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## Chapter

# Difficulties for Translating Quevedo's Sonnets from Portuguese Translations into English

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## Abstract

The aim of this chapter is a discussion about the criteria used on the translation of Brazilian Portuguese poetry into American English. I thus exemplify it with the translations of Quevedo's sonnets, namely the sonnet "*Desde a torre*," "From the tower." As one goes through Quevedo's sonnets, one can notice the recurrence of the semantic fields "fire" and "prison." The first appears until fatigue in the opposites game within the Petrarquian pairs tradition like fire/snow~water. In order to enjoy the multiple readings that Quevedo offers, it is necessary to delve into the disappointments of which he was a victim and the seventeenth-century Spain collapse, a tumultuous scene of the Baroque: Spain was ravaged by the Thirty Years' War and defeated by Holland and France. I based the criteria upon translation theories, more specifically upon poetic translation. I describe in detail the genre sonnet, particularly its metrics and rhymes, and the difficulties of translating them. I end the chapter with a microanalysis of the poem "*Desde a torre*" translation into American English.

**Keywords:** poetry translation, Brazilian Portuguese, American English, Quevedo's sonnet, Baroque

## 1. Introduction

In order to enjoy the multiple readings that Quevedo (Francisco Gómez de Quevedo y Villegas, 1580–1645) offers, it is necessary to delve into the disappointments of which he was a victim and the seventeenth-century Spain collapse, a tumultuous scene of the Baroque: Spain was ravaged by the Thirty Years' War and defeated by Holland and France. It is against this backdrop that the Spanish literary Baroque thrives, whose main characteristics are cultism and conceptism, with Quevedo being an adept of the latter, unlike Gôngora.

The sonnet's author considered the most beautiful in the Spanish language by Alonso [1], "*Cerrar podrá mis ojos la postrera/ sombra*," "My eyes will close the ultimate, and last/shadow," was exiled three times due to palace intrigues, and it is none other than one of these that inspired the title of the sonnet "From the tower."

Mentioning the topoi versed by him, from the satirical to the amorous, it is undoubtedly when dealing with death and life brevity that conceptism is handled

most vigorously: neostoicism bases his ideas, in the wake of Seneca's thought, revisited by Christianity. Conceptism must be understood as a style that can be either epigrammatic or vigorous, whose concise words or phrases shine with the force and speed of lightning. There is a lot of wordplay and lively metaphors. But Quevedo's characteristic touch, as Alonso points out [1] in several steps, is his affectivity: the "eruptive vitality," the "forging fury," and the "condensation."

Quevedo is, perhaps, among the poets whom I translated [2], the most Hispanic without, however, ceasing to be the most universal and, at the same time, historical: imprisoned emotions that finally explode, the satirization of human villainies, the panel of a Spain in decadence are portrayed with the formal domain of someone who masters Petrarque's technique, Mannerism and Baroque, although he does not allow himself to be subjugated by them.

The imprisoned passions idea has its source more in Quevedo's existential vision than perhaps in experiences with real women, but he had a very concrete prison experience three times. In the last arrest, at the end of his life, from 1639 to 1643, he remained under house arrest, under suspicion of political satire against King Filipe IV (poor whoever fell under Quevedo's sights!).

## 2. Quevedo's topos

With a vast work, whose chronology has not yet been established with precision, the theme that stands out in the sonnets I have translated [2] is the explosion of affections.

As one goes through Quevedo's sonnets, one can notice the recurrence of the semantic fields "fire" and "prison." The first appears until fatigue in the opposites game within the Petrarquean pairs tradition like fire/snow ~ water, which in the collection I translated [2] is illustrated in the sonnets: "*Cerrar podrá mis ojos la postrera*," "My eyes will close the ultimate, and last"; "*En los claustros del alma la herida*," "In the cloisters of soul the suffered wound."

But the obsession with the inner fire also appears in his lexical and metaphorical preferences by terms such as "marrows" (in "My eyes will close the ultimate, and last," verse 11); (in "In the cloisters of soul the suffered wound," verse 4).

