Pornodyssey: translating rhythm, register and raunch

Pornodyssey: traduzindo ritmo, registro e rebuliço

*Jennifer Sarah Cooper**
jennifersarahj@gmail.com
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte

_____

ABSTRACT: The celebrated novel *Pornopopéia,* by Reinaldo Moraes, represents a type of joycean *Ulysses* of the city of São Paulo's *underground* in the excesses of the 1980s extended to the beginning of the 21st century. Despite its importance in contemporary Brazilian literature and perhaps because of its literary and linguistic complexity in producing its distinct humor, it has never before been translated into English. This article reports some results of a post-doctoral research in which we carried out a literary, commented translation of this epic novel. The theoretical framework of the research was based in general on a model of language from the perspective of the Theory of Genre and Register (TGR) (MARTIN; ROSE, 2008) and on Berman's concept of '*tradutology'* (2012), while the translation practice was informed by adaptations of Rothenberg's concept of 'total translation' (2010), Frota's Jazz Theory (1989), Toury's 'norms' (1995), Milton's (1998) discussion of metaphors for the practice of translation. Some results point to the following features as contributing to humor and presenting distinct challenges in the process of translating them: *code-mixing* and *switching*, punning haiku, rapid changes in registers from erudite to street, sonority (hard rhymes), neologisms, blends, and other linguistic, semantic and generic transgressions, along with those of a social nature. Ultimately, with this research we hope to offer the anglophone reader the pleasure of this text by Reinaldo Moraes, simultaneously disseminating Brazilian literature and culture to a broad anglophone speech community through the translation, and ultimately contributing to reflections on the practice of translation in translation studies.
KEYWORDS: Literary Translation. Reinaldo Moraes. Pornopopéia. Contemporary Brazilian Literature

RESUMO: O romance celebrado, *Pornopopéia*, por Reinaldo Moraes, representa uma espécie de Ulysses joyceano do *underground* da cidade de São Paulo, nos

* Jennifer Sarah Cooper, PhD., is a professor at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN), in the Department of Modern Foreign Languages and Literatures, carrying out research in the field of applied linguistics and translation. Her translations of Brazilian poetry are available in various anthologies and she is currently collaborating on an Anthology of the Americas with Jerome Rothenberg and Javier Taboada. She holds a PhD in Language Studies – Applied Linguistics - UFRN; a Master's in Comparative Literature – literary translation – San Francisco State University (SFSU); and a Bachelor's in English – Creative Wring, SFSU

J. Cooper

excessos dos anos 80 estendidos até o início do século 21. Apesar da sua importância na literatura brasileira contemporânea e talvez por causa da sua complexidade linguística e literária na produção do humor distinta da obra, nunca foi traduzida para o inglês. Este artigo reporta em alguns resultados de uma pesquisa de estágio pós-doutoral, em que realizamos a tradução literária comentada dessa obra épica, *Pornopopéia*, traduzida como *Pornodyssey*. O arcabouço teórico-metodológico da pesquisa baseou-se de forma geral em um modelo de língua pela perspectiva da Teoria de Gênero e Registro (TGR) (MARTIN; ROSE, 2008) e no conceito da tradutologia de Berman (2012), enquanto a prática tradutória orientada nos conceitos adaptados de '*total translation*' (tradução total) de Rothenberg (2010), a Teoria de Jazz de Frota (1998), 'normas' de Toury (1995), a discussão de Milton (1998) sobre metáforas para a prática tradutória. Alguns resultados apontam às seguintes características que contribuem ao humor e que apresentam desafios distintos na prática de traduzi-los: *code-mixing* e *switching*, trocadilhos, haiku, a velocidade de mudanças entre múltiplos registros desde eruditas aos de rua, a sonoridade, neologismos, *blends* e transgressões linguísticas, semânticas e genéricas, além das transgressões de cunho social. A partir dessas reflexões e das de tradução em si, esperamos oferecer para o leitor anglófono o prazer da leitura da obra de Reinaldo Moraes, ao mesmo tempo divulgar a literatura e a cultura brasileira para uma ampla comunidade de fala anglófona pela tradução, e por fim, contribuir com reflexões da prática tradutória para os estudos da tradução.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Tradução Literária. Reinaldo Moraes. Pornopopéia. Literatura Brasileira Contemporânea.

