holding an animal by its tail
letters just like putrid dead animals
Luanda Bay, ignored by its own palm trees, amounted to nothing more than a tiny
room in need of a paint job, outfitted with a coatrack and a chest of drawers, Lena
filling my plate with smoke and blotting out the world
“You put them out on the street and now, fifteen years later, you want your siblings
back”
sitting in front of me waving her hand to waft away the smoke
“If I were you I wouldn’t wait up for visitors, Carlos”
(Antunes, 2011b: 9-11)

The fact that this selection corresponds to a longer portion of text than those we have chosen for the previous analysis is a reflex of the evolution of this author's writing: it is increasingly harder to pinpoint where a unit of meaning (or rhythm, if rhythm can be a criterion) ends or begins; the sentences have become, not exactly longer, but more broken, faltering. We have copied what we felt could be considered the opening lines, and stopped right after Lena's remark, for the final tone in which it is delivered. It may not be apparent without reading the text that came next, but this is not even the end of a sentence – the narrator proceeds to describe his wife's present appearance, first, and afterwards to recall the time when they met, back in Angola. His utmost contempt towards her shows through, every step of the way.

The opening scene places us in the present, with Carlos in his home in Ajuda, in the company of his wife Lena, waiting for his brother and sister to show up for the Christmas eve dinner. His loneliness and the creeping helplessness that will but grow over the evening are apparent from this incipit, and can be said to be epitomised in the form of a hypallage attributing Carlos' condition to the statue of Cristo-Rei visible from his window: “as her voice enveloped the window frame it took with it the hills of Almada, the bridge, the statue of Christ alone beating its helpless wings above the mist”, in McNeils rendition, which translates “a voz ao cobrir os caixilhos de vapor levou consigo os morros de Almada, a ponte, a estátua do Cristo a bater sozinha acima da bruma o desamparo das asas” (Antunes, 1997b: 11).

The operation undertaken here by McNeil is barely detectable but very common – both in his work and in that of other translators of this author – and it consists of an almost imperceptible neutralisation of what is in fact a distinctive trait in Lobo Antunes' style: the Portuguese would translate literally “the statue of Christ beating alone above the mist the helplessness of the wings”; setting aside the issue of word order, using an adjective to qualify a noun, as in “helpless wings”, is maybe more palatable, but less original than resorting to nominalizing what clearly plays the role of an adjective, as in “the helplessness of the wings” which no doubt lends substance (and, we would argue, emotional weight) to said helplessness.

Rita Desti's translation performs a comparable operation, in this point. Rendering this parenthetical sentence as “nel ricoprire i vetri di vapore la voce ha portato via con sé le colline di Almada, il ponte, la statua del Cristo che solitaria al di sopra della bruma agitava le ali abbandonate” (in English “while covering the window glass in vapour the voice took away with it the Almada hills, the bridge, the statue of Christ which solitary over the mist agitated the abandoned wings”), the Italian translation does their own bit

of neutralizing, again rearranging the awkward word order into another, more orthodox one, and refusing the statue's helplessness (“desamparo”) of the wings to stand as such, by forcing that meaning into the adjective form “abandonate” (“abandoned”). The choice of this word is also curious: “desamparo” is, of course, the antonym of “amparo” which means “help” or “support”; therefore, “helpless” is rather literal; the Italian version is, we would say, more interpretative: “abandonate” is more like “forsaken” than like “unprotected” (“unprotected” in Italian, could be “indifeso”), and it sounds imperceptibly more definitive.

This was the first instance we considered worthy of comment, since the text that precedes it is pretty straightforward. One detail we could comment upon, though, would be the usual difficulty on the part of translators to mimic Lobo Antunes' fluctuations in register and, mostly, their failure to come up with more colloquial solutions for many of the author's choices of vocabulary: “a voz embaciou os vidros antes de se sumir também” (“the voice fogged up the windowpanes before fleeing as well”), includes two instances of this. “Embaciar” stands for “clouding” or “misting up”; McNeil's “tarnishing” not only has a different semantic extension, more close to “soiling” than to “fogging up”, but corresponds to a rather high register; Desti's use of the verb “appannare” is closer both in meaning and register, but she then seems to take revenge for this use of colloquialism by unexpectedly scaling up the sentence, resorting to the refined “dileguarsi” for the very informal “sumir-se”, and choosing the almost quaint phrasing “anch'essa”⁹⁴ for the very neutral “também” (“too”, “also”, or “as well”). McNeil translates “antes de se sumir também” with “before it too vanished”; while semantically compatible, one has to note how the colloquial “sumir-se” was neither rendered with an equally informal verb, nor compensated by the insertion of a colloquial form elsewhere.

We find a similar phenomenon on the parenthetical phrase we were commenting on before, with the author's reference to the “morros de Almada”, in which “morro” is a less cultured way of saying “colina” (“hill” in English, “collina” in Italian), for which neither translator was able to find a match, or adopt a compensating mechanism.

Another feature that appears from the very beginning of the novel is this array of African or Africa-evoking words, that unavoidably summon the memories of the Portuguese colonial presence in Angola. Hence, the mention of the letters Carlos received from his mother “da fazenda primeiro e de Marimba depois, quatro cubatas numa encosta de mangueiras” (“from the farm at first and from Marimba afterwards, four cubatas on a slope of mango trees”) are a pretext to introduce African memories.

⁹⁴ The forms “esso”/“essa”, correct as they are, are nowadays virtually absent in the spoken register – which is, in our opinion, the one in use in this case.

“Fazenda” is a rural property, but the word is typically used to describe those in the colonies, since in Portugal the word normally used is “quinta” (“farm”, used for smaller properties), or “herdade” (the etymology of the word conveys the meaning of “inheritance”, and is used for farms of large dimensions). The obvious parallel could be found in the incipit of Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*, “I had a farm in Africa, at the foot of the Ngong hills” (Blixen, 1954: 13). McNeil's use of “plantation” is accurate, since we know the family dealt in cotton, but it is reminiscent of American, more than African, colonies and practices of exploitation. Desti's choice is maintaining “fazenda” as in the original, a word which made its way into Italian, but is (like “favelas”) associated with a Brazilian reality.

Here we find the novel's first occurrence of Bantu words: “cubata” is, as we have seen (in the chapter on *Os Cus de Judas*), Kimbundu for a specific kind of construction; in the English version, it is translated usually as “huts”, sometimes as “workers' huts”, and in one instance “straw huts”; in this particular case, “little huts”. Desti, like McNeil, bypasses the Kimbundu and treats “cubata” as standard Portuguese, rendering it as “casupole” (“small, poor houses”) in this and other cases, and “capanne” (huts) in several others.

Concerning other Kimbundu words present in the novel, in McNeil's translation, “soba” is rendered as “chief”; “senzala” is rendered as “workers' huts” or “workers' quarters”; “picada” was translated with the more general “dirt road”; and for “musseque”, the Angolan word for “slum” or “skid row” (the corresponding to “favelas” in Brazil), he uses “slum”. Desti chooses “baraccopoli” (“slum”) for “musseque”, “pista” (“track”) for “picada”, and leaves untranslated “soba” and “senzala”, writing “senzala” in italics, and inserting an explanatory interpolation after the first occurrence of “soba”, saying “capo tribù”.

The following parenthetical clause “lembro-me da moradia do chefe de posto, da loja, de ruínas de quartel a naufragarem no capim” (“I remember the chefe de posto's villa, the store, the barrack's ruins shipwrecking in the capim”) continues to recall memories of Angola. “Capim” is a word of Tupi origin, which generally stands for gramineae, that large family of plants usually known as “grass”; however, much like “fazenda” is employed to refer to large rural properties in Brazil or in African territories, “capim” is only used regarding the tall grass you find in former Portuguese colonies, and is charged with that hint of exoticism commonly associated, in the eyes of the Portuguese, to the vegetal life of those regions. McNeil writes “tall grass”, and Desti opts for the more general “vegetazione”.

The “chefe de posto” was a position of relative power in the Portuguese colonial system, consisting of a public official in charge of an administrative station, whose powers could include competences in the areas of health, taxes, registry, police and judiciary as well. McNeil renders it with the explanatory “regional administrator”, and Desti with the literal “capoposto”. They both translate “moradia” with the neutral “house” or “casa”, even though “moradia” is not any kind of “house”, but one that is in its own grounds (as opposed to “apartment”), detached from surrounding buildings, and the word often implies that it is large and well-off.

The letters Isilda wrote to Carlos were brought by the “empregado dos Correios”: the author writes “Post Office employee”, instead of the obvious “carteiro”, or “mailman”, “postino” in Italian, and both translators go with these neutralising options. These letters awakened a series of memories (a process the character synesthetically refers to mentioning how he heard the murmur of sunflowers), that prompt Carlos to manifest his refusal towards Angola and what it means to him: “não me interessa Angola cheia de pretos na fortaleza, no palácio do Governo e nas cabanas da ilha refastelados ao sol a julgarem-se nós” (“I don’t care about Angola filled with niggers in the fort, in the Government palace and in the island huts sat back in the sun thinking they’re us”).

The American translation is “I don’t care about Angola, a bunch of blacks in the barracks, in the government palace, and in the huts on the island laying out in the sun as if they were us”, and the Italian one states “non m’interessa l’Angola piena di negri nel forte, nel palazzo del Governo e nelle capanne dell’isola tutti lì affastellati sotto il sole a giudicarci”. For “não me interessa”, the translation could be more along the lines Desti chose, using the literal and more neutral “non m’interessa” (“I’m not interested”), or closer to what McNeil decided to do, choosing the more emotionally charged “I don’t care” (which in Italian would be closer to “non m’importa”). The “fortaleza” is likely the Fortaleza de São Miguel de Luanda, a military fort built in the 16th century by order of the Captain-Governor of Portuguese Angola, and therefore reminiscent of colonial rule. In either case, the Italian “forte” (which Desti uses) and the English “fort” or “fortress” (which McNeil for some reason forsakes in favour of “barracks”) would be semantically accurate, even if more general. Accurate as well is McNeil’s reading of the resented Carlos’ utterance “a julgarem-se nós” as “as if they were us”, while Desti falls into the trap of misreading “julgar” for “judging” instead of “thinking”⁹⁵, and thus choosing “a giudicarci” (“judging us”).

A tricky point in this sentence is the very colloquial “refastelar-se”, a popular way of

⁹⁵ “Julgar” can have both these meanings; in this case, the phrasal construction precludes Desti’s interpretation: to say “a giudicarci”, in Portuguese, would be “a julgar-nos”; the source text “a julgarem-se” clearly indicates the action is reflexive.

saying “very comfortably laying back”, which has a resonance of the utmost leisure and feeling at ease, which is precisely what the character resents and wants to point out, in this – for him – unacceptable behaviour of Angolans, who grew to behave as if they were “them”, the colonizers. This is one of the many instances in which the mental discourse of the novel's characters betrays their prejudice and their reluctance to accept the end of the colonial rule. McNeil renders it with “laying out”, for lack of a better option. Desti, on her part, seems to have been tricked into a false-friend situation, choosing the similar sounding “affastellati” which, however, stands for “bundled up”, the tying together of several “fastelli”, or “sheafs”.

Since this is a key issue of *O Esplendor de Portugal*, the choices regarding any words which convey or evoke race, prejudice or the management of the African territory, before and after Angola's independence, become of capital relevance. Hence, the problem with rendering “cubatas” as “huts” or “capanne” is that it erases the difference created in the Portuguese text when, as in this case, Carlos mentions the “cabanas da ilha” (“the huts on the island”, or “capanne dell'isola”). A “cubata” is a kind of construction whose roof is usually made of straw or other kind of dried vegetable material, and is considered typically African. Therefore, when the narrators in this book say “cubata”, they mean the natives' dwellings, which they perceive as precarious and degrading. The “cabanas da ilha”, on the other hand, are likely the adventitious constructions with thatched roofs made for tourists on the Ilha de Luanda, a peninsula off the shore of Luanda, known as “island” but which is actually connected to the mainland by a passage near the above mentioned Forte de São Miguel.

Finally, in this excerpt, we have the novel's first, but by no means last, mention to the natives of Angola as “pretos”. The term being offensive, and undoubtedly so in Carlos' words, Rita Desti translates it with “negri”. As we have discussed on the chapter about *Os Cus de Judas*, it can be said, in broad terms, that the Portuguese “negro” is neutral, and corresponds to the Italian “nero” and the English “black”, while “preto”, in Portuguese, is pejorative and usually translated as “negro” in Italian and “nigger” in English. This is not unequivocally clear-cut, but these are the most customary conventions. Yet, McNeil in this novel mostly chose to render “preto” with “black”; the only time he uses “nigger” (Antunes, 2011b: 511) is to translate the quaint “escarumba” (Antunes, 1997b: 378), an offensive term you would hardly hear nowadays (in terms of use, it is something like “coon” or “spade” in English). Rita Desti uses “negro” for “preto”, and “scarafone nero” (Antunes, 2002b: 384) for “escarumba”, on the only occasion it appears on this book – “scarafone” means cockroach, but has a

metaphorical use to designate someone very ugly⁹⁶.

Carlos' mental outburst “cartas iguais a bichos malcheirosos, mortos” is rendered by McNeil as “letters just like putrid dead animals” and by Desti as “lettere tali e quali ad animali maleodoranti, morti” (“letters in every way like dead animals, malodorous”). In either case, the contrast is present: the language of the original is somewhat less sophisticated, as something that might have been said by a child, something along the lines of “letters equal to stinky dead beasts” in English, and “lettere uguali a bestie puzzolente”, in Italian.

It is interesting how the two translators, in this very short string of text, adopt similar strategies and deviate in the same points and in the same way: granted that neither Italian nor English has a word with the semantic extension and the pragmatic use of the Portuguese “bichos” (it is “animals”, but it can be affectionate, like in Miguel Torga's book of the same name, or closer to the significance of the English “bug”, typically an insect and often not pleasant), they nevertheless rise the register with their choices for “malcheirosos”, resorting to “maleodoranti” and “putrid”, instead of “puzzolente” or “fetente” and “stinky” or “smelly”. On the other hand, faced with the awkwardness of Carlos' utterance, using “iguais” to convey comparison, they avoid the literal “equal” or “uguali”, and add emphasis to the comparison, translating “iguais” with, respectively, “tali e quali” and “just like”, instead of the simplest and most obvious forms “come” and its parallel “like”.

The fact that Carlos' reminiscences relate to Luanda's coastal area is confirmed by the lyrical personification “a baía de Luanda, esquecida de coqueiros” (“the Luanda bay, forgetful of coconut trees”); Desti renders it literally (“la baia di Luanda, dimentica delle sue palme di cocco”), only adding a possessive adjective that makes the expression slightly more palatable; McNeil also stresses the coconut trees' belonging to the bay, but misreads the direction of the verb, making the bay the object of the forgetfulness: “Luanda Bay, ignored by its own palm trees”; he also translates “coqueiros” with the more general “palm trees”. He performs the same operation of generalization when, shortly after, he uses “room” for “vestíbulo” (lobby, vestibule, or entrance hall).