A Bosch of literature, Quevedo hyperbolically emphasizes the human grotesque, illustrated below with the sonnet that satirizes female old age.<sup>1</sup> It's exactly on the satirical side where Quevedo presents one of his great originalities, drinking in us popular records, he populates his verses with Spanish words and expressions that were in people's mouths, such as *antaño* (yesteryear), *morenos* (dark skinned), and *présteme un ochavo* (lend me an ochavo), contradicting the prevailing trend for cultisms.

On the other hand, a true panel of Hispanic decadence, where his preference for the oppressed is clear, parades before us, this time reminiscent of Goya. And not least, he was the victim of inquisitorial processes, for mocking hell itself. His appeals for death to welcome him reach the maximum lyricism in the sonnet "Already great and formidable sounds" (Figure 1):

Many times, almost translating the authors within this cultural tradition (which does not diminish its literary value, as the great contributions of Plautus and Terence are examples), Quevedo presents originalities, as I have already pointed out: his pagan-Christian syncretism, whose inspiration can be traced back to the stoicism of

<sup>1</sup> A topic dear to Greek and Latin epigramists, cf. the Palatine Anthology, book XI, [3].

<i>Se um feliz descanso, paz serena, paramentada em dor a morte envia, finde-me a vida e meu viver intime.</i>	If pleasant rests, a comfortable peace with rich vestments in pain death sends to us, finish my life and end it subpoena.
--	---

**Figure 1.**  
“*Se um feliz descanso*” into English.

Seneca's or to Marcus Aurelius' theme of life fleetingness, never obscures the strongest side of his literary production, which is to express the human passions and the formal resources core: they are not an end in themselves, but create tensions, which mirror the most intimate energies, starting with syntactic parallels and forming a type of correlation.

### 3. Is poetic translation possible?

The debate on poetry translatability is inserted, firstly, in violating the original text of translation in general. According to Paes [4] “From its earliest beginnings, translation can thus be seen as an effort to make the positive impulse of language towards openness and communication prevail over the negativity of its other impulse towards closure and communication exclusion” [...] “the translator is a builder of linguistic bridges that link the closed-in-itself idiomatic islands to one another.”

Paes [4] is, therefore, among those, who admit translatability, citing Walter Benjamin [5], when referring to the restoration in human memory of the “traces of the Adamic language erased by Babel curse”: the existence of a Universal human cognition, despite linguistic diversity, would support translatability, since in the translation process the translator starts with the text interpretation in the source language and concludes his work, providing the receiver with the same interpretation in the target text.

According to Gadamer [6] “The meaning must be maintained, but because it has to be understood in a new linguistic world, it will come into force in a new way. That is why all translation is interpretation,” an idea shared by Theodor [7]. Further on, Gadamer [6] emphasizes the role of recreation in the translation process.

In the opposite direction, there are several translation theorists, whose epistemological basis is in line with the linguistic relativism of Sapir [8] and Whorf [9], that linguistic systems, conditioned spatially and temporally, shape the way of perceiving reality and, therefore, of thinking and this would make it impossible to translate different worldviews.

In a period (nineteenth century beginning), when translation still focuses heavily on literal, word-for-word translation, Wilhelm von Humboldt [10] states in the preface to his translation of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*: “Analysis and experience confirm that, which has been observed more than once: apart from expressions, which designate only physical objects, no word in one language is perfectly the same as one in another.”

Coseriu [11] criticizes the word-for-word approach to literal translation, asserting that “only texts are translated,” taking into account, in addition, the various extralinguistic contexts involved: empirical, historical, cultural, etc.

Paes [4], however, while accepting translatability, as I commented above, with regard to poetry, states: “In no other sector of translation activity is the struggle against the isolationist impulse of language more fierce than in poetry translation” [...] “This insofar as, to mean the most with the least, it makes use of all language

expressive resources, largely peculiar, exclusive to it” [...] “To the despair of the poetry translator, the phonic extract is always the most idiosyncratic” [...] “the poetry translator is sometimes led to more radical solutions than those commonly adopted in the routine of translating. This can creatively influence the very use of the language into which he translates, enriching it with resources of ‘strangeness.’” However, Humboldt [10] warns: “Insofar as it makes the strangeness feel rather than the strangeness, translation has achieved its highest ends, however, the moment the strangeness itself appears, perhaps even obscuring the strange, the translator reveals not to be up to his original.”