> *According to Aristotle, a child does not begin to laugh before the fortieth day after its birth; only from that moment does it become a human being.*
> *Bakhtin*

1 Introduction

Rendering a joke, a pun, a neologism, code switching and mixing, and other linguistic and semantic trangressions from one language to another is akin to attempting to touch the sun — a blistering challenge. Rising to this challenge, our translation, of the contemporary epic novel *Pornopopéia*, by Brazilian author Reinaldo Moraes, entitled *Pornodyssey*, on which this article is based, represents the first English language translation of works by this author. Born and raised in São Paulo, Moraes' epic, referred to as a type of joycean *Ulysses* or a guimarães rosaian *Grande Sertão Veredas* of the 80s São Paulo underground, extended into the 21st

century. *Pornopopéia,* unravels the story of Zeca, a failed independent filmaker who, lacking money-making prospects, succumbs to writing commercial video scripts — sizzle reels. Narrated in the first person, by Zeca himself, the book traces the picaresque and comic catastrophes that unravel as he procrastinates writing a sizzle-reel script promoting chicken sausages for the Itaquerambu Ranch sausage and links company. Zeca, according to Moraes (2009) is:

> […] a total junkie who gets involved in a thousand shenanigans over many nights, all mediated by blow, weed, brew and Jack Daniels, with a kaleidoscopic and confused vision of the culture [...] What seduced me was to transform Pedro Malasartes, that character I read in collections of naive picaresque adventures, into an urban, contemporary dude. That's how Zeca was born, this guy without a superego, the opposite of me, who gets involved in every kind of situation with no respect for any moral value or barrier, speaker of a totally unsublimated language, which explains the torrent of cussing, without ever ceding to euphemism: his speech is a total renunciation of lyricism[1].

This "self-hero,"[2] as the character calls himself, is one in a series of *malandros* devised by Moraes, who enjoys a writing career that has spanned over three decades. A prolific novelist, he is also the author of film scripts, television series and soaps, collections of short stories, a youth novel, a children's book and translations of various works by authors such as Bukowski, Pynchon, and Burroughs, among others. Of his six novels, included are: the cult classic, *Tanto Faz* —

---

[1] TN: All English translations of works not previously translated/published in English are our own. In Portuguese: "O Zeca é um baita dum junkie que se mete em mil tretas pela madrugada, tudo mediado pelo pó, pela maconha, pela breja (cerveja) e pelo Jack Daniels, com uma visão caleidoscópica e confusa da cultura - define Reinaldo, em entrevista por telefone, da capital paulista.--O que me seduzia era transformar o Pedro Malasartes, aquele personagem que eu lia em coleções de aventuras picarescas ingênuas, num cara urbano, contemporâneo. Nasceu assim o Zeca, esse sujeito sem superego, exatamente o contrário de mim, que se mete em tudo que é situação sem respeitar nenhum valor, nenhuma barreira moral, dono de uma linguagem totalmente dessublimada, daí a torrente de palavrões, daí ele não lançar mão de nenhum eufemismo: sua fala é uma renúncia total ao lirismo." (MORAES, Reinaldo. "Autor do cultuado 'Tanto faz', ícone da literatura." Entrevistado por Arnaldo Bloch. O Globo Cultura Online, 13/06/2009. Available at: https://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/autor-do-cultuado-tanto-faz-icone-da-literatura-dos-anos-80-reinaldo-moraes-volta-tona-3193590. Accessed: Jan. 2019).