In a very characteristic construction of Lobo Antunes', Lena is sitting in front of her husband “usando o abano da mão para afugentar o vapor” (“using the fan of the hand to chase away the vapour”); this kind of implicit comparison, in which a possessive is used to suggest a similarity, is recurring in this author's prose. If this kind of phrasal composition is unexpected and rather original in Portuguese, it is just the kind of

⁹⁶ And it does have strong regional connotations, being a favourite in the area of Naples.

operation the foreign translator deems too hazardous to mimic. And yet, in Italian, a literal rendition like “il ventaglio della mano” would have had an effect very similar to the one its source counterpart has in Portuguese; even in English, we are prepared to concede that such phrasal construction could risk incomprehension – but that effect would have been largely mitigated, had the translator insisted on the formulation, like Lobo Antunes does. After all, his is not the most straightforward way of saying things in Portuguese.

If on the one hand no simple solution is foreseeable, on the other hand the frequency with which Lobo Antunes uses this device demands that the translator finds a sustainable answer. To make the comparison explicit is out of the question, due to the number of times he employs this procedure, often side by side with actually explicit comparisons. A remedy may be what Desti chose to do, by compensating with another creative use of language: in this case, she writes “sventagliando con la mano” (“fanning away with the hand”), a choice which consists of a neutralisation. McNeil simply wrote “waving her hand”, with no inclusion of any idea of fans or fanning. They both neutralise, but Desti tries to at least leave a trace of the source text's image.

This “fanning” of the hand is said by the narrator to aim at “afugentar o vapor”, “to chase away” or “to scare away” the “vapour”. Since the character is smoking, “smoke” would be more accurate but, as you can see from the selection of text we chose for this analysis, the author intermittently writes “smoke” and “vapour”, to underline the fact that they are indoors, and to convey this idea of the condensation of their breath enveloping the whole scene. In this case, Desti maintains “vapore” (“vapour”), but chooses the more tame “dissolvere” (“to dissolve”, a verb usually employed for liquids) instead of a literal rendition of “afugentar”, like “cacciare via”; McNeil also neutralises the word, but prefers to complement his choice of “smoke” (for “vapour”) with a verb fit for the air element, and writes “to waft away”.

To finish the analysis of this excerpt, we would like to comment on the lines of direct speech: always a staple of this writer's style, they gain, roughly around this time in his career, a different importance, as they begin to work as a sort of ritornello that is repeated throughout the novel or, at times, more like a theme, repeated with variations. You can see examples of this strategy in this opening excerpt, with the iteration of Lena's remark “Já não vêes os teus irmãos há quinze anos”, rendered literally by both translators (“You haven't seen your siblings in fifteen years”, and “Non vedi i tuoi fratelli da quindici anni”).

The following two statements of Lena's, however, posed a few problems for the

translators. In “Puseste-os na rua e agora passados quinze anos queres os teus irmãos de volta”, “Puseste-os na rua”, which McNeil renders literally as “You put them out on the street”, has, in Portuguese, a very blunt ring to it: more like “You threw them out”, or “You kicked them out”, expressions which correspond, in tone, to Rita Desti's choice of “Li hai cacciati via”. The second part of this sentence “e agora passados quinze anos queres os teus irmãos de volta” is rendered by McNeil as “and now, fifteen years later, you want your siblings back” – and one cannot help noticing how he inserts two scrupulous commas for clarity; Desti's choice “e ora che sono passati quindici anni ricerchi i tuoi fratelli”, in spite of the reiterative nature of the verb she uses (“ricercare” means “to search” or “to look for”, but is already a reiteration of “cercare”), seems less poignant than the source text.

Lena's final remark, “Se fosse a ti não esperava visitas logo à noite Carlos” (“If I were you I wouldn't expect any visitors tonight Carlos”), is translated by McNeil with “If I were you I wouldn't wait up for visitors, Carlos”. The Portuguese “esperar” means “to wait”, “to expect” and, depending on context, “to hope for”; but, in this instance, the connotation is that of “expecting”, rather than “waiting”, as Desti conveys with her expression “Se fossi in te non mi aspetterei visite stasera Carlos” – “aspettare” in Italian has a semantic extension which encompasses the Portuguese acceptations of “esperar” as “to expect” and “to wait” (for “to hope for”, the Italian verb is “sperare”).

Based not only in this snippet, but also on our analysis of the whole translated text, we would argue that direct speech is McNeil's Achilles' heel, since he productively tackles other difficulties, but often is less accomplished when it comes to direct speech, in which he seldom manages to match the abrasive cogency of the original.

Another (shorter) piece of text we elected to submit to scrutiny is the following (it corresponds to Table 8):

“a fazenda a norte da nossa, uma fazenda pequena com uma casa pequena, sem milho nem algodão nem arroz, quase sem máquinas, lavrada por luchazes comprados mais barato no Moxico e portanto ainda piores e com mais doenças do que as aventesmas que tínhamos, o meu pai vinha de tempos a tempos, antes do chá, espicaçá-los com o bastão sem acreditar em desculpas de paludismo e diarreias, levantando os que se fingiam moribundos a mostrarem os beiços secos e os arrepios da febre

– Patrão

e todavia mal virávamos as costas passava-lhes logo e desatavam a fumar e a beber marufo, o meu pai de bota no ar

– Andor

por lhe dar pena a mulher nas traseiras com o seu bule lascado e a sua camisola puída a oferecer-nos cadeiras de lona sem cor e bancos de cozinha, a oferecer-nos biscoitos, a distribuir abanos de ráfia de abanar o fogão pela minha mãe e por

mim, pedindo desculpa do chá, do açúcar, de existir, tratando a minha mãe e eu por madame, o meu pai por cavalheiro, humilde, feia, triste, numa vozita de derrota

– As madames são servidas o cavalheiro é servido?”

(Antunes, 1997a: 205)

Italian translation by Rita Desti:

la fazenda a nord della nostra, una fazenda piccola con una casa piccola, senza granturco né cotone né riso, quasi senza macchine, lavorata da luciase comprati a Moxico più a buon mercato e quindi anche peggiori e più malati di quegli spettri che avevamo noi, mio padre andava di tanto in tanto, prima del té, a punzecchiarli con il bastone non credendo alle scuse di paludismo e diarree, facendo alzare quelli che si fingevano moribondi e che mostravano le labbra riarse e i brividi della febbre

– Padrone

e poi, appena giravamo le spalle, subito gli passava e si mettevano a fumare e a bere vino di palma, mio padre con lo stivale a mezz'aria

– Muoversi

perché gli faceva pena la donna nel retro con la sua teiera crepata e la sua maglietta lisa che ci offriva sedie di tela scolorita e sgabelli da cucina, che ci offriva biscotti, distribuiva ventagli di rafia per ravvivare il focolare a mia madre e a me, chiedendo scusa del té, dello zucchero, chiedendo scusa di esistere, riferendosi a mia madre e me con l'appellativo di madame, a mio padre con quello di signore, umile, brutta, triste, con una vocina da sconfitta

– Le madame gradiscono il signore gradisce?”

(Antunes, 2002b: 201-202)

English translation by Rhett McNeil:

the farm north of ours, a small farm with a small house, which had no corn or cotton or rice, barely any farm equipment, and that was worked by people from Luchazes who were bought for next to nothing in Moxico and so were even worse and more prone to illness than the specters who worked for us, my father would pay them a visit every so often, before teatime, striking them with his walking stick, not believing their excuses about malaria and dysentery, rousing the ones who pretended to be dying showing him their dry lips, that they were shivering with fever

“Look sir”

and yet we'd no sooner turn our backs than they'd suddenly be all better, smoking and drinking palm wine, my father with his boot upraised

“Get up you fool”

because he felt sorry for the woman with her cracked teapot and threadbare sweater out on the patio behind the house offering us faded canvas chairs and stools to sit on, offering us cookies, handing my mother and me palm-leaf fans that she used to fan the fire, apologizing for the tea, for the sugar, for even existing, calling my mother and me ma'am, calling my father sir, humble, ugly, sad, in her defeated little voice

“Do you need anything more ma'am need anything more sir?”

(Antunes, 2011b: 267-268)

This is one excerpt of one long enumeration, in the voice of Isilda, the mother, recalling

how things used to be in Angola, when their family was part of the ruling class.

Isilda mentions “máquinas” (“machines”), and Rita Desti translates literally as “macchine”, but McNeil feels the need to specify it consisted of “farm equipment” (in English, “machines” would hardly be understood). Luchazes is a municipality in the Moxico province of Angola, and the narrator here refers to the people from that place as “luchazes”; Desti writes “luciase”, in Italian, while the American translator uses “people from Luchazes”.

For “baratos”, “cheap”, Desti opts for the neutral “a buon mercato”, but McNeil accentuates the cheapness of the workmanship by stating “next to nothing”. The perceived consequence of this money saving was that the workers were “ainda piores e com mais doenças” (“even worse and with more diseases”) than those her family “had” (Isilda’s choice of words is shocking throughout). This syntagm is rendered almost literally in Italian: “anche peggiori e più malati”, with the slight difference that Desti writes they are “more ill” instead of “with more diseases”; in English, the option was “even worse and more prone to illness”; therefore, in face of the Portuguese, which states the workers “had more diseases”, Desti goes with the more trenchant “più malati”, implying they were effectively ill from the diseases they carried, while McNeil accentuated the underlying suspicion the narrator is suggesting, opting for “more prone to illness”, as if said illness was more a disposition than something actual.

For “aventemas” they curiously both choose “spectre” and the Italian counterpart, “spettri”; while “aventema” effectively denotes a ghostly figure, the connotation is more that of fright than that of spectrality; hence, Gregory Rabassa’s option, when translating the same word in *Que Farei Quando Tudo Arde?*: “spook” (Antunes, 2008: 264).

Isilda refers to the workers as those “que tínhamos”, “we had”, stressing the way they were seen as possessions, and Desti upholds the gist translating “che avevamo noi” (“that we had”, but with emphasis on the pronoun); McNeil could not bring himself to be so blunt, and writes “who worked for us”.

The following utterance causes a little confusion: “o meu pai vinha de tempos a tempos” (“my father came every once in a while”), probably because it is unclear why he “came” instead of “went” to the neighbouring farm; one explanation is that Isilda is speaking from the point of view of one who is at her neighbours’ at the time of the discourse; Desti ambiguously writes “mio padre andava di tanto in tanto” (“my father went every once in a while”), avoiding a pronoun which one feels should be there (“ci andava”, or “would go there”), and McNeil interprets “my father would pay them a visit every so often”.

The father would “espicaçá-los com o bastão sem acreditar em desculpas de paludismo e diarreias” (“prod them with the stick without believing their excuses of paludism or diarrhoeas”); “espicaçar” is “to prod”, and Desti chose “punzecchiarli” (“to prick”), and the literal “bastone”; McNeil writes “striking them with his walking stick”, even if “bastão” is more like a “club” or any other kind of “stick”, but hardly a “walking stick”, and “striking” is less rigorous than “prodding”. “Paludismo” is a vernacular way of referring to malaria in Portuguese (and in Italian, as Desti testifies to); “paludism” exists in English, but it is a very rare word, hence the translator opted for “malaria”; he also preferred “dysentery” to “diarrhoea”.

In the sentence “levantando os que se fingiam moribundos a mostrarem os beiços secos e os arrepios da febre” the cruelty and cynicism of the colonizer show their true colours. McNeil translates “rousing the ones who pretended to be dying showing him their dry lips, that they were shivering with fever”, and Desti is even more literal and closer to the original with her rendition “facendo alzare quelli che si fingevano moribondi e che mostravano le labbra riarse e i brividi della febbre”. The nuances to be taken into account are the following: “levantando” is, literally, “lifting”; so, more like “rousing” them, as McNeil writes, than “helping up” or “making them get up” (the latter being the English translation of what Desti chose); another subtlety probably hard to reproduce is the vernacular “beiços” for “lips”.

The disease-ridden workers would call out “Patrão” (“Boss”, or “Master” in a context of slavery), which Desti renders as “Padrone” and McNeil interprets as the respectful and subaltern “Look Sir”; and, if one were to believe Isilda, they would instantly recover once the employers turned their back, “e desatavam a fumar e a beber marufo” (“and they would take off smoking and drinking marufo”); “marufo” is the Kimbundu word for palm wine and, by extension, any fermented drink. Both translators neutralize it into “palm wine” and “vino di palma”.

Isilda's father reaction, “Andor”, is a very idiomatic and harsh way of prodding someone along, something along the lines of “Scram”, or “Get lost” in English, and “Via” in Italian. Desti chooses “Muoversi”, and McNeil “Get up you fool”; both options are less curt and blunt than the source text, and also less colourful.

They are offered tea from a woman with “o seu bule lascado e a sua camisola puída”, in a portrait of dilapidation and squalor that Isilda wants to convey; both translators are able to find replacements for “lascado” (“cracked” and “crepata”) and “puída” (“threadbare” and “lisa”), and they have no problem with the other objects enumerated in this tableau: “cadeiras de lona sem cor e bancos de cozinha” are met

with “sedie di tela scolorita e sgabelli da cucina” and “faded canvas chairs and stools to sit on”; for the “abanos de ráfia”, Desti has the literal “ventagli di rafia” available, while McNeil circumvents it with the explanatory and exact “palm-leaf fans”.

The harrowing recognition by Isilda that the woman apologizes for everything she offers and, ultimately, for existing, is corroborated by the extremely respectful and subservient way in which she addresses the colonizers: “tratando a minha mãe e eu por madame, o meu pai por cavalheiro” or, like McNeil translates “calling my mother and me ma’am, calling my father sir”, offering them tea and biscuits saying “As madames são servidas o cavalheiro é servido?”, addressing them in the third person, as is still customary, even between equals and in much less formal contexts, in Portuguese. McNeil tackles the direct speech line with “Do you need anything more ma’am need anything more sir?”. Desti prepares the ground for the third-person address explaining “riferendosi a mia madre e me con l'appellativo di madame, a mio padre con quello di signore” (“referring to my mother and me with the title of Madame, to my father with that of Sir”), and then, for the dialogue line, using the very courteous verb “gradire”: “Le madame gradiscono il signore gradisce?”, in this case corresponding to “Would you care for...”, when offering food or beverages. These are social markers which betray the origins of a character or their place in society.

Another example of this can be found in the excruciating scene in which Isilda and the colonial authorities interact with someone in a subaltern position: a merchant is being accused of disrespecting the colonial rules of trade; mistreated and threatened by Isilda and the chief of police, he tries to defend himself declaring “I swear I had no idea that they worked for you ma'am I don't sell anything to the farm workers just to the people in Chiquita” (Antunes, 2011b: 17), in English, and “Giuro che non avevo idea che lavorassero per vossignoria io non vendo niente ai braccianti della fazenda vendo solo alla gente di Chiquita” (Antunes, 2002b: 13) in Italian. What he says in Portuguese is “Juro que nem sonhei que trabalham para vosselência eu não vendo nada aos empregados da fazenda só vendo ao povo da Chiquita” (Antunes, 1997a: 17).