Humboldt [10] also recognizes the impossibility of translating poetry, when referring to *Agamemnon*. The uniqueness of each message is linked to the concept of energy: “each one must carry within himself his work and that of all the others, this emergence should resemble the emergence of an ideal figure in the artist’s imagination. Nor can it be extracted from something real, it arises by a pure spirit energy, and rather out of nothing, but from that moment on it starts to live and be real and lasting.”

A very strong line of poetic translation defends the idea that only a poet is competent to do it. The arguments rest on the eminently creative character of poetic translation with all its implications for the permissible audacity of violating the original text according to Paz [12] and Islam [13].

Eco [14] points out that the full meaning of the poetic text also rests on the phonic suggestions, as well as on the rhyme and other sound aspects, such as paronomasia, alluding to Jakobson’s analysis of the example “I like Ike.” It is necessary to emphasize that Jakobson [15] was not referring strictly to poetry, but rather to language poetic function, which he defined as having the message itself as its focus (also for Silvestri [16]). Thus, the poetic function may be the predominant one in the girl’s choice of the adjective “horrible,” in the expression “The horrible Harry,” instead of “dreadful,” “terrible,” “frightful,” or “disgusting,” because it is paronomasia. Eco [14] concludes that the notion of propositional content only applies to utterances that unambiguously represent states of the world and never to those, in which the focus is the message itself, as occurs when the poetic function predominates. The expressive substance, therefore, for Eco [14] is “fundamental with regard to phono-stylistic topics and discursive rhythm in general.” But it is precisely on the expressive substance that many deny the possibility of translation, as for instance, Silvestri [16].

The difficulties in translating poetry and artistic prose had already been pointed out by Schleiermacher [17], for whom “the language musical element that manifests itself in rhythm and intonation is also of special and superior importance” [...] “Therefore, what strikes the sensitive reader of the original work in this respect as characteristic, intentional and effective in tone and mood terms, and as decisive for the speech rhythmic or musical accompaniment must also be transmitted by the translator.”

In an intermediate position, there are theorists such as Dollerup [18], who claim that it is not possible to find equivalences in poetic translation, but rather compensatory strategies, such as the use of traits considered poetic by a given culture.

The concept of seeking equivalences in the target language has been one of the most debated by translation theorists. Schleiermacher [17] in his classic essay on the different methods of translation, when commenting on literary and scientific translation difficulties, points out the difference between “equivalent expression,” which is impossible and “closer” one, which is possible. On the other hand, Coseriu [11], based on his tripartite model of Meaning 1 (the meaning of the source language), Meaning 2 (the meaning in the target language), and Designation, that is, the referent, only

admits equivalences in the designation. For him, “in the translation process itself – it is about finding meanings in the target language that can designate the same thing.” In fact, Coseriu [11] argues that linguistic contents are in an irrational relationship, which he calls incommensurability: in his view, it is the main problem of translation theory, that is, “the problem of identical designation,” with different linguistic means” [11]. However, the identical designation collides with the differences between cultures, spatially and temporally distanced, as ironically emphasizes Nietzsche [19]: “There are translations with honest intentions that are almost falsifications and involuntary vulgarizations of the original, only because their cheerful and courageous time could not be translated – time which, providentially omitted, overcomes all that is dangerous in things and words.”

When dealing with the issue of incommensurability, Eco [14] asserts that, although it is a fact, it cannot be equated with incomparability. The possibility of comparing broadens the translatability horizons, as long as the translator is not restricted to linguistic limits, making use of intertextuality, narrativity, and psychological aspects.