[2] As the protagonist, Zeca, calls himself after he comes close to drowning from a leg cramp while swimming at a beach on the coast of São Paulo where he hides out from the law after a series of mishaps that put him in the spotlight, as a prime suspect in the murder of a drug dealer, in a police shoot out with the, PCC (*Primeiro Comando da Capital* – Captial's First Command), notorious street gang from São Paulo. The title of 'self-hero' (*auto-heroi*) pokes fun at both the trope of the 'anti-hero', and the narcissim of "self-help" genres taken to the extreme. Describing the near drowning, Zeca proclaims, "As paradoxical as this may sound, the fact is I heroically risked my life to save myself. I am a "self-hero". I am eternally grateful to myself." In Portuguese: "Por paradoxal que isto soe. O fato é que arrisquei heroicamente minha vida pra salvar a mim mesmo. Sou meu auto-herói. Devo-me gratidão eterna." (MORAES, 2009, p. 417)

J. Cooper

Whatever (1984)[3], the critically acclaimed, 475 page, epic *Pornopopéia* — Pornodyssey (2009) and the recently released *Maior que o Mundo* — Bigger than the World (2019). He has been described as being "one of the greatest living writers in the Portuguese language," (PEREIRA; REBINSKI, 2019) today.[4] *Pornopopéia*, his fifth novel, which has outsold the other five, won international and national critical acclaim. Dom Phillips, from *The Guardian International* edition, writes: "Moraes' novel, *Pornopopéia,* exploded on to the Brazilian literary scene in 2009, like a São Paulo Trainspotting — ribald, hilarious and disturbing. Critics loved its heady mix of high and low culture and the way it riffs on the rhythms and melody of its language, like a jazz musician" (PHILLIPS, 2014). Brazilian writer and critic, Ronaldo Bressane (2009) echoes this assessment: "Certainly, *Pornopopéia* is one of the funniest books ever published in the Portuguese language."[5]

In addition, his work has been the subject of academic studies including critical analysis by one of Brazil's foremost scholars of erotic literature and professor of philosophy at the University of São Paulo, Elaine Robert Moraes (2015), — no relation to the author —who sees kinship in the transgressions and libertine drives of Sade's characters and Moraes', particularly in Sade's *Story of Juliette*, with Moraes' *Pornodyssey*. Ultimately, E. Moraes sumarizes the affinity of the two, thus:

> The erotic fiction, as is read in Sade and in Reinaldo, correct the world according to the imperatives of desire, without having to observe any constraints, be they of a moral, ethical, political, religious or psychological order. As in debasement, everything comes down and is sucked down. Anything goes when you are, in Zeca's words, "copulating in letters" (E. MORAES, 2015, p. 104)[6].

As for the "self-hero" of *Pornopopeia*, E. Moraes weighs in proposing that: "Washed-up libertine and has-been *malandro,* Zeca is imposed as one of the best crafted figures of excess in Brazilian prose fiction" (E. MORAES, 2015, p.102)[7].

---

[3] This and the other titles of works by Moraes are our translations since they have not been previously published in English translation.

[4] In Portuguese: "Reinaldo Moraes é hoje um dos maiores escritores vivos da língua portuguesa" (PEREIRA; REBINSKI, 2019).

[5] In Portuguese*:* "Certamente, Pornopopéia é um dos livros mais engraçados já publicados na língua portuguesa*"* (BRESSANE, 2009).

[6] In Portuguese: "A ficção erótica, tal como se lê em Sade e em Reinaldo, corrige o mundo segundo dos imperativos do desejo, sem ter que observar qualquer constrangimento, seja ele de ordem moral, ética, política, religiosa ou psicológica. Como num desabamento, tudo vem abaixo e é tragado pelo baixo. Vale tudo quando se está, para dizer com Zeca, "copulando em letras" (MORAES, E., 2015, p.104).

[7] In Portuguese: "Libertino rebaixado e malandro decaído, Zeca se impõe como uma das mais bem acabadas figuras do excesso da prosa de ficção brasileira." (MORAES, E., 2015, p. 102).

This engaging *malandro* has also received academic attention in a number of Master's theses and doctoral dissertations, offering literary analyses from diverse approaches. In one academic study, J.D. Paz (2012) examines Moraes' oeuvre and *Pornopopéia* in particular, as a type of '*corpo-escritura*'- 'body-writing', largely informed by the theories of Walter Benjamin. In his Master's dissertation, Oliveira (2015), develops a study on *malandragem* and pleasure in Moraes' work, from a philosophical perspective in dialogue with Žižek, and Foucault, among others. Marques Filho (2015) traces literary devices.