The Portuguese text is, we would argue, a bit more colourful – and maybe because of that very use of language, the merchant comes across as more submissive. The crucial element that conveys this admission of subalternity is the form of treatment he uses, “vosselência”, here translated into English as “ma'am” and into Italian as “vossignoria”; “vosselência” is actually the contracted form of “vossa excelência”, “your excellency”, a deference more fit for a high government official in a public capacity than for a plantation owner.

Other minor fluctuations are the very colloquial “nem sonhei”, “never even dreamt”, that both translators render with the more neutral “non avevo idea”, or “I had no idea”, and the use of “povo”, which, even if it translates as “people”, has a resonance closer to something like “commoners” or at least allows for such a reading; both translators choose “people” or “gente”.

The issue of the forms of treatment is an everlasting enigma for foreigners because of the sheer quantity of possibilities and the sometimes subtle differences and variations. In this instance, “vossignoria” can be considered close to the source text in terms of register, but the use of the subjunctive form “lavorassero” by the uneducated seller is unlikely (it is grammatically correct, but the use of the subjunctive is a telling social marker in Italian, and less educated people typically substitute it with an indicative form); on the other hand, “ma'am” would serve the purpose of conveying the respectful manner the merchant had adopted. It becomes less fitting a choice for the fact that, in McNeil's translation, it is the same expression the doctor uses when he tells Isilda about her son Rui's condition “A hereditary condition ma'am” (Antunes, 2011b: 28), in Portuguese “minha senhora” (Antunes, 1997a: 23); the one Carlos as a child uses to address his mother, calling her “senhora” (Antunes, 1997a: 61); and it was also the option to render the interactions of the servants with Isilda, namely Damião, announcing his departure, saying “patroa” in the original, which is feminine for “boss” (Antunes, 1997a: 92), and Maria da Boa Morte in Isilda's imagination, using “a senhora”, (Antunes, 1997a: 109), a very common use even today and between equals, of addressing the one you are talking to in the third person as if in their absence.

Rita Desti has this task made simpler by the conventions of the Italian language. Her choices are, respectively: “Un problema ereditario cara signora” (Antunes, 2002b: 21), in the doctor's words, “signora” (Antunes, 2002b: 59) in Carlos', “padrona” in Damião's (Antunes, 2002b: 89) and, in the case of Maria da Boa Morte's utterance, by adopting the respectful form of using the second person plural, instead of singular, to address Isilda, “voi” (Antunes, 2002b: 105).

The next piece (please see Table 9) is the opening of Clarisse's account, in which she recalls when she went to live in Portugal with their brothers after their life in Angola. The similarity with the opening of *Os Cus de Judas* is noticeable, mostly on the structure of the sentence, which echoes that opening line (“Do que eu gostava mais no Jardim Zoológico (...)”), but also on the kind of children's fantasy the narrator projects on her new home. To Clarisse, just arrived from Angola, the proletarian Ajuda

neighbourhood feels exotic, and she sees echoes of her colonial life all around her:

Quando voltei a Portugal do que gostei mais na Ajuda foi dos carros eléctricos e dos homens gordos que saltavam das plataformas em movimento da mesma maneira que os abutres pousam: desciam a planar do estribo de tronco para trás equilibrando-se nos braços abertos, davam uma corridita de passinhos curtos e juntavam-se a baloiçar a barriga, muito dignos, aos colegas na esplanada do café, atropelando-se em torno do cadáver de uma mesa, antílope de patas de metal e corpo de fórmica de que disputavam aos guinchos os pedaços de carne do dominó. Sempre que passava na avenida, de manhã e à tarde, encontrava-os instalados em ramos de cadeiras, de cabeça metida nos enchumaços dos ombros, pacientes e calvos, fitando-me com as pálpebras brancas à espera que eu morresse. Abaixo deles, na savana da praça, hienas de alunos da escola trotavam em círculo corcundas de mochilas, com o pêlo das samarras eriçado de frio e a baba das pastilhas elásticas a oscilar das mandíbulas, farejando os tabuleiros dos vendedores ambulantes, pulando de lado, rosnando-se alcunhas, sumindo-se na mata do jardim de onde se avistavam hipopótamos de barcos a acenderem os olhos no Tejo com a chegada da tarde, pacaças de guas que bebiam as ondas erguendo os chifres de ferro contra os morros de Almada, um bando de contentores a dormir no alcatrão de gaivotas passeando sobre eles, a catarem-lhes os parasitas da pele, os cachorros selvagens latiam toda a noite no bairro dos ciganos, o Rui queria trazer a espingarda de chumbinhos que ficara em África e procurá-los no escuro, o Damião, o Fernando, a Josélia e dois ou três cipaios sorriam da parede em que a Lena os pendurou, de órbitas ocas e lábios ocos
- Não mexas nas minhas máscaras Clarisse
(Antunes, 1997a: 269)

Italian translation by Rita Desti:

Quando tornai in Portogallo, ciò che piú mi piacque all'Ajuda furono i tram elettrici e i ciccioni che balzavano giú dalle piattaforme in movimento proprio come si posano gli avvoltoi: scendevano planando dal predellino col busto all'indietro tenendosi in equilibrio con le braccia aperte, facevano una corsetta a piccoli passi e raggiungevano con la pancia sbalanzolante, dignitosissimi, i colleghi nel bar all'aperto della piazza, affastellandosi in torno al cadavere di un tavolo, antilope dalle zampe di metallo e corpo di formica di cui si disputavano striduli i pezzi di carne del domino. Ogni volta che passavo nel viale, la mattina e il pomeriggio, li trovavo piazzati su rami di sedie, con la testa infilata nelle spalline, pazienti e calvi, che mi fissavano con le palpebre bianche in attesa che morissi. Sotto di loro, nella savana della piazza, iene di scolari trotavano in circolo ingobbiti dagli zaini, col pelo dei giacconi di pelle rizzato per il freddo e la bava delle gomme da masticare che oscillava sulle mandibole, fiutando i carrettini dei venditori ambulanti, saltellando, bofonchiandosi soprannomi, scomparendo nella foresta del giardino, da cui si avvistavano ippopotami di barche che accendevano gli occhi nel Tago con l'arrivo dell'imbrunire, bufali di gru che si abbeveravano nelle onde innalzando le corna di ferro contro le colline di Almada, una banda cassonetti che dormivano sull'asfalto con gabbiani che vi passeggiavano sopra, li spulciavano dei parassiti della pelle, i cani selvatici abbaivano tutta la notte nel quartiere degli zingari, Rui avrebbe voluto prendere il fucile a piombini che era rimasto in Africa e cacciarli nel buio, Damião, Fernando, Josélia e due o tre cipaios sorridevano dalla parete su cui Lena li aveva appesi, con le orbite vuote e le labbra vuote
- Non toccare le mie maschere Clarisse
(Antunes, 2002b: 267-268)

English translation by Rhett McNeil:

When I returned to Portugal the thing I liked best in Ajuda were the electric streetcars and the fat men who leap from the platform their movements identical to vultures when they land: they'd jump down, gliding along the running board with their torso leaning back, balancing with their outstretched arms, take a few quick, short steps, and then gather together with friends, bellies bouncing, very dignified, on the sidewalk outside the café, crowding together around the corpse of a table, an antelope with metal paws and a Formica body around which they quarreled amid shrieks over the scraps of meat that were dominoes. Every time I walked down the avenue, in the morning and the afternoon, I'd find them perched on branches, chairs, with their heads sunk down between their bulky shoulders, patient and bald, staring at me from under their white eyelids, waiting for me to die. Down below them, in the savanna of the town square, hyenas, schoolkids trotted in a circle, hunchbacked with their backpacks, with the fur on their coats bristling from the cold and drool from their gummy candy dangling from their jaws, sniffing around the street vendors' carts, jumping to one side, growling out nicknames, disappearing into the jungle, garden, where hippopotamuses, ships could be seen flashing their eyes in the Tagus as the afternoon began, forest buffaloes, mechanical cranes drinking in their wake, raising their iron horns against the backdrop of the hills of Almada a flock of shipping containers sleeping on the tarred decks with seagulls walking along their backs, picking parasites off their hides, wild dogs barking all night long in the gypsies' neighborhood, Rui wanted to bring the pellet gun that was left behind in Africa and hunt them down in the dark, Damião, Fernando, Josélia, and two or three native soldiers smiled from the wall where Lena had hung them up, with hollow eye sockets and hollow lips

"Don't mess with my masks Clarisse"

(Antunes, 2011b: 357-358)

The opening line "Quando voltei a Portugal do que gostei mais na Ajuda foi dos carros eléctricos" contains the expression "carros eléctricos", to refer to the trams; even if they are "electric cars", and were once known as such, they are most commonly referred to simply as "eléctricos"; the author's choice though led the translators to try and reproduce the effect; while in Portuguese "carro" can be any kind of car, the solutions found by both of the translators ("tram elettrici" and "electric streetcars") sound a little pleonastic, since "tram" (in Italy) and "streetcar" (in the United States) are the words used specifically for vehicles of public transportation that are powered by electricity and run on rails.

Then Clarisse starts the list of suggestive images that come to her mind, beginning with the memory "dos homens gordos que saltavam das plataformas em movimento da mesma maneira que os abutres pousam" ("of the fat men which jumped off the moving platforms in the same way as vultures land"); by lapse or by choice, McNeil starts by using a present tense for the verb "saltar" ("the fat men who leap from the platform their movements identical to vultures when they land"); Desti uses the past tense imperfect,

and the verb she chooses is “balzare” (“balzavano giù”, “jumped off”), less neutral than “saltare”, and she uses “ciccioni” for “fat men”. Lobo Antunes' expression is maybe equivocal: “saltavam das plataformas em movimento” most likely means that they jumped off the moving trams, and by “plataforma” he means “step”, that narrow horizontal surface that projects from the main body of the streetcar. In our interpretation, which coincides with Desti's (“piattaforme in movimento”), the platforms were moving; McNeil reads the movement as belonging to the fat men: “the fat men who leap from the platform their movements identical to vultures when they land”. Here, “identical to vultures when they land” translates “da mesma maneira que os abutres pousam” (“the same way in which vultures land”), an uncommon and slightly awkward phrasing (the more natural way to present this comparison would be either “como abutres que pousam”, “like vultures that land”, or “pousando como abutres”, “landing like vultures”), which Desti renders as “proprio come si posano gli avvoltoi” (“precisely as vultures land”).

Continuing to explore the flying imagery, the author writes “desciam a planar do estribo de tronco para trás equilibrando-se nos braços abertos” (“they would jump down from the trunk stirrup gliding their torsos tilted back balancing on their open arms”), which is rendered in Italian as “scendevano planando dal predellino col busto all'indietro tenendosi in equilibrio con le braccia aperte” and, in English, as “they'd jump down, gliding along the running board with their torso leaning back, balancing with their outstretched arms”. For this collection of Clarisse's memories of Ajuda, the author resorts several times to his way of using a possessive construction to convey comparison or metaphor. Here, “estribo de tronco” (as, shortly after, “ramos de cadeiras”, “savana da praça”, “pacaças de gruas”, etc.) serves the purpose of likening the tram's stirrup to the tree trunks (or, more accurately, “branches”, in Portuguese “ramos”; it seems likely that the author uses “tronco” for the stirrup to avoid repetition, since he will be using “ramos” for the chairs, shortly afterwards) from which the “vultures” would fly away. Curiously, both translators either ignore or oversee this first comparison, and write simply “running board” and “predellino” to translate “estribo”, foregoing the “tronco”. McNeil, however, reads the source text as if saying they glide on the platform, instead of off the platform, and writes “gliding along the running board”.

For “planar” they both choose the most obvious verb (“glide” and “planare”); regarding the Portuguese “de tronco para trás”, the Italian allows for a very similar construction “col busto all'indietro”, while English forces one to insert a verbal form: “their torso leaning back”. Similarly, the Portuguese form “equilibrando-se” corresponds

to a use which needs to be rendered in these target languages with different solutions: McNeil can use the same gerund form, with the difference that, in English, it is not used reflexively; Desti includes a different verb, and nominalises “balance”, thus writing “tenendosi in equilibrio” (roughly, “keeping balance”). The sentence continues by saying “e juntavam-se a baloiçar a barriga, muito dignos, aos colegas na esplanada do café” (respecting the word order, “and they would joint, swinging their bellies, very dignified, their colleagues on the café’s *esplanada*”). The Italian allows the same word order, which Desti maintains, while in English it would be stranger not to say “aos colegas” (“their colleagues”) immediately after “juntando-se” (“gather together” in McNeil’s translation); McNeils translates these “colleagues” as “friends”, since “colleagues” here is not very accurate. A problem arises with the word “esplanada”, for which neither language has an obvious equivalent⁹⁷; the translators hence resort to circumlocutions: McNeil writes “on the sidewalk outside the café”, and Desti “nel bar all’aperto della piazza” (“in the bar outside on the square”).

These men are said to “run over each other around the corpse of a table” (“atropelando-se em torno do cadáver de uma mesa”), reopening the author’s peculiar use of similes. The fact that they ran over each other (“atropelar” is the verb used in Portuguese to describe being run over by a car, but it is often used figuratively, as it is in this case) is rendered by McNeil with the neutral “crowding together”, and by Desti with the unusual “affastellandosi” (“bundling up”). The comparison of the table around which they gathered with the corpse of an animal is complemented by the image “antílope de patas de metal e corpo de fórmica”, which is rendered literally by both translators: “antilope dalle zampe di metallo e corpo di formica”, in Italian and “an antelope with metal paws and a Formica body”, in English⁹⁸. The sentence “disputavam aos guinchos os pedaços de carne do dominó” (“dispute screeching over the domino’s pieces of meat”) is rendered by Desti as “si disputavano striduli i pezzi di carne del domino”, which is rather literal, the only difficulty being to establish the precise meaning of “aos guinchos”, which is very close to the English “screeching”; the Italian “striduli” (“stridulous” or “shrill”) is close in meaning, but more refined in terms of register. McNeil, on his part, chooses “amid shrieks” for “aos guinchos”, and “quarreled” for “disputavam”, and he makes explicit the comparison in “os pedaços de carne do

⁹⁷ The Treccani online encyclopedia registers the word “dehors” as a neologism, as used in 19-06-2005 by the Torino newspaper *La stampa*.

⁹⁸ Detailing the table top is made of formica laminate is very characteristic of this author, who seems to be very fond of referring by name to these early thermosetting plastics; another personal favourite of his is bakelite – a reference which you may find elsewhere in this novel (Antunes, 1997b: 385), but also in many others: for instance in *Explicação dos Pássaros* (Antunes, 1981: 20), and several times in *As Naus* (Antunes, 1988: 63, 143, 165, 167, 226) or in *Fado Alexandrino* (Antunes, 1983: 49, 178, 206, 256, 349, 398, 429, 444, 469).

dominó”: “they quarreled amid shrieks over the scraps of meat that were dominoes”. Another small correction is performed by the American translator when, for the source text “fitando-me com as pálpebras brancas à espera que eu morresse” (“staring at me *with* their white eyelids waiting for me to die”), he translates “staring at me *from under* their white eyelids, waiting for me to die” (our emphasis), while Desti keeps the imprecision in the target text (“che mi fissavano con le palpebre bianche in attesa che morissi”).