Eco [14] approaches the issue from another perspective, by proposing the existence of a deep meaning in the texts, to which the translator has access through interpretation, superficializing it, when translating it into the target language, even at the cost of lexical and referential violations.

When stating that translations “are not about linguistic types, but about linguistic occurrences” and, when recalling the Chomskyan dichotomy of deep and superficial structures, several implications follow: on the deep meaning, superficialized in the utterances, several factors intervene, which Coseriu [11] calls contexts.

A first factor that Eco [14] mentions is the total work context, exemplified by *al di là dela siepe* translation of his book *Il pendolo di Foucault* (Foucault's Pendulum). It is a literary quotation from the sonnet *L'infinito* by Giacomo Leopardi, like hundreds of others that fill the book, to highlight the style of the three characters. The English translator Weaver did the best translation, with an “explicit reference to Keats”: “we glimpsed endless vistas.” Another factor pointed out by Eco is the cultural differences that interfere in the translation of even banal situations. The French expression “*Cherchez la femme*,” cannot be translated as “Look for the woman,” because its meaning is “where there is trouble, the cause is in some woman” [14].

#### **4. The need for poetic translation**

Despite the immense difficulties that poetic translation faces at, it is necessary. Several theorists point out that it allows those, who do not know the source language, to have access to new art forms and new worldviews, in addition to enriching the target language with new forms of expression. Humboldt [10] cites the example of German meter enrichment, after the Greek classics' translation by Klopstock. I cite the contribution of Plautus and Terence, when they translated the Greek New Comedy and, thus, established the Latin meter.

The enrichment of the target language and culture is not only provided by poetic translation: the impact on the German language and culture with the Bible translation into the vernacular by Luther was pointed out by Humboldt [10]; Eco [14] mentions the radical change in the style of the French philosophical genre, after Heidegger's translation; the same happened with the Italian narratives, after the American authors' translation, before the Second World War. As a result, according to Eco, the

axis of the debate shifts from the relationship between source and target language to the “effect that the translated text has on the target culture.”

## 5. Difficulties in poetic translation

Translating poetry is a challenge, as it implies finding the stylistic resources in the target language, that is, finding, among the parameters that define a given genre, those that will cause on the reader a similar effect to those felt by the readers of the source text.

Borges [20] confessed that if he could translate music from English or German into Spanish, he would be a great poet. Paraphrasing, it can be said that only those who deal with musical effects can translate poetry and this is the biggest challenge, that is, reconciling the meanings intended by the author with aesthetic solutions, finding their aesthetic availability in the target language, or, as stated by Dámaso Alonso [1], “in poetry there is always a motivated link between signifier and signified.”

Given the difficulties in finding equivalences in the target language, particularly with regard to poetic translation, theorists have suggested compensatory strategies to obtain similar effects during reception. Gadamer [6] explains the sometime painful path, in which the translator seeks a middle ground to reconcile the interpretation he makes of the source language text in order to make it available in the target language, through back and forth.

Such a middle ground is also suggested by Goethe [21] when he explains that there are two maxims in translation, the first one being to bring the culture from which the text to be translated comes to the culture of the target language, with an incorporation, while the other consists of an inverse trajectory, that is, subjection “to the conditions, their way of speaking, their particularities.” When in doubt, Goethe suggests the first option.

Schleiermacher [17] conceives the ideal that translation would be, either enabling the reader to meet the author or conversely, for the author to meet the reader. In the second hypothesis, the author would be able to write the work in the target language, which would be the perfect translation. It is surprising that in 1813 Schleiermacher already mentioned “We could outline rules for each of the two methods, taking into account the different genres of discourse” [17].

To get an idea of the difficulties in translating a Petrarquean sonnet, such as the sonnet “From the tower,” I will begin by examining the questions of meter and rhyme. To solve them, strategies are used that involve inversions, additions, omissions, and substitutions of items, preferably purely grammatical ones, although additions and losses of items and/or expressions that refer to external meaning are also used; major displacements generally imply morphosyntactic changes.