While many studies focus on the social, moral and sexual transgressions presented in the novel – the general *sacanagem* or *putaria*[8] – this article diverges from these studies and analyses by focusing on the particular *linguistic* and *semantic putaria* that specifically contribute to the humor. Humor is, clearly, the salient feature of the work. The practice of recreating these maneuvers in English — the practice of translation — is itself a type of method of analysis insofar as translation is interpretation of the utmost intense order, requiring total scrutiny of every aspect of the novel and the ability to recreate it in another language/culture. As Rabassa[9] reminds us, "translation is the most intimate reading one can do of a text." Also, that a "dog" in one culture is a fluffy plaything in one culture a devil in another. "Among some peoples, Muslims, for example, the dog is considered a vile creature, worthy of a swift kick, while other, notably those of northern Europe, dote on him. So that "dog" can never translate *perro* in all of its hidden senses" (RABASSA, 1989, p.2). Nothing more clearly illustrates this relationship than humor and lexico-semantic transgression. What is funny/fucky in one culture may not be in another.

Thus, riding shotgun to the general social-moral-sexual libertinism and transgressions, in this work, the linguistic-discursive-formal types, include: generic parodying of many microgenres including haikus, poetry, song lyrics, e-mails, insults, etc.), semantic punning, code-switching and mixing, zeugma and other types of polysemy, and linguistic, such as neologisms through morphological bending and blending of phonemes and morphemes bilingually. These are joined with the fast paced switching of the many registers – another type of liberty. It is the freedom of

---

[8] These are difficult terms to translate into American English and are abundant in the novel. They generally mean – borrowing a term from Amy Winhouse – fuckery.
[9] The late Gregory Rabassa was a distinguished translator and professor of Romance Languages at Queens College and the Graduate program at the City College of New York. He has translate works by Cortázar, Clarice Lispector, Garcia Marquez, including his celebrated translation of One Hundred Years of Solitude, among other Latin American authors.

disparate voices to encounter/collide in a type of Rabelaisian "language of the Marketplace," as proposed by Bakhtin: "forms of familiar speech — curses, profanities, and oaths — and second the colloquialisms of the marketplace: the *cris de Paris* and the announcements made during fairs by quacks and vendors of drugs" (BAKHTIN, 1984, p. 153). Along with the importance of register switches/ encounters/collisions, Moraes' fascination and supernatural ease in playing with the sound of language is another characteristic feature of the work. Moraes affirms his attention to sound in language as: "a linguistic kick, a little mania, I am very attentive to the sound of words" (MORAES, 2014).

It is in this vein that we endeavored to preserve the sound and the rhythms, the colliding registers, and the linguistic rambunctiousness of the work in order to preserve the novel's salient feature — the humor, which Moraes characterizes as:

> […] an insidious acid that unmercifully corrodes the solemnity of ideological, religious, melodramatic, political and even poetic discourse. But I don't think everybody has the stomach for the type of humor I've been dishing out in my books, this kind of humor tends toward the crude and frankly obscene. Some people have already accused me of never having left the back of the class in the 5th grade. I laughed my ass off when I heard that (MORAES, interviewed by REBINSKI, 2019)[10].

In the back or the front of wherever Moraes may be, nonetheless, it is clear that when faced with translating his work the translator's task is to produce another work that is equally crude and hilarious, producing this acidic humor in English as well through various types of linguistic play and transgressions - tricks. The remainder of this article describes some particular challenges in rendering these tricks in English and to this end, is divided into two sections that cover: a brief description of the theory on which the translation is based and the methodology by which it was carried out; and a description of specific examples of these challenges and solutions, followed by final remarks of synthesis and that point to future works.

2 Translation of a Picaresque Underworld — theory and methodology

---

[10] In the Português: "O humor é um ácido insidioso que corrói sem piedade a solenidade dos discursos ideológicos, religiosos, melodramáticos, políticos e até mesmo poéticos. Mas penso que nem todo mundo tem estômago pro tipo de humor que eu venho praticando nos meus livros, humor esse que tende ao esculacho e à franca obscenidade. Já houve quem me acusasse de nunca ter saído do fundão da classe da quinta série. Caguei de rir ouvindo isso." (MORAES, entrevistado por REBINSKI, 2019).