Clarisse's description goes on to include more instances of this construction and, at this point, McNeil resorts to a solution he will use again. For the expression “ramos de cadeiras” (literally, “branches of chairs”) in the sentence “encontrava-os instalados em ramos de cadeiras” (“I would find them settled in branches of chairs”), the Italian translation uses the literal “rami di sedie”; the same operation, if performed in English, would risk incomprehension. McNeil thus decides to use both terms of the comparison as if it were an enumeration: “I’d find them perched on branches, chairs”; if the first instance of this mechanism may result uncomfortable, the repetition that will follow shortly after puts into perspective: isolated, it comes across as an odd formulation; reiterated, it is more easily perceived as a stylistic option.

In the sentence which begins “Abaixo deles, na savana da praça, hienas de alunos da escola trotavam em círculo” (“Below them, in the savanna of the square, hyenas of school students trotted in a circle”), we encounter this construction two times in a row (“corcundas de mochilas” is a different case). Desti repeats her strategy twice, using “savana della piazza” and “iene di scolari”; McNeil uses a possessive construction for the first instance, but resorts to his enumeration strategy for the second one: “in the savanna of the town square, hyenas, schoolkids trotted in a circle”.

The schoolkids are said to be “corcundas de mochilas”, which may be interpreted by “hunchbacked by their backpacks”, as Desti does in Italian (“ingobbiti dagli zaini”); but it may also be read as it was by McNeil, who chose the option “hunchbacked with their backpacks”. The comparison with wild animals continues by saying that the students would behave like them, “farejando os tabuleiros dos vendedores ambulantes, pulando de lado, rosnando-se alcunhas” (“sniffing the street vendors’ trays, jumping sideways, growling nicknames at each other”). Even though the source text says “trays” (“tabuleiros”), both translators chose to render it as “carts” (“carrettini” in Italian). The Portuguese verb “farejar” is used primarily for animals, typically for dogs, to describe how they are guided by their sense of smell (even though the metaphorical use is frequent). Desti uses the Italian “fiutare”, which has the same characteristics, while

McNeil has to resort to the more general “sniffing around”. The expression “saltando de lado” (“jumping sideways”) also enhances the impression of an animal behaviour, and is rendered in English with “jumping to one side”, and in Italian with “saltellando” (“hopping”); the choice of a verb with a different meaning suggests that the translator thought that “saltando di lato” (“jumping sideways” or “to the side”) would be less adequate in Italian. The comparison of the students with animals is condensed in the final element, in which they are said to “growl nicknames” at each other, combining a typically animal action with a typically human one. For this, McNeil chooses the neutral “growling out nicknames”, while Desti uses “bofonchiare” (“bofonchiandosi soprannomi”), whose meaning is between snorting and muttering, and corresponds to a more formal register.

The similes are resumed with expressions such as “na mata do jardim” (“the jungle of the garden”), “hipopótamos de barcos” (“hippopotamuses of ships”), and “pacaças de gruas” (“pacaças of cranes”). As we have seen before, “mata” is a word whose extension is very wide; it can indeed be interpreted more like “forest”, as does Desti (“nella foresta del giardino”) or more like “jungle”, as does Mc Neil “into the jungle, garden” reusing his enumeration solution, as he will with the following segment, translating “hipopótamos de barcos” (in Italian “ippopotami di barche”) with “hippopotamuses, ships”, who are said to “acenderem os olhos no Tejo com a chegada da tarde” (“light up their eyes in the Tejo with the arrival of the afternoon”). For this, McNeil translates “flashing their eyes in the Tagus as the afternoon began”, choosing “flashing” instead of “lighting up”, and keeping the unlikely “afternoon” (“tarde”) of the source text, when “evening” would perhaps make more sense; Desti introduces this correction, by writing “imbrunire” (“nightfall”, typically literary) instead of the literal for “tarde”, which would be “pomeriggio” (“afternoon”).

“Pacaça” is the name given in Angola to a kind of small African buffalo that is native to Central Africa⁹⁹; Desti uses the more general “bufali”, and McNeal the precise “forest buffaloes”; hence the syntagm becomes “bufali di gru” (“buffaloes of cranes”) in Italian, and “forest buffaloes, mechanical cranes”, in English, since in this context the word “crane” might have evoked the bird, if not for this specification. These forest buffaloes “bebiam as ondas erguendo os chifres de ferro contra os morros de Almada” (“drank the waves lifting their iron horns against the Almada hills”); Desti renders literally “contro le colline di Almada”, while McNeil interprets it as “against the backdrop of the hills of Almada”; for the neutrally formulated “bebiam as ondas”, both use a more

⁹⁹ African forest buffalo (*Syncerus caffer nanus*), also known as the dwarf buffalo or the Congo buffalo, is the smallest subspecies of the African buffalo.

literary vocabulary: Desti chooses “si abbeveravano nelle onde” (in which “abbeveravano” is what animals do in written stories), while McNeil opts for “drinking in their wake”.

In order to translate “um bando de contentores a dormir no alcatrão de gaivotas passeando sobre eles” McNeil writes “a flock of shipping containers”, while Desti mistakes the later for “cassonetti” (“dumpsters” or “waste containers”). The remainder of this sentence may be read as “sleeping on the tar, seagulls strolling over them”, as Desti did (“con gabbiani che vi passeggiavano sopra”); McNeil thinks the tar is that of decks, and says so specifically, and imagines a very physical proximity of the gulls that “stroll” over the containers (the Portuguese “sobre eles” is less specific, and can mean “on”, “over”, or “above”), an image which is conveyed by his translation “sleeping on the tarred decks with seagulls walking along their backs”. McNeil has a point here, since the next utterance is “a catarem-lhes os parasitas da pele” (“picking parasites off their skin”, “li spulciavano dei parassiti della pelle” in Italian), or as McNeil writes, “picking parasites off their hides”.

Clarisse then mentions her brother Rui and his violent tendencies: she recalls how “os cachorros selvagens latiam toda a noite no bairro dos ciganos” (“wild dogs barked all night in the gypsies’ neighborhood”), a past tense imperfect that McNeil decides to render with a gerund (“barking” instead of “barked”), giving this clause a sense of continuity (“wild dogs barking all night long in the gypsies’ neighborhood”); Desti, in Italian, keeps the past tense imperfect (“abbaivavano”). Against the threat posed by these “wild dogs”, “o Rui queria trazer a espingarda de chumbinhos que ficara em África e procurá-los no escuro”; the Portuguese “procurar” would be “to look for”, but both translators choose the correspondent to the Portuguese “caçar”, “cacciare” in Italian, “to hunt down” in English: “Rui wanted to bring the pellet gun that was left behind in Africa and hunt them down in the dark”.

Finally, she likens Lena's African masks with the servants and the people they had crossed paths with back in Angola: “o Damião, o Fernando, a Josélia e dois ou três cipaios sorriam da parede em que a Lena os pendurou, de órbitas ocas e lábios ocos” (“Damião, Fernando, Josélia, and two or three *cipaios* smiled from the wall where Lena had hung them, with hollow eye sockets and hollow lips”); the word *cipaio* is typical of the colonial society, and means, like McNeil chooses to explicitate, “native soldiers”; Desti leaves the word “cipaios” untranslated, marking the fact that it is a foreign word with the use of italics.

We have commented on how McNeil's translations of direct speech are often less

bold than the source text but, in this case, his solution is actually less neutral. He translates “Não mexas nas minhas máscaras Clarisse” with “Don’t mess with my masks Clarisse”; Desti uses “Non toccare le mie maschere Clarisse” (“Don’t touch my masks Clarisse”). The verb “tocar”, in Portuguese, means “to touch, even lightly”, while “mexer” is more general; in this sense, “tocar” would be stronger than what Lobo Antunes used. But neither Italian nor English have an equivalent of this use of “mexer”.

In conclusion, these two are all in all adequate translations. The main difficulty for the translators of this work, professional and proficient as they might be, may be the sheer dimension of it: oversights are inevitable, and the more the book is long, more likely they are to occur; Lobo Antunes' writing style, with long, run-on sentences that often are interrupted by other sentences or those lines the author is, at this point of his career, using as themes, subject to repetition and variation, do not make the task easier.

In both renditions the tendency is to neutralize, often imperceptibly, other times more blatantly, the author's flamboyant – and quirky – style; this is due, in some instances, to lack of inspiration; but, in others, certainly by the limits of the target languages. Rita Desti has a very mature prose, and reacts very well to the athletic demands of Lobo Antunes' style, at the time of the writing of *O Esplendor de Portugal*. McNeil is resourceful with the literary register, but has a weak spot in colloquialism: his renditions of direct speech are often uninspired and less scathing than the original. Desti, with her very sober vocabulary and syntax, is surprisingly limber in that regard. They both have a series of mishaps, but they may be more than justified both by the absolute volume of material, and by all the accomplished solutions they managed to adopt.

Discussion

The analysis we have undertaken in this last section sought to gather material with which to reflect on the issues concerning the translations of António Lobo Antunes' texts. By way of conclusion, we have organised the main theoretical questions around a double axis: (1) Foreignization vs Domestication and (2) Translatability and Internationalisation.

Foreignization vs Domestication

Even if this dichotomy became particularly notable after the intervention of Lawrence Venuti, who famously argued against a practice of domestication he saw as “ethnocentric violence” (Venuti, 1995: 20), it echoes an old distinction – one which voices the awareness, self-evident in most western thinking on translation, that we are dealing with two poles.

In 1763, Jean d’Alembert offered his opinion on the subject:

The way foreigners speak [French] is the model for a good translation. The original should speak our language not with the superstitious caution we have for our native tongue, but with a noble freedom that allows features of one language to be borrowed in order to embellish another. Done in this way, a translation may possess all the qualities that make it commendable – a natural and easy manner, marked by the genius of the original and alongside that the added flavor of a homeland created by its foreign coloring. (d’Alembert *apud* Bellos, 2011: 41, his translation)

What d’Alembert is suggesting here is that in order for it to be “good”, a translation needs to strike a balance between two contending forces, the ones we might call foreignization and domestication: it should use the target language not with “superstitious caution”, but with a “noble freedom” which, to his mind, allows for a commerce in which both parts have to gain. With this, d’Alembert seems to be

suggesting the use of loan words, or calques, or both – however, without forsaking what Venuti (1995) calls “fluency”, “a natural and easy manner”. In a time in which cultivated people were proficient in French, d’Alembert’s claim is that a good translation should sound like them: educated, but with the added value of carrying with it a specific difference; quality and literary value are condensed in his expression “marked by the genius of the original”; and, finally, what we would consider to be the reason for translating foreign literature into one’s language: “the added flavor of a homeland created by its foreign coloring”.

The question of *realia*, which we brushed on section II of this work, and which we consider a staple of Lobo Antunes’ (and particularly the first Lobo Antunes’) prose, is linked to this quality of “coloring” invoked by d’Alembert.

“Local colour” is an expression that has been used to refer to a genre, also known as American Regionalism. While indebted to the literary tradition of 19th century realism, it emphasizes its setting, through the depiction of customs, dialect, landscape, etc.; tinged with a taste for the exotic similar to the one we find in romanticism, these authors’ interest in challenging more standardizing cultural influences is usually embodied in a depiction not of foreign but of domestic and very local realities. The expression “Local Color Literature” has been applied, more narrowly, to the production of a group of authors (many of whom female) who were active after the American Civil War, like Kate Chopin or Harriet Beecher Stowe; but it is often used so as to include the works of authors like Harper Lee, Eudora Welty, or William Faulkner, whose prose is very much steeped in Southern landscapes and events¹⁰⁰.

Lobo Antunes’ prose is often compared to that of Faulkner, mostly for reasons related to their use of the stream of consciousness; but another important affinity is the way both writers use local features “to forge levels of psychological characterization, thematic complexity and formal innovation” (Kalaidjian, 2005: 9) that are typical of literary modernism. Lobo Antunes’ resort to local references, popular register, vernacular, and other characteristics of direct speech plays a pivotal role in his style, and it materialises variety – a variety which can be seen in terms of style, and that earned the author the epithet of polyphonic; but it is also a way to give voice to different aspects and layers of Portuguese society – sometimes in terms of gender, seldom in terms of race, and almost always in terms of class.

About Faulkner, Albert Murray writes:

¹⁰⁰ The fact that the label is not clear is discussed by John Duvall, who dedicates one study to the subject: “Regionalism presents its own definitional problems. For much of its history, the term was synonymous with the phrase, “writers of local color,” a designation frequently used to devalue women writers by signaling that they were of only regional, not national, importance”. (Duvall, 2005: 243)

William Faulkner's stylization of the idiomatic particulars of the Deep South is very much a part of what impressed me about his fiction from the very outset. Moreover, even then it was not simply a matter of regional or provincial atmosphere or local color, not as such. Even then there was something about it that had the effect of transforming all too familiar everyday downhome environmental and demographic details into the stuff of poetry, the stuff that the so-called avant-garde poetry of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, e.e. cummings, Marianne Moore, and Robinson Jeffers, among others, was made of. (Murray, 2001: 1132)

This reflection on Faulkner could be applied to Lobo Antunes as well, provided that where it says "Deep South" one would read "rural Portugal", "Lisbonese bourgeoisie", or "Angolan outpost". In settings that reproduce those of his personal experience, the Portuguese writer creates the conditions to muse on the human condition through his portraits of local characters. The reason why we raise this question is because of how it relates to translation and, above all, to the internationalization of literature. And the questions of local culture and references resonate in an entirely different way depending on how central is the culture in question. Even those which are seen as peripheral (or "regional") North American realities are far more recognizable to an international readership than the most central of Portuguese references.

Salazar's rule and his name are known to many; yet, the fact that Elisabeth Lowe decided to insert an explicative interpolation in her translation of *Os Cus de Judas* suggests that it was considered necessary or adequate, at least for the Random House readers in 1983. Years later, Margaret Jull Costa, while translating the same book, decided it needed no explanation; even if she included several footnotes, Salazar and PIDE were not among the references she felt needed clarification.

Salazar is arguably one of the more recognizable names of Portugal's recent history. Other famous names from Portuguese history are even less familiar to international audiences, either because they belong to a more distant period in time (like Mestre de Avis or Nuno Álvares Pereira) or they are perceived as less central (like Marcello Caetano or Salgueiro Maia), and hence have been given less attention by media outlets. And yet, if the battle of Aljubarrota is known only to specialists, the battle of the Alamo "was a history lesson delivered by John Wayne on the screen" (Trouillot, 1995: 21). The settings of Lobo Antunes' works may sometimes be familiar to international audiences: the Tejo estuary near Belém from the beginning of *As Naus* may resonate with some; but it is hardly comparable to the way in which Mark Twain's Mississippi entered our imaginaries.