In the sphere of meaning, resources are used, such as the use of items belonging to the same semantic field and figures as metaphors. Sometimes, some more audacious resources are used, interpreted as the space of freedom left to the poetic creation of the translator.

Such difficulties increase when the differences between the source language and the target language are compared, as it occurs in the translation from Portuguese into English. The following are systematized and further elaborated on:

- a. American English (AE) has almost 13 oral vowels, including lax and tense ones, unlike Brazilian Portuguese (BP), which has seven oral vowels and five nasal

ones. The contrast between syllables in words, in BP, is marked by the stressed and unstressed syllables, while in AE, it is between lax and tense syllables, which influences the rhythm in both languages;

- b. BP has no affricate consonants, nor dental or glottal fricatives;
- c. Phonotactic rules differ mainly because BP does not admit plosive or nasal consonants at the end of a syllable, therefore, at the end of a word;
- d. The syntactic rules are also different, as the AE does not admit the subject postponed to the verb in declarative affirmative sentences, nor the postposition of the adjective to the noun, as well as it does not admit the ellitic or null subject;
- e. there are many differences in the use of the verbal aspect;
- f. false cognates.

## 6. More serious rhyming problems

The most serious rhyming issues in translation from BP into AE stem from differences between the two phonological systems, particularly with regard to the vowel system, since, as seen, BP has five nasal vowels and AE does not have any although vowel letters in the sonnets are the same, as, a, e, i, o, u, since both written languages adopt the same script, the Latin one. There are also differences regarding nasal consonants that, in English, can appear in syllabic locking, unlike Portuguese, which compensates for this gap with nasalized diphthongs, which are absent in English.

Failure to observe these differences caused several stumbling blocks in the translation by Horta, Vianna and Rivera [22], as shown in the following example, in Cristóbal de Castillejo's sonnet "*Sonho*" ("Dreaming") the translators rhyme "cousa" (/ˈkɔwzɐ/), with "saborosa" (/saboˈɾɔzɐ/), and "formosa" (/foRˈmɔzɐ/).

This constitutes a trap for translating the rhymes, because, although the letters are the same, the grapheme values depend on the phonological system of each language.

Meter problems, particularly in heroic verses, that is, decasyllables with ictus on the sixth foot, stem from many factors, firstly, morphosyntactic issues, such as: the AE does not admit the subject postponed to the verb in declarative affirmative sentences, nor the postposition of the adjective to the noun, as well as it does not admit the ellitic or null subject; secondly, prosody questions, since the contrast between syllables in words, in BP, is marked by the stressed and unstressed syllables, while in AE, it is between lax and tense syllables. Therefore, as I stated above, several strategies are necessary that I will specify below:

- a. inversions, additions, omissions, and substitutions

Example of inversion, addition, and substitution in the translation of the sonnet "From the tower," I found in the fourth verse of the first stanza (**Figure 2**):

- b. another strategy I will comment on deals with semantics and figures, particularly metaphors. It must be assumed that approximate meanings can be found in the source language and in the target one but never the senses, since their respective



*e os mortos eu escuto, olhos despertos.* I hear the deads, the eyes vigilant, open.

**Figure 2.**  
“*e os mortos eu escuto*” into English.

<i>Alma que todo um deus a tem rendido, veias que a tanto fogo humor têm dado, medulas que gloriosas têm ardido,</i>	Soul, that a whole god has surrendered, veins, that have given much humor to fire, marrows that glorious have become burned, your entire body will leave, not your care;
<i>seu corpo deixarão, não seu cuidado; serão cinza, terão, porém, sentido: pó serão, porém, pó enamorado.</i>	they will be gray, but they will be followed: they will be dust, but enamoured powder.

**Figure 3.**  
“*Alma que todo um deus*” into English.

readers do not share the same sociocultural experiences, with spatiotemporal coordinates being implicit. Such a difference already allows the literary translator a wide margin of creativity, without too much discrepancy from the original meanings. Therefore, he will use resources such as replacing words with items belonging to the same semantic field, paraphrases, and tropes. Sometimes the translator eliminates items not essential to the central idea.