The theory and methodology for carrying out this translation of *Pornopopeia* drew on both linguist and literary perspectives. On the one hand, we relied on a stratified model of language proposed by Hallidayian systemic functional linguistics (SFL), observing the dialectical relationship between context and language, further developed in the Theory of Genre and Register (TGR) by Martin and Rose (2008). Genre from this perspective is understood as "staged, goal-oriented social process. Social because we participate in genres with other people; goal-oriented because we use genres to get things done; staged because it usually takes us a few steps to reach our goals." (MARTIN; ROSE, 2008). Genres are the patterns that a speech community recognizes as constituting a given social practice. The dialectical relationship between the strata: context of culture (genre), context of situation (register), and language (lexicogrammar). Given the culture (genre) and the situation (register) the language can be predicted. The reverse then is also true. Given the language, the situation (register) and the culture (genre) can be deduced. Importantly, in this translation, the register variables of field (what), tenor (who the interlocutors are and the roles they play- the relationships of power), and mode (how- the channels of communication) offer systematic categories that allow us to minutely observe a general sense of rule breaking, subversion of expectations, linguistic and semantic *sacanagem* abundant in the novel. This model highlights the indissociable relationship between language and culture, which presents a fundamental challenge in the attempt to instantiate genre and register through the lexicogrammar from one language to another. Thus, from this perspective, choices available, when moving from the source language to the target language, require: 1) finding analogous cultures/situations (registers) in the target language, making use of the language that actually circulates in those genres of those registers to recreate the work; 2) invent language that, while it may not currently circulate within the given genre/register of a particular speech community, could imaginably circulate within the speech community in question. Both of these choices have their pitfalls, discussed within the analysis. Ultimately, both are employed under specific conditions.

On the other hand, in the translation carried out for this research, we have been guided as well by reflections on the practice from a literary perspective. This perspective draws from the metaphors for the practice of translation and the role of the translator, by writers and translators themselves. As Milton (1998) points out, there are many metaphors for the practice of translation and the role of the translator

J. Cooper

that range from the most negative, such as: "servant or slave, and the work of the translator as being infinitely inferior to the original"(MILTON, 1998, p.2).[11] Metaphors also extend to the most positive, such as those at the beginning of the 19th century in Germany: "The translator is seen as an esoteric demigod, a 'morning star', a prophet, the guide to Utopia" (MILTON, 1998, p.2).[12] More recent metaphors for the practice of translation and the role of the translator include those that refer to the act of translation as *a task* (BENJAMIN, 1992). Rabassa (1989), addressing the idea of equivalence, proposes translation as *snowflakes* since no two are exactly alike. Then there are the metaphors of translation as *performance* and the translator as *actor* (MAIER,1994). Translation has been likened to *walking a tight rope* with your legs tied (DRYDEN, 1922), to *a world symphony*, as Octavio Paz (1992) proposes, and, drawing from Paz's premise, Frota (1998) calls it *jazz*. Each of these metaphors highlight different aspects of the endeavor. In Benjamin's case, *task* emphasizes the arduous aspect — a task, a feat, herculean: "It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language which is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his re-creation of that work. For the sake of pure language he breaks through decayed barriers of his own language" (BENJAMIN, 1992, p. 80, 81). For Rabassa, the making of *snowflakes* highlights the alchemical aspect: "A word is nothing than a metaphor for an object, or another word [...] In light of the above, then, translation is really what we might call transformation. It is a form of adaptation, making the new metaphor fit the original metaphor [...]" (RABASSA, 1992, p.2). The metaphors for translation proposed by Maier, Dryden, and Frota are derived from a staged event, but spotlight different qualities of that staging. Maier's metaphor highlights the "ephemeral nature of performance" (MAIER, 2012, p.5). Dryden's metaphor calls attention to the risk:

> 'Tis much like dancing on ropes with fettered legs: man may shun a fall by using caution; but the gracefulness of motion is not to be expected: and when we have said the best of it, 'tis but a foolish task; for no sober man would put himself into a danger for the applause of escaping without breaking his neck (DRYDEN, 1998, p.18).