One could say that two sets of issues are intertwined in these considerations. On the one hand, there is the more obvious question of how a particular work is translated

in a given target context. On the other hand, this matter overlaps with another, and more subtle one, which has to do with the way literary works are perceived differently around the world – and here translation may not even be a part of the equation; books written in English may be perceived as foreign in the United States because they refer to an Indian or British reality. Conversely, a novel set in the United States may be perceived as very familiar, even in translation, by readers in Europe or across the globe, given the pervasiveness of American culture. Such is the power of cultural hegemony. Its implications on the translation of literature are self-evident: the first and most visible implication is the small number of translations that central cultures yield.

Translatability and Internationalisation

If translatability is an issue, it is because it suggests the possibility of its opposite, the idea of untranslatability. Robert Frost famously suggested that poetry “gets lost in translation”, prompting an exasperated reaction by Bassnett and Lefevere:

And there is a great deal of nonsense written about poetry and translation too, of which probably the best known is Robert Frost's immensely silly remark that 'poetry is what gets lost in translation', which implies that poetry is something intangible, ineffable thing which, although constructed in language, cannot be transposed across languages. (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1998: 57)

Their aggravation may have more to do with the use it has been made of Frost's words than with his actual formulation and opinion, which reflected more his idea of poetry than his views on translation. His actual words were: “I like to say, guardedly, that I could define poetry this way: it is that which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation” (Frost, 1961: 7). Our purpose here is less to defend Frost than to comment on how ideas circulate and sediment. And this idea of loss is pervasive in debates on translation. Emily Apter warns us against what she considers one of the “primal truisms of translation”, or this idea that “something is always lost in translation” (Apter in Bermann and Wood, 2005: 159):

When one operates under this postulation of loss, translation becomes synonymous with an act of compensation that is bound to fall short of the original. This idea of loss in translation, however, is itself problematic. Loss assumes a prior presence or possession; the underlying assumption is that there is an original that is secure, inviolable, and immutable. Poetry, however, is not transparent, and the original, or its interpretation, remains amorphous; even when reading a poem in its original language, readers arrive at a wide array of different interpretations, albeit

within the range of what the evidence bears. (Komura, 2019: 201-202)

We would like to suggest that what can be said about poetry can also be said about any text with elevated semantic density, multiple and complex reference, and a high presence of connotation. We may say that every text is open to interpretation, and to multiple interpretations; and the less its language is used denotatively, the less “transparent” (to use Komura's word) it becomes.

Literary language is thus language that either gains or loses in translation, in contrast to nonliterary language, which typically does neither. The balance of credit and loss remains a distinguishing mark of national versus world literature: literature stays within its national or regional tradition when it usually loses in translation, whereas works become world literature when they gain or balance in translation, stylistic losses offset by an expansion in depth as they increase their range, as it is the case with such disparate works as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and *Dictionary of the Khazars*. (Damrosch, 2003: 289)

Written in the context of a reflection on translation and the circulation of literature, Damrosch's formulation is more complete and more nuanced than Robert Frost's. It must be read in the framework of the theorisations on the subject carried out by Damrosch, for whom world literature has more to do with the approach of the reader than with the intrinsic characteristics of the texts: “World literature is not a set canon of texts but a mode of reading: a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time” (Damrosch, 2003: 289).

Applied to Lobo Antunes' textual production, the question then would be how is it possible to read him out of his context. A question we have tried to answer is how translators read him, or specifically how these translators did in these particular translations. We consider that Lobo Antunes' prose is suffused with a significant amount of local references, and we are not alone in this opinion: Marianne Eyre keeps a map close by when she is translating Lobo Antunes (Cabral et al., 2003: 393); Richard Zenith describes the reality depicted in the author's novels as “portuguesíssima”, “extremely Portuguese” (Cabral et al., 2003: 397). And yet this is one of the most translated Portuguese authors.

If there is a readership which engages with Lobo Antunes' prose, in spite of lacking the knowledge and experience of the realities he is describing, it is because there is potential for other, non-local readings of his work. One could then say that there is a regional experience of Lobo Antunes, but there is also an international one, and neither is homogeneous. Even in the context of the same language and even concerning the same novel, as we have seen, there can be multiple refractions of this author's work.

Two of those potential readings have been embodied in the two translations of *Os Cus de Judas*. This is one rare example of commensurability, since they depart from the same source text. But there are multiple points of contact, both in terms of content and in terms of style, in his written production. The translators whose work we have examined have different approaches, sensitivities and experiences, and were working in varied circumstances.

In the words of Pascale Casanova (2004), in order for an author to achieve consecration there needs to be a process she calls *littérisation* (a word her translator DeBevoise decided to leave in French in the English version):

I define *littérisation* as any operation – translation, self-translation, transcription, direct composition in the dominant language – by means of which a text from a literarily deprived country comes to be regarded as literary by the legitimate authorities. No matter the language in which they are written, these texts must in one fashion or another be translated if they are to obtain a certificate of literariness. (Casanova, 2004: 136)

Her formulation, according to which texts have to be translated “in one fashion or another”, suggests that what is at stake is not strictly linguistic (as it becomes evident with her analysis of Irish literature written in English). Casanova's career was marked by the constant presence of the question of linguistic domination. Her 1999 work *La République mondiale des lettres*¹⁰¹ is a comprehensive characterisation of what she calls the international literary field, including a detailed analysis of the power relations that characterise it. She dedicates much of the work to explain the dynamics of the accumulation and transfer of cultural capital. Given the inequality between cultures in the international literary field, there is, to her mind, the need for weaker languages and cultures to be legitimised by the international instances of consecration.

Writers from languages that are not recognized (or are recognized only to a small degree) as literary are not immediately eligible for consecration. The condition of their works' being received into the literary world is translation into a major literary language. For translation is not simply a form of naturalization (in the sense of exchanging one nationality for another), or the passage from one language to another; it is, much more specifically, a *littérisation*. (Casanova, 2004: 135)

Casanova conceives translation, and most notably translation into more central languages, as the very process by which works of literature access this status of literary objects, and are accepted to that World Republic of Letters. To go back to Lefevere's lexicon, they need to be sanctioned by the institutions which hold the power

¹⁰¹ We have used the English translation by DeBevoise (Casanova, 2004).

to enforce the dominant poetics and ideology (Lefevere, 1990, 1992). The school of Descriptive Translation Studies (also known as the Manipulation School) conceives translation as a form of mediation which is strongly constrained by the norms and values of the target culture (Toury, 1995). The translations we have analysed are thus products of each translator's individual circumstances, no doubt, but always under a set of conditions that are systemic. And the vast majority of translation choices (occasional and actual mistakes notwithstanding) must be read according to this grid:

It is extremely important that the shifts in the translation not be regarded dismissively as errors in need of correction. They show, rather, that the translator has applied his own interpretants in translating the novel, a concept of equivalence (the degree of formal and semantic correspondence permitted by linguistic differences) and a fictional discourse (a naturalism that befits criminality), and these choices result in a nuanced interpretation. To treat a specific verbal choice as incorrect without careful examination of the context risks the unwitting assumption of a different interpretation as a standard of evaluation. This move is questionable because no translation can reproduce a source text with completeness and precision or without a gain of translating-language form and meaning. Worse, it deprives the translator of the right to interpret the source text for audiences in the receiving situation. (Venuti, 2013: 191)

V – Closing Remarks

This work endeavoured to contribute to a history of Portuguese literature in translation, looking into the internationalization of one of its most prominent epitomes. For that purpose, we have concentrated in two of the systems in which Lobo Antunes' work is present. Before describing the circumstances in which his novels came to be a part of those systems, we have tried to briefly characterise both of them. We have assessed the conditions in which the translations were carried out and then looked closely into the translated texts themselves, trying to isolate common traits. Part II sets forth the principles that underlie both the textual analysis of Part IV and the inquiry made on Part III on the circumstances surrounding them.

As we have seen on Part III, the very fact that a work is selected to be translated is seen as an instance of consecration, and thus valued accordingly. The more central the target system in question, the more prestigious this operation appears from the point of view of the source system. With a system as peripheral as the Portuguese, any translation is easily perceived as a *prize*, to use Casanova's word (Casanova, 2004: 133). As a consequence, editorial collocation is not a priority for most Portuguese authors, insofar as the importance of having a book translated into a more central language overcomes the possibility that it may not be very fortunate in terms of distribution or visibility.

This was not the case with the works of Lobo Antunes who has been very well received from the beginning of his career, namely by the foreign systems we analyse in this work: first in the United States, with Random House, and soon after with their British partner Chatto & Windus, Lobo Antunes was off to a very good start in the context of English language; similarly, in Italy, his debut was under the very prestigious Mondadori label. As time went by, his publishers changed, in both of the contexts we have studied, but the fact that stands is that his presence abroad his marked by relationships to very strong institutions of both systems.

One of the most remarkable facts that stemmed from our enquiry has to do precisely with the way this author's editorial collocation has evolved in the context of English language: we would not go so far as to say that it lost prestige, even if his work has gone from a giant of the book trade to more specialised labels. Quite on the contrary, one could say that the trajectory corresponds to a progressive *elitization*: as the

author's image loses in prospective sales potential, it accumulates cultural capital.

As we have seen, Lobo Antunes gets published in English as early as 1983, when it was indeed rare for a Portuguese author to be published in the United States, and by none other than New York's Random House, an epitome of the large-scale circuit. After a hiatus, the publication of English translations is resumed with the participation of very prestigious translators (such as Gregory Rabassa), for very prestigious but more specialized labels: first the independent Grove Press, and later the non-profit Dalkey Archive Press. In a parallel motion, his works began being published by W. W. Norton and, as we have seen, there has been an isolated yet telling instance of being published by the Yale University Press. All these elements point towards a framework in which Lobo Antunes as an author has not only gone from the large-scale to the small-scale circuit, but has done so by moving growingly closer to the academia: the one book published by Yale University Press seems to have been an isolated event, but both Norton and Dalkey Archive, each one in its own way, have their connections to scholarly environments.

In Italy, on the other hand, the late penetration of the author's work gave way to a very solid editorial collocation, with his name being linked first to Einaudi and later to Feltrinelli. They are both large-scale, and extremely prestigious, the difference being that Einaudi is arguably slightly more high-brow and Feltrinelli slightly more popular, with a particularly strong investment in paperback and economic editions. In that sense, we can say that the parable we have seen in the English-speaking system was not reproduced in this one; it has, if at all, been the other way around, although one has to concede that the difference is subtle.

A look into the names of the authors who, over the years, have translated Lobo Antunes into English and Italian reveals a similar tendency: that they mostly come from an academic background. We have looked into seven translations, with seven different translators, and among these there are but two who are not scholars (Rita Desti and Margaret Jull Costa). Our corpus selection includes all of the Italian translators of this author (there have been only three, and Vittoria Martinetto finally became his only translator into her language). This is not the case with translations into English, which have been ensured, over the years, by a pool of translators that is still growing: with the four translations we have studied, we have four different translators; yet, the list goes on. After the initial translation by Elisabeth Lowe (and it is interesting to note how, in both systems, the translator of the first work authors only that one translation of Lobo Antunes), there has been a period in which translations were carried out, in turns, by

Gregory Rabassa and Richard Zenith; but after that, we can observe, on the one hand, the constant presence of Margaret Jull Costa for the Norton translations of this author, while in the United States Lobo Antunes has been translated by four other translators (among which McNeil, whom we have studied here) in recent years.

One of the most significant discoveries we have made in the course of this research was that of the characteristics of the first translation of *Os Cus de Judas* – indeed, the first translation of Lobo Antunes to be ever made. The fact that a new translation was made suggested that there could be a perceived need to readdress the same source text, once the circumstances of the author and his status had changed so profoundly, but it was stunning to discern just how much the text of that first translation had been edited. This is something that happens in no other translation of the author – not in the ones we have scrutinized and not, as far as we could establish, in any other – even though in all of them there is the occasional omission, most likely deliberate, and there is what seems to be an accidental omission of a long section of text in the Italian translation of *Os Cus de Judas*, this is the only instance of this kind of intervention.

Elisabeth Lowe's translation, which seems careful and backed-up by a conscious strategy throughout, has left out of the target text a considerable amount of source text material. Unlike the page or couple of pages of missing source text in the Italian *In culo al mondo*, this discrepancy between target and source text is not an isolated event, but seems rather to correspond to a careful plan, and it consists of the systematic and repeated removal of several sentences or pieces of sentences – sometimes secondary clauses, sometimes more complete textual units.

This kind of intervention illustrates the status of the author and of translation in the target system. At least at a given time, it was considered adequate for Lobo Antunes to be published by the Random House in a very heavily edited translation. This circumstance reflects the relative perceived prestige of the source text as such vis-à-vis its target context. One relevant issue that should be kept in mind is that the publisher in question was a large-scale one, with a very clear commercial purpose. The fact that a retranslation was demanded or at least strongly encouraged by the author's agent testifies to the change in the author's status and contractual power, at least vis-à-vis that particular target context, but one cannot help but wonder what kind of translation it would have been, had it been done by an independent publisher.

Another line of inquiry which relates to this one but which we could not, for lack of time, pursue in the context of this research, would be that of the history of such editorial practice, namely in the system in question. We have no data whatsoever on the

frequency with which this occurred, or the timeframe or editorial milieu in which it was more likely to be encountered, but we know how, until very recently, it was common practice to exclude from translations into Portuguese whatever material was considered expendable or incompatible with editorial requirements of space: we are not referring here to the recurring and widely studied action of censorship which, usually for ideological reasons, forced the maiming of literary and other works, namely – but not exclusively – during the dictatorship; the links between dictatorship and censorship have been largely documented, but the censorship that has been dictated by commercial or strategic reasons, and which mostly has to do with book size and production costs is often ignored and very seldom discussed.

The fact that what we suppose to be an oversight of the first Italian translation of Lobo Antunes has never been corrected – in spite of the multiple republications and reprints this translation has had over the years, and with a change of publisher along the way – is to our mind an indication both of the editorial standards of the publishers in question, and of how the Italian system is perceived, since a lapse in an Italian translation does not seem to entail the same need for reparation as that required by the first English translation.

Our textual analysis of the translations has yielded results that are hardly quantifiable, at least with the tools we have used. Comparing source texts with their target counterparts has illuminated many individual cases and a few general tendencies. Aside from the expected tendency towards explicitation and neutralization that seems to be one of the defining features of translation as such, we do acknowledge an effort to reproduce the author's experimental, verbose and unconventional style. More light on this subject could be shed had we pursued a different line of inquiry – for instance, one which compared translations of this author with those of other authors who are also perceived as experimental or innovative; if a platform of commensurability could be found for such an analysis, we could assert just how much latitude the translators of Lobo Antunes are allowed or allow themselves when compared to authors from other systems – for instance, James Joyce or Carlo Emilio Gadda.