- c. The last strategy deals with syntactic parallelism, exemplified in the bellow sonnet “The eyes will close the last.” There are three subjects of split clauses, asyndetically coordinated, each followed by an adjective clause (in the first tercet), creating a tension that is solved in the last stanza, with the implicit resumption of the three vocatives, first, in an asyndetically coordinated clause, then in a coordinated adversative clause, and finally, in a clause in which only the predicate is coordinated by the adversative (**Figure 3**):

## 7. The sonnet

The sonnet is a poetic form that dates from the thirteenth century, having originated in Sicily, at the court of Frederick II, and coexists with Provence poetry, but the poet Guittone D’Arezzo was the one who established its form. The first great classics of the genre are Petrarch and Dante. The first bequeathed its name to one of the most widespread sonnet forms, the Petrarchean sonnet, adopted by Camões. Shakespeare composed his sonnets in the English form, with three quartets and a couplet. In Portugal, Sá de Miranda introduced the sonnet and several other poetic genres, constituting the so-called *dolce stil nuovo*, after having made a trip to Italy in the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

The structure adopted in Quevedo’s sonnets is Petrarchean. Despite being criticized, the sonnet continues to be widely practiced. The great Brazilian poet Francisco

Carvalho [23] asks: "After all, if the sonnet is really out of fashion, outdated in form and content, why do so many people continue to write it with such conviction?"

I will begin by explaining the units of which the verse is constituted in the sonnet. They are the feet (probably a metonymy derived from the rhythm marking), and they have their origin in the Greek lyric, later adopted by the Romans. Plautus and Terence were the Latin meter creators, when they translated the New Greek Comedy. We can therefore conclude that the translator's role goes far beyond translation. In both Greek and Latin, the phonological accent is based on duration, as it is the case in English, and therefore, so it is the meter. Thus, what counts is how the long and short syllables are articulated among themselves, forming the units we call feet, depending on how many they are and the position they occupy. It is a binary system: the limit of possible combinations is determined by our processing capacity. In languages whose phonological accent is based on stress, as is the case of Portuguese and Spanish, an equivalence is made while translating poetry.

See which feet usually occur, with their respective names and formalizations, in the decasyllable (ten-syllable verse), used in the sonnet "From the tower":

Iambic (I), whose formalization is - /, meaning a short or unstressed syllable, followed by a long or stressed syllable, as in the beginning of the first verse of the second stanza of "From the tower": "If not always implied, they are revealed."

Trocheu (T), whose formalization is / -, meaning a long or stressed syllable, followed by a short or unstressed syllable, as in the last three words of the second verse: "*com poucos, porém doutos livros juntos,*", in English, "with few, although be learned readings jointly." In Brazilian Portuguese, the trochaic form predominates in nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

Pirríqueo (P), whose formalization is - -, meaning a short or unstressed syllable, followed by another short or unstressed syllable, as in the beginning of the third verse of the second stanza: "*e em silenciosos, músicos conjuntos*", in English, "in a counterpoint music silently."

Espondeu (E), whose formalization is //, meaning long or stressed syllable, followed by long or stressed syllable. The single example in "From the tower" is "Dom Ioseph."

Anapesto (A), whose formalization is - - /, meaning short or unstressed syllable, followed by another short or unstressed syllable, and another long or stressed syllable, like the first feet of the first line of the sonnet: "Retirado na paz destes desertos," in English, "In the peace of these deserts, my heart broken."

Dactylic (D), whose formalization is / - -, meaning a long or stressed syllable, followed by two short or unstressed syllables, as in the first feet of "*destes desertos*" in English, "peace of these deserts," from the first verse of the first stanza: "Retirado na paz destes desertos," in English, "In the peace of these deserts, my heart broken."

## 8. Micro-analysis of "From the tower" translation

See Figures 4 and 5.