---

[11] In Portuguese: "servo ou escravo, e o trabalho do tradutor como sendo infinitamente inferior ao original"
[12] In Portuguese: "O tradutor é visto como um esotérico semideus, uma "estrela da manhã", um profeta, um guia para a Utopia"

On the contrary, Frota embraces risk — translation as jazz relies on "improvisation" and "spontaneous discoveries" (FROTA, 1995, p. 35). Lastly, O. Paz's *world symphony* (1992), emphasizes the interdependence of writers and poets, proposing that they are constantly rewriting one another, and likening this to improvisation as well, but on a macro level. "[...] if we take a step backward, we can understand that we are hearing a concert, and that the musicians, playing different instruments, following neither conductor nor score, are in the process of collectively composing a symphony in which improvisation is inseparable from translation and creation is indistinguishable from imitation" (PAZ, 1992 , p. 160, 161).

Despite their differences, one thing all of these distinct metaphors share, is the tension between the source and the target text with regard to the concept of 'originality'. In the translation of this work, and for this research, we adopt Octavio Paz' approach to translation as *rewriting*:

> No text can be completely original because language itself, in its very essence, is already a translation — first from the nonverbal world, and then, because each sign and each phrase is a translation of another sign, another phrase. All texts are originals because each translation has its own distinctive character. Up to a point, each translation is a creation and thus constitutes a unique text (PAZ, 1992, p. 154).

Along these lines, thus, a first step in the methodology was to recognize that the aim of this translation is to configure an English version as acidic, crude, and hilarious, as exuberant in the linguistic play, as the source text, avoiding copious footnotes that explain rather than perform the humor. However, a series of notes at the end of the academic version was included for the purpose of study.

In addition to the aforementioned linguistic and literary considerations, approaching the choice of analogue or invention, one expression, word or sound over another, there are three that informed the methodology of this particular translation: *Operational Norms* (TOURY, 1995), *Total Translation* (ROTHENBERG, 2004), and *Jazz* (FROTA, 1998).

Even though the first perspective relies on the practice of translation studies developed by Toury (1995) in which the investigation of norms is not necessarily for the application and carrying out of successful translations, but to better understand the operating mechanisms in various approaches to the practice of translation, there were ways in which we adapted operational norms for that purpose. According to Toury (1995):

> Operational norms, in turn, may be conceived of as directing the decisions made during the act of translation itself. They affect the matrix of the text -- i.e., the modes of distributing linguistic material in it -- as well as the textual make-up and verbal formulation as such. They thus govern -- directly or indirectly --the relationships as well that would obtain between the target and source texts; i.e., what is more likely to remain invariant under transformation and what will change (TOURY, 1995, p.58).

Applying Toury's approach to looking outside of the text for particular patterns to establish operational norms within the text, given that Moraes is also a translator, we also examined Moraes' translations of works cited by the narrator, namely, Bukowski's *Women* (2011) and Burrough's *Junky* (2013). In the case of both of these translations, although the pace is slower than Moraes, they gave us suggestions for vocabulary, but *mainly* helped us 'develop an ear' (O. PAZ, 1992; FROTA, 1998) for a certain register of a *malandro* figure akin to Zeca. Other references in the novel we researched included song lyrics by the Doors, which gave us *chucha* for dog vagina. Also included were Sade's *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, and Miller's *Opus Pistorum*, which gave us 'cuntlet' for *bucetinha*, and so forth.

The second theory speaks to the importance of sound values. Initially it may seem incoherent to rely on a theory that speaks to indigenous north American oral tradition, as in Rothenberg's *total translation* approach. However, we see this as relevant considering Moraes' admitted keen attention to sound and non-literary voices. In this way, we have established an *operational norm* that prioritizes the sound — sound *is* meaning – as Rothernberg's *total translation* implies. To enact the sound Rothenberg offers us this:

> In the big books –the ethnopoetic ones in particular –I was engaged with a range of processes, related to but not always identical with that of translation. Some of those — the more clearly translational ones – involved experimental forms of translation with perhaps an emphasis on the translation of oral poetry and –conversely –of visual poetry –a fascination with what had been thought of as untranslatable forms of poetry. In "the 17 Horse-songs of Frank Mitchell"-- from sources in Navajo—I engaged in what Dennis Tedlock and I were calling "total translation," going beyond the semantic level to try to find equivalents for the non-lexical vocables in Navajo song and even—most outrageously for me—for the music—the melodies—by which the words and sounds were carried (ROTHENBERG, 2004, p. 1).