One of the few elements that are common to all the translations we have considered is the absence of Bantu words in the target text: the presence of foreign words in a source text is sometimes dealt with by strategies of maintenance; this is never the case with Bantu words in Lobo Antunes' source text (with the obvious exception of toponyms, which fall into a category of their own), which is probably a symptom of how

the perceived alterity of these words is different in the context of Portuguese and that of other countries, with a different colonial history.

The examination of the translated texts revealed no discernible trends that are more prevalent in one language than the other, but one element that stood out was the fact that, contrarily to what one might have expected, the hegemonic system of English language does not seem to yield more domesticating translations. If at all, it is the Italian system the one that shows more adherence to an orthodoxy of language, if not of style. The impression given by these samples is that, marginal as it is, translation in English is a place of great creative freedom, especially when compared to the more conservative choices of the Italian translations of our corpus.

With our analysis, limited in scope as it has been, we hope to have contributed, if nothing else, to entice scholars and draw their attention to the unusually rich and challenging corpus we have at our disposal, with Lobo Antunes' novels and their translations.

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Table 1

Lobo Antunes	Maria José Lancastrre	Elisabeth Lowe	Margaret Jull Costa
Do que eu gostava mais no Jardim Zoológico era do rinque de patinagem sob as árvores	Quello che più mi piaceva allo zoo era la pista era la pista di pattinaggio sotto gli alberi,	What I liked most about the zoo was the roller-skating rink shaded by trees,	The thing I liked best about the zoo was the roller-skating rink under the trees
e do professor preto muito direito	e il professore negro bello e dritto	and the erect black professor	and the very upright black instructor
a deslizar para trás no cimento em elipses vagarosas sem mover um músculo sequer,	che scivolava all'indietro sul cemento in ellissi lente senza muovere neanche un muscolo,	gliding backwards, effortlessly, tracing lazy ellipses,	describing slow ellipses as he glided effortlessly backward over the concrete surface,
rodeado de meninas de saias curtas e botas brancas, que, se falassem,	circondato da bambine dalle gonne corte e dagli stivaletti bianchi che, se avessero parlato,	all the while surrounded by girls in short skirts and white boots.	surrounded by girls in short skirts and white boots, who, if they spoke,
possuíam seguramente vozes tão de gaze como as que nos aeroportos anunciam a partida dos aviões,	di sicuro avrebbero rivelato voci di tulle come quelle che negli aeroporti annunciano la partenza degli aerei,		doubtless did so in the same gauzy tones as those voices you hear at airports announcing the departure of planes,
sílabas de algodão que se dissolvem nos ouvidos à maneira de fins de rebuçado na concha da língua.	sillabe di cotone che si dissolvono negli orecchi come lische di caramella nella conchiglia del palato.		cotton syllables that dissolve in the ear just as the remnants of a piece of candy do on the curled shell of the tongue.
Não sei se lhe parece idiota o que vou dizer mas aos domingos de manhã,	Non so se quello che sto per dirle le sembrerà una cazzata ma la domenica mattina,	I don't know if this will sound idiotic to you,	I know it may sound idiotic, but on Sunday mornings,
quando nós lá íamos com o meu pai, os bichos eram mais bichos,	quando ci andavamo com mio padre, gli animali erano più animali,	but when we used to go to the zoo in Sunday mornings with my father, the animals showed themselves for what they were:	when we used to visit the zoo with my father, the animals seemed more real somehow,
a solidão de esparguete da girafa assemelhava-se à de um Gulliver triste,	la solitudine da spaghetti della giraffa assomigliava a quella di un Gulliver triste,	the giraffe, in his lofty solitude, had the dimensions of a sad Gulliver;	the lofty long-drawn-out solitude of the giraffe resembled that of a glum Gulliver,
e das lápides do cemitério dos cães subiam de tempos a tempos latidos aflitos de caniche.	e dalle tombe del cimitero dei cani venivano fuori ogni tanto dei guaiti infelici di barboncino.	The frantic bark of poodles occasionally filtered up around tombstones in the dog cemetery.	and from the headstones in the dark cemetery there arose, from time to time, the mournful howls of poodles.

Lobo Antunes	Maria José Lancastre	Elisabeth Lowe	Margaret Jull Costa
Cheirava aos corredores do Coliseu ao ar livre,	L'odore era quello dei corridoi all'aria aperta del Coliseu, il circo d'inverno,	smelled like the open-air galleries of the Coliseum.	The zoo had a whiff about it like the open-air passage ways in the Coliseu concert hall,
cheios de esquisitos pássaros inventados em gaiolas de rede,	pieni di strambi uccelli inventati, in gabbie di rete,	The aviary, full of strange, fantastic birds,	a place full of strange invented birds in cages,
avestruzes idênticas a professoras de ginástica solteiras,	struzzi simili a professoresse di ginnastica zitelle,	the ostriches resembled spinster gym teachers;	ostriches that looked just like spinster gym teachers,
pinguins trôpegos de joanetes de contínuo,	pinguini gottosi com l'andatura di vecchi bidelli coi calli ai piedi,	the penguins waddled like office boys with bunions;	waddling penguins like messenger boys with bunions,
catatuas de cabeça à banda como apreciadores de quadros;	cacatoa com la testa inclinata come visitatori di musei;	the cockatoos tilted their heads to one side like viewers in a museum;	and cockatoos with their heads on one side like connoisseurs of paintings;
no tanque dos hipopótamos inchava a lenta tranquilidade dos gordos,	nella vasca degli ippopotami lievitava la lenta tranquillità della grassezza,	the hippopotamus was swollen with slow, obese calm;	the hippopotamus pool exuded the languid sloth of the obese,
as cobras enrolavam-se em espirais moles de cagalhão,	i serpenti si attorcigliavano in molli spirali stronzesche,	the snakes squirmed in soft spirals that looked like mounds of shit;	cobras lay coiled in soft dungy spirals,
e os crocodilos acomodavam-se sem custo ao seu destino terciário de lagartixas patibulares.	e i coccodrilli si abbandonavano com naturalezza al loro destino terziario di lucertole patibolari.	and the crocodiles, Tertiary lizards, easily accommodated themselves to their destiny of imprisonment.	and the crocodiles seemed reconciled to their Tertiary-age fate as mere lizards on death row.

Table 2

Lobo Antunes	Maria José Lancastre	Elisabeth Lowe	Margaret Jull Costa
Deixe-me pagar a conta. Não, a sério, deixe-me pagar a conta	Permetta che il conto lo paghi io. No, davvero, mi lasci pagare,	Let me pay the bill. No, seriously, let me pay the bill	Let me pay the bill. No, seriously, let me pay
e tome-me pelo jovem tecnocrata ideal português 79,	e mi consideri il giovane tecnocrate portoghese ideale del 1979,	so you can take me for the ideal Portuguese '79 technocrat	and pretend to be the ideal young Portuguese technocrat, circa 1979,
inteligência tipo Expresso,	intelligenza livello settimanale "Expresso",	with the café-society intelligence,	someone with the intelligence of the average <i>Expresso</i> reader,
isto é, mundana, superficial e inofensiva,	vale a dire mondana, superficiale e inoffensiva,	that is, mundane, superficial and inoffensive,	namely, materialistic, superficial and inoffensive,
cultura género Cadernos Dom Quixote,	cultura livello "Cadernos Dom Quixote",		with a taste for the kind of books published by, say, Cadernos Dom Quixote,
ou seja, prolixa, esquisita e fininha,	vale a dire prolissa, contorta e snobbina,	garrulous, strange and slight.	wordy, weird and rather superficial,
opção política Fox-Trot, Pedras d'El Rei e Casa da Comida,	scelte politiche fox-trot, bianco seco d.o.c. e ristorante <i>à la page</i> ,		the politics of swish bars, restaurants and resorts,
uma gravura de Pomar, uma escultura de Cutileiro	un disegno di Pomar, una scultura di Cutileiro		someone who would have in his apartment an etching by Júlio Pomar, a sculpture by João Cutileiro,
e um gramofone de campânula no apartamento,	e un grammofono di tromba fra le pareti di casa,		and an old-fashioned phonograph,
mantendo uma relação emancipada, sinuosa e repleta de curtos-circuitos tempestuosos com uma arquitecta paisagista,	una storia sentimentale emancipata tutta curve e cortocircuiti tempestosi, lei un'architetta di giardini	I maintain an open, often tempestuous relationship with a landscape architect	someone enjoying an emancipated, tortuous relationship full of stormy short circuits with a landscape gardener,
ao deixar à noite as lentes de contacto no cinzeiro, perde com esse strip-tease de dioptrias	che la sera, nel lasciare le lenti a contatto nel portacenere, con il suo strip-tease ottico perde	who, when she removes her contact lenses and puts them in the ashtray at night, loses with that striptease of diopters	who, when she performs the dioptric striptease of taking out her contact lenses and placing them in the ashtray, loses
o encanto brumoso do olhar das atrizes americanas de Nicholas Ray,	l'incanto nebbioso degli occhi delle attrici americane di Nicholas Ray	her smoky charm derived from Nicholas Ray's American actresses	the fuzzily charming gaze of those American actresses who appear in Nicholas Ray movies

Lobo Antunes	Maria José Lancastre	Elisabeth Lowe	Margaret Jull Costa
para se transformar numa nudez sem mistério de Campo de Ourique,	per conquistare la nudità senza mistero dei quartieri piccolo borghesi,	to become a crass Campo de Ourique nude	and is transformed instead into boring suburban nakedness,
à procura, às apalpadelas, na carteira, da embalagem de Microginon.	mentre cerca a tentoni nella borsa le pillole di salvataggio.	groping in her bag for a Valium.	rummaging in her purse for her contraceptive pills.

Table 3

Lobo Antunes	Maria José Lancastrre	Elisabeth Lowe	Margaret Jull Costa
Éramos peixes, somos peixes, fomos sempre peixes,	Eravamo dei pesci, siamo dei pesci, siamo sempre stati dei pesci,		We were fish, we are fish, we were always fish,
equilibrados entre duas águas na busca de um compromisso impossível entre a inconformidade e a resignação,	in equilibrio in uno spartiacque alla ricerca di un impossibile con promesso fra l'inconformismo e la rassegnazione,	We searched for a compromise between unconformity and resignation.	caught between two currents, in our search for an impossible compromise between rebellion and resignation,
nascidos sob o signo da Mocidade Portuguesa e do seu patriotismo veemente e estúpido de pacotilha,	nati sotto il segno della Gioventù Salazarista, e del suo stupido e veemente patriottismo da paccottiglia,	Born under the sign of the Portuguese Youth and its vehement and stupid jingoism;	born under the sign of the Portuguese Youth Movement and its stupid, cheap, trenchant brand of patriotism,
alimentados culturalmente pelo ramal da Beira Baixa, os rios de Moçambique e as serras do sistema Galaico-Duriense, espiados pelos mil olhos ferozes da PIDE,	alimentati culturalmente dalla rete ferroviaria delle regioni portoghesi, dai fiumi delle colonie e dal sistema orografico del nord del Portogallo, spiati dai mille occhi feroci della polizia politica,	culturally nourished by the Beira Baixa railroad, the rivers of Mozambique and the mountains of the Galaico-Duriense range; spied on by the thousand fierce eyes of the PIDE;	nourished culturally by the Beira-Baixa railroad line, the rivers of Mozambique and the Galaico-Duriense Massif, spied on by the thousand ferocious eyes of the PIDE,
condenados ao consumo de jornais que a censura reduzia a louvores melancólicos ao relento de sacristia de província do Estado Novo,	condannati al consumo di giornali che la censura riduceva a lodi malinconiche con l'odore di sacrestia provinciale del regime,	condemned to read censored newspapers praising Salazar's New State;	condemned to read newspapers that the censors reduced to glum, provincial, pious, hymns of praise for the Estado Novo,
e jogados por fim na violência paranóica da guerra, ao som de marchas guerreiras e dos discursos heróicos dos que ficavam em Lisboa,	e alla fine scagliati nella violenza paranoica della guerra, al suono di marce bellicose e dei discorsi eroici di coloro che restavano a Lisbona,	we were finally thrown into the paranoid violence of the war to the tune of military marches interrupted by the heroic speeches of those who remained in Lisbon	and then flung at last into the paranoiac violence of war, to the sound of martial music and heroic speeches given by those who stayed behind in Lisbon
combatendo, combatendo corajosamente o comunismo nos grupos de casais do prior,	combattendo, combattendo coraggiosamente contro il comunismo nelle riunioni parrocchiali,	to fight, courageously to fight Communism at staid evening functions.	valiantly doing battle against Communism from the safety of church halls,
enquanto nós, os peixes, morríamos nos cus de Judas uns após	mentre noi, i pesci, morivamo in culo al mondo, uno dopo	We died in this asshole of the world one after the other,	while we, the fish, were dying one by one in the asshole of the world,

Lobo Antunes	Maria José Lancastrre	Elisabeth Lowe	Margaret Jull Costa
outros,	l'altro,		
tocava-se um fio de tropeçar, uma granada pulava e dividia-nos ao meio, trás!,	si toccava un filo steso per terra, una mina scoppiava e ci spezzava in due, zac!,	tripping on wires, being blown up by grenades, zap!	touch a trip wire and a grenade flies up at you and splits you in two,
o enfermeiro sentado na picada fitava estupefacto os próprios intestinos que segurava nas mãos, uma coisa amarela e gorda e repugnante quente nas mãos,	l'infermiere seduto in mezzo al sentiero guardava stupefatto i propri intestini che reggeva fra le mani, una cosa gialla e grassa e ripugnante e calda fra le mani,	The medic sitting on the dirt road looked stupefied at his own intestines that he was holding in his hands, a yellow, fat, repugnant hot thing in his hands,	the nurse sitting in the path staring in astonishment at the sight of his own intestines in his hands, a plump, yellow, disgusting thing hot in his hands,
o apontador de metralhadora de garganta furada continuava a disparar, chegava-se sem vontade de combater ninguém, tolhido de medo,	il mitragliere con la gola ferita continuava a sparare, al nostro arrivo nessuno aveva voglia di uccidere nessuno, eravamo terrorizzati,	next to him a soldier with a hole in his neck continued to fire his machine gun. Another man came back without the will to fight, paralyzed with fear,	beside him, the machine gunner with a hole in his neck continuing to fire, you arrived in Angola not wanting to fight anyone, crippled with fear,
e depois das primeiras baixas saía-se para a mata por raiva na ânsia de vingar a perna do Ferreira e o corpo mole e de repente sem ossos do Macaco,	e poi, dopo le prime perdite, ci inoltravamo rabbiosamente nella boscaglia col desiderio di vendicare la gamba del Ferreira e il corpo molle del Macaco,	and after the first casualties we went back to the bush in anger to avenge Ferreira's leg and Macaco's limp body.	but after the first few losses, you went out into the jungle feeling angry, wanting to avenge Ferreira's leg and Macaco's limp and suddenly boneless body,
os prisioneiros eram velhos ou mulheres esqueléticos menos lestos a fugir, côncavos de fome,	i prigionieri erano vecchi o donne scheletriche, non erano svelti a scappare, erano concavi di fame,	The prisoners were old people or skeletal women less inclined to escape, dying of hunger,	our only prisoners were old men and skeletal women too feeble to escape, concave with hunger,
o MPLA deixava mensagens nos trilhos a dizer Deserta mas para onde se só havia areia em volta, Deserta,	il MPLA che lasciava messaggi nei sentieri che dicevano Diserta, ma per andare dove se tutt'intorno non c'era altro che sabbia, Diserta,	the MPLA left messages on the railroad tracks saying Desert but where could we go.	the MPLA left messages on the trails and tracks urging us to Desert, but where to, when there was only sand all around, Why don't you desert, they said,
os tipos passavam da Zâmbia para o interior detendo-se de quando em quando para dinamitar as pontes dos rios,	i guerriglieri venivano fino a noi dallo Zambia, fermandosi ogni tanto per minare i ponti,	The guerrillas went from Zambia to the interior stopping once in a while to dynamite bridges,	they crossed over from Zambia and into the interior, stopping now and then to dynamite the bridges of the rivers,