*Da Torre* (BP version)

*Retirado na paz destes desertos,  
com poucos, porém doutos livros juntos,  
vivo em conversação com os defuntos,  
e os mortos eu escuto, olhos despertos.*

*Se não sempre entendidos, descobertos,  
emendam, ou fecundam meus assuntos;  
e em silenciosos, músicos conjuntos  
à vida em sonho falam sempre abertos.*

*As grandes almas ceifa a morte ingente,  
e a vingar as injúrias de outrora  
os doutos livros, Dom Ioseph, isentam.*

*Em fuga irrevogável foge a hora;  
mas sempre o melhor cálculo assenta  
no que a lição e estudos nos melhora.*

From the Tower (English version)

In the peace of these deserts, my heart broken  
with few, although be learned readings jointly,  
in conversation with deads, I live coyly,  
I hear the deads, the eyes vigilant, open.

If not always discovered, ever woken,  
they amend my affairs eternally;  
in a counterpoint music silently  
to the dream of life, they speak awoken.

The noble souls that death from us excepts,  
the injuries avenging of back days  
in changeless flight the hour flees away:  
The learned books, Dom Joseph, them exempt.

But always the best calculus attempts  
in the lesson improving our ways.

**Figure 4.**  
“Da Torre” (BP version) into English.

*Desde la torre*

*Retirado en la paz de estos desiertos,  
pero doctos libros juntos,  
vivo en conversación con los difuntos,  
y escucho con mis ojos a los muertos.*

*Si no siempre entendidos, siempre abiertos,  
o enmiendan, o fecundan mis asuntos;  
y en músicos callados contrapuntos  
al sueño de la vida hablan despiertos.*

*Las grandes almas que la muerte ausenta,  
de injurias de los años vengadora,  
libra, ¡oh gran don Ioseph!, docta la emprenta.*

*En fuga irrevocable hoye la hora;  
pero aquélla el mejor cálculo cuenta,  
que en la lección y estudios nos mejora.*

**Figure 5.**  
*Desde la torre* (Quevedo’s original).

## 9. Stylistic analysis and the search for aesthetic effects in translation

In the BP version first word, “*Retirado*,” we are faced at its polysemy, as it can have the meaning of someone who seeks peace in a retreat, as well as that of the banishment imposed on Quevedo: I lean toward the second interpretation, and I used the metaphor “my heart broken,” image of suffering. In the second verse, the author alludes to the confiscation of his books, when arrested in 1639. The adjective “*doutos*,” in the second verse, translated into “learned” is repeated in the last verse of the first tercet: the same positions are maintained in the English translation.

In the first stanza, there were only difficulties in the fourth verse, as “*mortos*” does not rhyme with “*deserts*”: I made syntactic transpositions, dragging “*os mortos*” to the beginning of the fourth verse (the same with “the deads” in the English translation) and drawing “*despertos*,” which was at the end of the second stanza, to crown the end of the first one (the same with “vigilant, open” in the English translation).

The effect of these changes was the topicalization of “the deads.” It is worth emphasizing that this verse is one of the most beautiful, created by Quevedo. Not only does the author use synesthesia and an oxymoron, but, as it is so often the case in literature, he anticipates neuroscience scientific findings, by proving that, after the written word recognition by the reading neurons, its acoustic images are internally heard. A similar anticipation of the unconscious was recorded by Virgil [24], in the *Aeneid*, when he uses the expression “*alta in mente*.”

In the second stanza, I made some lexical changes in the last word of the third verse, due to the rhymes. I believe they did not cause major semantic violations. The first verse is bimembre, and this resource, very Petrarquean, was kept. The third verse, however, was problematic, as “counterpoints” does not end in “ly.” To keep the meter, I reversed the order and translated “*e em silenciosos, músicos conjuntos*” into “in a counterpoint music silently” and the oxymoron was kept. The word “counterpoint,” in addition to be in Quevedo’s original version, connoting antithesis, was one of the Baroque musical forms, cultivated by J. S. Bach. It was possible to keep in the translation the anastrophe in the fourth verse, another Baroque characteristic.