Table 4

Lobo Antunes	Vittoria Martinetto	Gregory Rabassa
<p>Passara por Lixboa há dezoito ou vinte anos a caminho de Angola e o que recordava melhor eram as discussões dos pais na pensão do Conde Redondo onde ficaram entre tinir de baldes e resmungos exasperados de mulher.</p>	<p>Era passato da Lixboa diciotto o vent'anni prima andando in Angola, e quello che ricordava meglio erano le discussioni dei genitori alla pensione di via Conte Redondo dove si erano alloggiati fra cozzare di secchi e rimbrotti esasperati di donne.</p>	<p>He'd passed through Lixbon eighteen or twenty years earlier on the way to Angola and what he remembered best were his parents' rooms in the boarding house on Conde Redondo where they were staying in the midst of a clatter of pots and women's exasperated grumbling.</p>
<p>Lembrava-se da casa de banho colectiva, com um lavatório de torneiras barrocas imitando peixes que vomitavam soluços de água parda pelas goelas abertas e da altura em que topou com um senhor de idade, a sorrir na retrete de calças pelos joelhos.</p>	<p>Rammentava la stanza da bagno comune, com un lavabo dalle rubetterie barocche a forma di pesce che rigurgitavano singhiozzi di acqua marroncina dalle gole aperte e la volta in cui si era trovato faccia a faccia con un signore anziano che sorrideva sul vaso della latrina, con i pantaloni alle ginocchia.</p>	<p>He recalled the communal bathroom, a washbasin with a set of baroque faucets in imitation of fish that vomited out sobs of brownish water through their open gills, and the time he came upon a man on in years smiling on the toilet with his pants down around his knees.</p>
<p>À noite, se abria a janela, via os restaurantes chineses iluminados, os glaciares sonâmbulos dos estabelecimentos de electrodomésticos na penumbra, e cabeleiras loiras no lancil dos passeios.</p>	<p>La notte, se apriva la finestra, vedeva i ristoranti cinesi illuminati, i frigoriferi sonnambuli nella penombra dei negozi di elettrodomestici, e capigliature bionde sul bordo dei marciapiedi.</p>	<p>At night the window would be open and he'd see the illuminated Chinese restaurants, the sleepwalking glaciers of electrical-appliance stores in the shadows, and blond heads of hair above the paving stones of the sidewalks.</p>
<p>De forma que urinava nos lençóis por medo de encontrar o cavalheiro do sorriso atrás dos peixes oxidados ou as cabeleiras que rebocavam notários corredor adiante, baloiçando a chave do quarto no mindinho.</p>	<p>Cosí pisciava nelle lenzuola per la paura di incontrare il signore del sorriso dietro ai pesci ossidati o le capigliature che rimorchiavano notai nel corridoio, facendo dondolare la chiave della stanza sul dito mignolo.</p>	<p>So he'd wet his bed because he was afraid of finding the smiling gentleman beyond the rusty fish or the blond heads of hair that dragged clerks along the corridor, twirling room keys on their pinkies.</p>
<p>E acabava por adormecer a sonhar com as ruas intermináveis de Coruche, os limoeiros gémeos do quintal do prior e o avô cego, de olhos lisos de estátua, sentado num banquito à porta da taberna, ao mesmo tempo que uma manada de ambulâncias assobiava Gomes Freire fora na direcção do Hospital de São José.</p>	<p>E finiva per addormentarsi sognando le vie interminabili di Coruche, i limoni gemelli del giardino del curato e il nonno cieco, con gli occhi lisci da statua, seduto su uno sgabello davanti alla porta dell'osteria, mentre una mandria di autoambulanze spiegava le sirene lungo via Gomes Freire in direzione dell'ospedale São José.</p>	<p>And he'd end up falling asleep with dreams of the endless streets of Coruche, the twin lemon trees in the prior's grove, and his blind grandfather, with blank statue eyes, sitting on a bench by the tavern door as a flock of ambulances wailed along Gomes Freire on their way to São José Hospital.</p>

Table 5

Lobo Antunes	Vittoria Martinetto	Gregory Rabassa
Dera aos estivadores, a um sargento português bêbedo e aos empregados da alfândega a escritura da casa e o dinheiro que trazia,	Aveva consegnato agli stivatori, a un sergente portoghese ubriaco e agli impiegati della dogana i suoi titoli di proprietà e l'indirizzo e il denaro che aveva con sé,	He'd given the stevedores, a drunken Portuguese sergeant, and the customs officials the deed to his house and all the money he had,
vira-os içar o frigorífico, o fogão e o Chevrolet antigo, de motor delirante, para uma nau que aparelhava já, mas recusou separar-se da urna apesar das ordens de um major gorducho	li aveva visti issare il frigorifero, la cucina e la vecchia Chevrolet, dal motore singhiozzante, su una nave che si apprestava a salpare, mas si era rifiutato di separarsi dalla cassa, malgrado gli ordini di un maggiore corpulento	he'd seen them hoist the refrigerator, stove and ancient Chevrolet with a ranting motor on board a ship that was already being made ready, but he refused to leave the casket in spite of the orders of a chubby major
(Você nem sonhe que leva essa gaita consigo), um féretro de pegas lavradas e crucifixo no tampo, arrastado tombadilho fora perante o pasmo do comandante que se esqueceu do nónio	(Si tolga dalla testa di portarsi dietro quell'arnese), un feretro dalle maniglie cesellate, con un crocefisso sul coperchio, che lui aveva trascinato sul cassero di poppa con grande stupore del comandante il quale, dimenticando il nonio,	(You can't be dreaming of taking that crap with you), a coffin with carved handles and a crucifix on the lid, dragged tilting along to the amazement of the commandant, who forgot about his vernier
e levantou a cabeça, tonta de cálculos, para olhá-lo, no momento em que o homem de nome Luís desaparecia no porão e encaixava o morto sob o beliche, como os restantes passageiros faziam aos cestos e às malas.	aveva alzato la testa, stordita di calcoli, per guardarlo, nel momento in cui l'uomo di nome Luís si eclissava nella stiva e incassava il morto sotto la propria cuccetta, come gli altri passeggeri facevano con le ceste e con le valige.	and lifted his head, dizzy with calculations, to look at him at the moment the man called Luís was disappearing below and was stowing the dead man under his bunk, the way the other passengers did with their baskets and suitcases.
Depois estendeu-se no cobertor, poisou a nuca nas palmas e entreteve-se a seguir o crochet meticuloso das aranhas e o cio dos ratos nas vigas do tecto cobertas de caranguejos e percebes, sonhando com os braços nocturnos das negras carecidas.	Poi, si era sdraiato sulla coperta, le mani incrociate dietro la nuca, e si era divertito a seguire con lo sguardo l'uncinetto meticoloso dei ragni e la fregola dei topi sulle travi del soffitto coperte di granchi e di lepade, sognando le braccia notturne delle negre in calore.	Then he stretched out on the blanket, put his hands behind his neck, and amused himself by following the meticulous crochet work of the spiders and the zeal of the mice on the ceiling beams covered with crabs and barnacles, dreaming about the nocturnal arms of absent black women.
Ao segundo almoço conheceu um reformado amante de biscoitos e suecas e um maneta espanhol que vendia cautelas em Moçambique chamado Dom Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra,	Durante il pranzo, aveva fatto la conoscenza di un pensionato amante della briscola e dello scopone e di un monco spagnolo che vendeva biglietti della lotteria in Mozambico e si chiamava Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra,	At the second lunch, he met a retired cardsharp and a one-handed Spaniard who'd been selling lottery tickets in Mozambique named Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra,
antigo soldado sempre a escrever em folhas soltas de	un ex soldato che passava il tempo a scrivere su fogli	a former soldier, always writing on the pages torn out of a

Lobo Antunes	Vittoria Martinetto	Gregory Rabassa
agenda e papéis desprezados um romance intitulado, não se entendia porquê, de Quixote, quando toda a gente sabe que Quixote é apelido de cavalo de obstáculos,	strappati di agenda o su qualunque altro pezzo di carta un romanzo intitolato, Dio sa perché, <i>Chisciotte</i> , quando tutti sanno benissimo che Chisciotte è il nome di un cavallo da corsa,	ledger and discarded scraps of paper a novel untitled, no one knew why, <i>Quixote</i> , when everybody knew that Quixote is the nickname of a steeplechase horse,
e ao fim da tarde puxavam o caixão e batiam trunfos lambidos no tampo de verniz, evitando tocar no crucifixo porque dá azar às vazas e altera as manilhas,	e, verso sera, tiravano fuori la bara e lanciavano le carte sul coperchio verniciato, evitando di toccare il crocefisso perché porta male,	and at the end of the afternoon they pulled out the coffin and played some fine blackjack on the varnished cover, avoiding touching the crucifix, because it's risky in cards and can affect your hand,
e erguendo os sapatos de fivela sempre que os balanços do barco derramavam na sua direcção o vomitado dos vizinhos,	e sollevando le scarpe con la fibbia tutte le volte che il rullio della nave faceva colare nella loro direzione il vomito dei vicini,	and lifting up their buckled shoes whenever the listing of the ship spilled the vomit of their neighbors in their direction;
que adquirira um palmo de altura e os obrigava, de meias ensopadas, a agarrarem-se às pegas a fim de que o cadáver não lhes escapasse,	che aveva raggiunto una spanna e li obbligava, con le calzemaglia fradice, ad aggrapparsi alle maniglie della bara per paura di vedersi sfuggire il cadavere,	it had reached a depth of six inches and obliged them, sopping their stockings, to hold on to the handles so the corpse wouldn't get away from them,
à deriva num caldo em que flutuavam lavagantes, transportando consigo os valetes e os ases da partida decisiva.	alla deriva in un brodo dove fluttuavano gamberi portandosi via i fanti e gli assi della partita decisiva.	adrift in a soup where <i>lavagantes</i> fluttered, carrying off the jacks and aces of the winning hand.

Table 6

Lobo Antunes	Vittoria Martinetto	Gregory Rabassa
No fim do turno de Garcia da Orta, às sete da manhã, quando a noite zarpara devagarinho para escurecer noutra país,	Finito il turno, alle sette del mattino, quando la notte era salpata lentamente per oscurare un altro paese,	At the end of Garcia da Orta's shift, at seven o'clock in the morning, when night sailed slowly off to darken some other country,
levou-me ao esconso de copa onde dependurou o casaco dos botões e das nódoas e o trocou por um blusão de crocodilo fingido, dos que encolhem para metade à segunda lavagem,	Garcia da Orta mi portò nello sgabuzzino del retro dove appese la giacca con i bottoni e le macchie sostituendola con un giubbotto di coccodrillo finto, di quelli che si restringono al secondo lavaggio,	he took me to the back of the pantry, where he hung up the jacket with buttons and lumps and changed into one of fake crocodile skin, the kind that shrinks to half its size with the second washing,
abrimos a caixa de cartão e o seu clima de guano, separámos a serradura, e como nas farmácias entornámos o meu pai,	aprimmo lo scatolone con la sua atmosfera di guano, separammo la segatura e, come nelle farmacie,	we opened the cardboard box and its guano atmosphere, pushed the sawdust back, and the same as in pharmacies, we poured my father,
com a espátula de uma faca de peixe, numa garrafa de leite, cartilagens, tendões, falanges, pedacitos aquosos de carne,	con la spatola di un coltello da pesce, abbiamo travasato mio padre in una bottiglia del latte, cartilagini, tendini, falangi, pezzetti acquosi di carne,	using the blade of a fish knife, into a milk bottle, cartilages, tendons, joints, watery little pieces of flesh,
a dentadura postiça em bom estado que guardei na algibeira das calças para quando fosse tão idoso e sem bochechas como ele,	salvo la dentiera in buono stato che misi via nella tasca dei pantaloni per il giorno in cui fossi stato vecchio e senza guance quanto lui,	the false teeth were in good shape and I put them in my pants pocket for when I'd be just as old and cheekless as he was,
condenado a chupar asas de frango pela desilusão de uma palhinha.	condannato a succhiare ali di pollo con nostalgia degli stuzzicadenti.	condemned to sucking on chicken bones like a disappointed faggot.
Ao alcançarmos, de garrafa no sovaco, o largo, ou o que eu pensava um largo, diante da estação dos comboios,	Arrivati in piazza, o a quello che credevo fosse una piazza, davanti alla stazione ferroviaria, con la bottiglia sotto il braccio,	When, bottle under my arm, we reached the square, or what I thought was a square, in front of the train station,
vi apenas uma humidade de gaivotas, espiões castelhanos sob as camionetas de descarga junto ao rio,	non vidi altro che un umidità di gabbiani, spie castigliane sotto i camion delle consegne vicino al fiume,	all I could see was a dampness of gulls, Castilian spies under trucks beside the river,
e dezenas de Fernandos Pessoas muito sérios, de óculos e bigode, a caminho de empregos de contabilista em prédios pombalinos de beirais de loiça,	e decine di Fernando Pessoa serissimi, con baffi e occhiali, che si recavano al loro impiego di contabili in edifici costruiti all'epoca del marchese di Pombal con gronde di ceramica,	and dozens of Fernando Pessoas, very serious, with glasses and mustaches, on the way to their jobs as bookkeepers in Pombaline buildings with ceramic eaves
roídos pelo cancro do caruncho e por baratas envernizadas	intaccate dal cancro della tignola e da scarafaggi di	gnawed at by the cancer of dry rot and varnished cockroaches

Lobo Antunes	Vittoria Martinetto	Gregory Rabassa
semelhantes a sapatos de casamento com antenas.	vernice simili a scarpe da nozze con le antenne.	that were like wedding shoes with antennae.

Table 7

Lobo Antunes	Rita Desti	Rhett McNeil
24 de Dezembro de 1995	24 dicembre 1995	12/24/95
Quando disse que tinha convidado os meus irmãos para passarem a noite de Natal conosco	Quando ho detto che avevo invitato i miei fratelli a passare la notte di Natale con noi	When I said that I had invited my siblings to spend Christmas Eve with us
(estávamos a almoçar na cozinha e viam-se os guindastes e os barcos a seguir aos últimos telhados da Ajuda)	(stavamo pranzando in cucina e si vedevano le gru e le imbarcazioni al di là degli ultimi tetti dell'Ajuda)	(we were eating lunch in the kitchen and you could see the cranes and the boats back behind the last rooftops of Ajuda)
a Lena encheu-me o prato de fumo, desapareceu no fumo e enquanto desaparecia a voz embaciou os vidros antes de se sumir também — Já não vês os teus irmãos há quinze anos	Lena mi ha riempito il piatto di fumo, è scomparsa nel fumo e mentre scompariva la voce ha appannato i vetri prima di dileguarsi anch'essa — Non vedi i tuoi fratelli da quindici anni	Lena filled my plate with smoke, disappeared in the smoke, and as she disappeared her voice tarnished the glass of the window before it too vanished “You haven’t seen your siblings in fifteen years”
(a voz ao cobrir os caixilhos de vapor levou consigo os morros de Almada, a ponte, a estátua do Cristo a bater sozinha acima da bruma o desamparo das asas)	(nel ricoprire i vetri di vapore la voce ha portato via con sé le colline di Almada, il ponte, la statua del Cristo che solitaria al di sopra della bruma agitava le ali abbandonate)	(as her voice enveloped the window frame it took with it the hills of Almada, the bridge, the statue of Christ alone beating its helpless wings above the mist)
até que o fumo se diluiu, a Lena regressou a pouco e pouco de dedos estendidos para o cesto do pão — Já não vês os teus irmãos há quinze anos	finché il fumo si è stemperato, Lena è ricomparsa a poco a poco con le dita tese verso il cestino del pane — Non vedi i tuoi fratelli da quindici anni	until the smoke dissipated, Lena reappeared little by little with her fingers outstretched toward the breadbasket “You haven’t seen your siblings in fifteen years”
de forma que de repente me dei conta do tempo que passara desde que chegámos de África, das cartas da minha mãe da fazenda primeiro e de Marimba depois, quatro cubatas numa encosta de mangueiras	sicché all'improvviso mi sono reso conto del tempo che era passato da quando eravamo tornati dall'Africa, delle lettere che mia madre mandava, prima dalla fazenda e poi da Marimba, quattro casupole su un pendio ricoperto di manghi	so that all of a sudden I was aware of the time that had passed since we arrived here from Africa, of the letters from my mother, first from the plantation and later from Marimba, four little huts on a hillside of mango trees

Lobo Antunes	Rita Desti	Rhett McNeil
(lembro-me da moradia do chefe de posto, da loja, de ruínas de quartel a naufragarem no capim)	(mi ricordo della casa del capoposto, della bottega, delle rovine della caserma che naufragavano nella vegetazione)	(I remember the regional administrator's house, the store, the ruins of the barracks shipwrecked and sinking in the tall grass)
os envelopes que guardava numa gaveta sem os mostrar a ninguém, os abrir, os ler, dúzias e dúzias de envelopes sujos, cobertos de carimbos e selos, falando-me do que não queria ouvir, a fazenda, Angola, a vida dela,	quelle buste che riponevo in un cassetto senza mostrarle a nessuno, senza aprirle, senza leggerle, dozzine e dozzine di buste sporche, coperte di timbri e francobolli, che mi parlavano di cose che non volevo udire, la fazenda, l'Angola, la sua vita,	the envelopes that I kept in a drawer without showing anyone, without opening them, without reading them, dozens and dozens of dirty envelopes, covered with stamps and seals, telling me about things I didn't want to hear, the plantation, Angola, her life,
o empregado dos Correios entregava-mos no patamar e uma extensão de girassóis murmurava campos fora, girassóis, algodão, arroz, tabaco, não me interessa Angola cheia de pretos na fortaleza, no palácio do Governo e nas cabanas da ilha refastelados ao sol a julgarem-se nós,	il postino me la consegnava sul pianerottolo e una distesa di girasoli sussurrava nei campi, girasoli, cotone, riso, tabacco, non m'interessa l'Angola piena di negri nel forte, nel palazzo del Governo e nelle capanne dell'isola tutti li affastellati sotto il sole a giudicarci,	the mailman delivered them to me on the landing of the stairway and an expanse of sunflowers murmuring in the fields outside, sunflowers, cotton, rice, tobacco, I don't care about Angola, a bunch of blacks in the barracks, in the government palace, and in the huts on the island laying out in the sun as if they were us,
fechava a porta com a carta segura por dois dedos como quem transporta um bicho pela cauda	chiudevo la porta tenendo la lettera con due dita come se trasportassi un animale per la coda	I closed the door with the letter held between two fingers like someone holding an animal by its tail
<i>cartas iguais a bichos malcheirosos, mortos</i>	<i>lettere tali e quali ad animali maleodoranti, morti</i>	<i>letters just like putrid dead animals</i>
a baía de Luanda, esquecida de coqueiros, reduzia-se a um vestíbulo diminuto a necessitar de pintura decorado por um bengaleiro e uma cómoda, a Lena enchendo-me o prato de fumo e apagando o mundo	la baia di Luanda, dimentica delle sue palme da cocco, si riduceva a un minuscolo ingresso che aveva bisogno di una tinteggiatura arredato con un attaccapanni e un comò, mentre Lena mi riempiva il piatto di fumo e cancellava il mondo	Luanda Bay, ignored by its own palm trees, amounted to nothing more than a tiny room in need of a paint job, outfitted with a coatrack and a chest of drawers, Lena filling my plate with smoke and blotting out the world
— Puseste-os na rua e agora passados quinze anos queres os teus irmãos de volta	— Li hai cacciati via e ora che sono passati quindici anni ricerchi i tuoi fratelli	“You put them out on the street and now, fifteen years later, you want your siblings back”
sentada à minha frente usando	seduta davanti a me	sitting in front of me waving her

Lobo Antunes	Rita Desti	Rhett McNeil
o abano da mão para afugentar o vapor	sventagliando con la mano per dissolvere il vapore	hand to waft away the smoke
— Se fosse a ti não esperava visitas logo à noite Carlos	— Se fossi in te non mi aspetterei visite stasera Carlos	“If I were you I wouldn’t wait up for visitors, Carlos”

Table 8

Lobo Antunes	Rita Desti	Rhett McNeil
a fazenda a norte da nossa, uma fazenda pequena com uma casa pequena, sem milho nem algodão nem arroz, quase sem máquinas,	la fazenda a nord della nostra, una fazenda piccola con una casa piccola, senza granturco né cotone né riso, quasi senza macchine,	the farm north of ours, a small farm with a small house, which had no corn or cotton or rice, barely any farm equipment,
lavrada por luchazes comprados mais barato no Moxico e portanto ainda piores e com mais doenças do que as aventemas que tínhamos,	lavorata da luciase comprati a Moxico più a buon mercato e quindi anche peggiori e più malati di quegli spettri che avevamo noi,	and that was worked by people from Luchazes who were bought for next to nothing in Moxico and so were even worse and more prone to illness than the specters who worked for us,
o meu pai vinha de tempos a tempos, antes do chá, espicaçá-los com o bastão sem acreditar em desculpas de paludismo e diarreias, levantando os que se fingiam moribundos a mostrarem os beiços secos e os arrepios da febre – Patrão	mio padre andava di tanto in tanto, prima del tè, a punzecchiarli con il bastone non credendo alle scuse di paludismo e diarreie, facendo alzare quelli che si fingevano moribondi e che mostravano le labbra riarse e i brividi della febbre – Padrone	my father would pay them a visit every so often, before teatime, striking them with his walking stick, not believing their excuses about malaria and dysentery, rousing the ones who pretended to be dying showing him their dry lips, that they were shivering with fever “Look sir”
e todavia mal virávamos as costas passava-lhes logo e desatavam a fumar e a beber marufo, o meu pai de bota no ar – Andor	e poi, appena giravamo le spalle, subito gli passava e si mettevano a fumare e a bere vino di palma, mio padre con lo stivale a mezz'aria – Muoversi	and yet we'd no sooner turn our backs than they'd suddenly be all better, smoking and drinking palm wine, my father with his boot upraised “Get up you fool”
por lhe dar pena a mulher nas traseiras com o seu bule lascado e a sua camisola puída a oferecer-nos cadeiras de lona sem cor e bancos de cozinha,	perché gli faceva pena la donna nel retro con la sua teiera crepata e la sua maglietta lisa che ci offriva sedie di tela scolorita e sgabelli da cucina,	because he felt sorry for the woman with her cracked teapot and threadbare sweater out on the patio behind the house offering us faded canvas chairs and stools to sit on,
a oferecer-nos biscoitos, a distribuir abanos de ráfia de abanar o fogão pela minha mãe e por mim, pedindo desculpa do chá, do açúcar, de existir,	che ci offriva biscotti, distribuiva ventagli di rafia per ravvivare il focolare a mia madre e a me, chiedendo scusa del té, dello zucchero, chiedendo scusa di esistere,	offering us cookies, handing my mother and me palm-leaf fans that she used to fan the fire, apologizing for the tea, for the sugar, for even existing,
tratando a minha mãe e eu por madame, o meu pai por cavalheiro, humilde, feia, triste, numa vozita de derrota	riferendosi a mia madre e me con l'appellativo di madame, a mio padre con quello di signore, umile, brutta, triste, con una vocina da sconfitta	calling my mother and me ma'am, calling my father sir, humble, ugly, sad, in her defeated little voice
– As madames são servidas o cavalheiro é servido?	– Le madame gradiscono il signore gradisce?	“Do you need anything more ma'am need anything more sir?”

Table 9

Lobo Antunes	Rita Desti	Rhett McNeil
Quando voltei a Portugal do que gostei mais na Ajuda foi dos carros eléctricos e dos homens gordos que saltavam das plataformas em movimento da mesma maneira que os abutres pousam:	Quando tornai in Portogallo, ciò che piú mi piacque all'Ajuda furono i tram elettrici e i ciccioni che balzavano giú dalle piattaforme in movimento proprio come si posano gli avvoltoi:	When I returned to Portugal the thing I liked best in Ajuda were the electric streetcars and the fat men who leap from the platform their movements identical to vultures when they land:
desciam a planar do estribo de tronco para trás equilibrando-se nos braços abertos, davam uma corridita de passinhos curtos	scendevano planando dal predellino col busto all'indietro tenendosi in equilibrio con le braccia aperte, facevano una corsetta a piccoli passi	they'd jump down, gliding along the running board with their torso leaning back, balancing with their outstretched arms, take a few quick, short steps,
e juntavam-se a baloiçar a barriga, muito dignos, aos colegas na esplanada do café, atropelando-se em torno do cadáver de uma mesa,	e raggiungevano con la pancia sbalanzolante, dignitosissimi, i colleghi nel bar all'aperto della piazza, affastellandosi in torno al cadavere di un tavolo,	and then gather together with friends, bellies bouncing, very dignified, on the sidewalk outside the café, crowding together around the corpse of a table,
antílope de patas de metal e corpo de fórmica de que disputavam aos guinchos os pedaços de carne do dominó.	antilope dalle zampe di metallo e corpo di formica di cui si disputavano striduli i pezzi di carne del domino.	an antelope with metal paws and a Formica body around which they quarreled amid shrieks over the scraps of meat that were dominoes.
Sempre que passava na avenida, de manhã e à tarde, encontrava-os instalados em ramos de cadeiras,	Ogni volta che passavo nel viale, la mattina e il pomeriggio, li trovavo piazzati su rami di sedie,	Every time I walked down the avenue, in the morning and the afternoon, I'd find them perched on branches, chairs,
de cabeça metida nos enchumaços dos ombros, pacientes e calvos, fitando-me com as pálpebras brancas à espera que eu morresse.	con la testa infilata nelle spalline, pazienti e calvi, che mi fissavano con le palpebre bianche in attesa che morissi.	with their heads sunk down between their bulky shoulders, patient and bald, staring at me from under their white eyelids, waiting for me to die.
Abaixo deles, na savana da praça, hienas de alunos da escola trotavam em círculo corcundas de mochilas, com o pêlo das samarras eriçado de frio e a baba das pastilhas elásticas a oscilar das mandíbulas,	Sotto di loro, nella savana della piazza, iene di scolari trotavano in circolo ingobbiti dagli zaini, col pelo dei giacconi di pelle rizzato per il freddo e la bava delle gomme da masticare che oscillava sulle mandibole,	Down below them, in the savanna of the town square, hyenas, schoolkids trotted in a circle, hunchbacked with their backpacks, with the fur on their coats bristling from the cold and drool from their gummy candy dangling from their jaws,
farejando os tabuleiros dos vendedores ambulantes, pulando de lado, rosnando-se alcunhas, sumindo-se na mata do jardim de onde se avistavam	fiutando i carrettini dei venditori ambulanti, saltellando, bofonchiandosi soprannomi, scomparendo nella foresta del giardino, da cui si avvistavano	sniffing around the street vendors' carts, jumping to one side, growling out nicknames, disappearing into the jungle, garden,
hipopótamos de barcos a acenderem os olhos no Tejo	ippopotami di barche che accendevano gli occhi nel Tago	where hippopotamuses, ships could be seen flashing their eyes

Lobo Antunes	Rita Desti	Rhett McNeil
com a chegada da tarde, pacaças de guias que bebiam as ondas erguendo os chifres de ferro contra os morros de Almada,	con l'arrivo dell'imbrunire, bufali di gru che si abbeveravano nelle onde innalzando le corna di ferro contro le colline di Almada,	in the Tagus as the afternoon began, forest buffaloes, mechanical cranes drinking in their wake, raising their iron horns against the backdrop of the hills of Almada
um bando de contentores a dormir no alcatrão de gaivotas passeando sobre eles, a catarem-lhes os parasitas da pele,	una banda di cassonetti che dormivano sull'asfalto con gabbiani che vi passeggiavano sopra, li pulciavano dei parassiti della pelle,	a flock of shipping containers sleeping on the tarred decks with seagulls walking along their backs, picking parasites off their hides,
os cachorros selvagens latiam toda a noite no bairro dos ciganos, o Rui queria trazer a espingarda de chumbinhos que ficara em África e procurá-los no escuro,	i cani selvatici abbaivano tutta la notte nel quartiere degli zingari, Rui avrebbe voluto prendere il fucile a piombini che era rimasto in Africa e cacciarli nel buio,	wild dogs barking all night long in the gypsies' neighborhood, Rui wanted to bring the pellet gun that was left behind in Africa and hunt them down in the dark,
o Damião, o Fernando, a Josélia e dois ou três cipaios sorriam da parede em que a Lena os pendurou, de órbitas ocas e lábios ocios	Damião, Fernando, Josélia e due o tre <i>cipaios</i> sorridevano dalla parete su cui Lena li aveva appesi, con le orbite vuote e le labbra vuote	Damião, Fernando, Josélia, and two or three native soldiers smiled from the wall where Lena had hung them up, with hollow eye sockets and hollow lips
- Não mexas nas minhas máscaras Clarisse	- Non toccare le mie maschere Clarisse	"Don't mess with my masks Clarisse"