It was not possible to keep always the same lexicon to obtain the rhymes, because the word endings and its suffixes are phonologically distinct, in the two languages. Sometimes, I used a syntactic resource, transforming an adjective into an adverb, like “jointly” for “*juntos*” (first stanza, second verse) or “silently” for “*silenciosos*” (second stanza, third verse); other times I added words, reinforcing the original semantic field as the word “coily” from “in conversation with deads, I live coily,” for “*vivo em conversação com os defuntos*,” (first stanza, third verse), or as the word “vigilant” from “I hear the deads, the eyes vigilant, open” for “*e os mortos eu escuto, olhos despertos*.” The dearest topos to Spanish poetry, the brevity of life, opens the last tercet, closed in the last two lines by a correlation.

## 10. Computational semantics contributions

The methodology of the present research resulted primarily from manually constructed sources that could have benefited from computational supervised learning, since the manual specification and the automatic acquisition of knowledge are solidly interrelated; however, the automatic induction of semantic information is guided and dependent on manually specified information.

One of the issues most worked on by Computational Semantics is the automatic disambiguation of the meaning of words: “Senseval was the first open community-based evaluation exercise for Word Sense Disambiguation programs” [25], essential to literary translation, in particular, poetry. From the polysemic nature of words [26], ambiguity multiplies in the situational context of statements, in which the enunciator, although using the same *significant* [27], denotes a new meaning to the referent, thanks to time, which is never repeated, with all the repercussions on his/her prior knowledge.

Computational Semantics seeks to solve this paradox, making use of databases and computational statistics, through which it was possible to make available the contextual patterns where the most frequent meanings of a significant data occur [28].

The following questions remain for literary translation:

- a. Are situational communicative contexts the same in spatially and temporally different cultures?
- b. Are stylistic resources, such as meter, translatable, or are equivalences sought?
- c. Although linguistic communication is based on the assumption that the receiver expects new information from the enunciator (given/new; topic/comment), why do we feel pleasure when rereading the same poem dozens of times, or why does the child protest when we change a word while retelling the same story?

## 11. Conclusions

To understand the strategies used for translating Quevedo’s sonnet “From the tower,” I framed them in a theoretical discussion: translation is a creative process. It allows interpreting, according to Gadamer [6] and Theodor [7], as the source text, capturing the linguistic meanings emerged from the author’s intratextual and intertextual relationships with extra-linguistic information, coming from his experiences, the moment and the historical-cultural space, according to Coseriu [11]. For this reason, I began the chapter with a historical context and with an evocation of the remarkable episodes in Quevedo’s life that served as a background for the topos in his work and, in particular, for the sonnet that is the main focus of the paper. Only in this way we will be able to capture the allusion to prison and isolation, in the first verse of “From the tower” and the solace he finds with the books company.

However, when it comes to poetry, in addition to the general translation characterization, this genre requires that aesthetic aspects be prioritized, as mentioned by Jakobson [15], Paes [4], Eco [14], Silvestri [16], and Schleiermacher [17], such as meter, rhythm, rhymes, alliteration, paronomasia, and figures that relate to the signifier. Some authors even deny the possibility of translating poetry like Humboldt [10]. For this reason, a great deal of space was devoted to the examination of the sonnet form and rhymes.

In this chapter, I presented the strategies I used in the translation of the sonnet “From the tower” to achieve aesthetic effects similar to those of the Brazilian Portuguese version, given the phonological and morphological differences between it and American English, so, it was quite difficult to benefit from Computational Semantics supervised learning,

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The author published another article in Portuguese, based on the same theoretical references, dealing with the difficulties of poetic translation of Quevedo's sonnets, however, from the original Spanish into Brazilian Portuguese, entitled: "OS MORTOS EU ESCUTO, OLHOS DESPERTOS: HOMENAGEM A MOACYR SCLiar" (THE DEAD I LISTEN WITH MY OPEN EYES: HOMAGE TO MOACYR SCLiar), in the journal *Lingüística* Vol. 32-1, June 2016: 79-93 ISSN 2079-312X online ISSN 1132-0214 printed DOI: 10.5935/2079-312X.20160005.

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