As Rothenberg attends to sound values, we too aspire to approach a *total translation* in reproducing these sound values, with the sense that the sound itself is meaning. For example, we prioritized preserving the rhymes (mostly hard end

rhymes) of the twenty six poems contained in the novel, aware that it is precisely these sounds that produce the humor and the meanings as the sound enacts them. The hard end rhymes and cadence produce the universe of nursery rhymes, enacting meanings of infancy, innocence, which, employed in a ditty hailing the virtues of a cheap fuck, produces a semantic clash between the sound's meaning and the word's meaning to hilarious effect.

Similarly, we honed the sounds of the voices from the various social registers, the language being a realization of the cultural and situational contexts of the characters, so that these voices from the street brim with vitality, clearly distinct from one another, and colliding, resulting in the humor of type of 'register' shock. For example, in one instance Zeca quotes a passage in Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* in which Swan's friend, Bloch, maligns bourgeois norms, having upset everyone in Swan's household by arriving an hour and a half late for dinner, stating, unapologetically:

> I never allow myself to be influenced in the smallest degree either by atmospheric disturbances or by the arbitrary divisions of what is known as Time. I would willingly reintroduce to society the opium pipe of China or the Malayan kriss, but I am wholly and entirely without instruction in those infinitely more pernicious (besides being quite bleakly bourgeois) implements, the umbrella and the watch (PROUST, 1982, p.99)

Zeca immediately follows with, "No shit, man" (*pode crer*), resulting in this hilarious collision of high and low registers. In another example sex workers shout insults in the street to Lolla, the transgendered dealer, crashing together homophobic and heterophobic insults intensified by the play of the sound of the words, enacting a spontaneous streetwalker-dealer poetry slam, on the actual street. Also with regard to sound, we paid attention to preserving, alliterations, internal rhymes and rhythms generally found throughout the prose. Without these clashes, in which the sound is essential, there is no transgression, and the expressions may as well be wearing watches and carrying umbrellas.

Finally, the Jazz theory of translation proposed in Frota's (1998) Master's thesis of translations of short stories by Clarice Lispector, was helpful in both in practical application and inspiring the creative drive. In it, adopting Paz's metaphor of the need for 'developing an ear' in translation, she compares the process as akin to playing jazz, and proposes that the writing of a first draft, serves as a type of chord chart, which is then used in many jam sessions (revisions) of improvisations within

J. Cooper

the confines of the realm of possible notes that can be played from the scale(s) of the chord chart, before deciding on some final riff.

To further develop an ear for this work, after reading the novel, and other works by Moraes, listening to interviews, intertextual research was carried out through reading Moraes' translations, and other works previously cited: Miller, Sade, Proust, Pynchon, Bukowski, Burroughs, etc. Other research also involved listening to music of the era, of groups cited in *Pornopopéia*, such as the Doors, but also Cuban-Miami ganster hip-hop from the '80s, 90s and the first part of the 2000s for the voice of Miro, the dealer, among other musical and pop-culture references. In addition, research led to films referenced in the novel, for example the Bollywood film, Chitchor, referenced in Moraes' neologism '*otichitchorino*' to describe the eyes of the novels' dangerous darling, Sossô. This multimodal process was carried out for each of the voices encountered in the novel according to the particular context of culture and situation. Subsequently, a first version in English was produced — the chord chart. Then the many jam sessions or revisions ensued experimenting with various riffs and combinations, in consultation with research materials, and writers, researchers, such as, Dr. John Milton, Matthew Shirts, Matthew Rothenberg and others, including Moraes himself, as well as folks similar to those in the various universes of the book, known to me from earlier days, until coming up with a final version. Ultimately, the words jazz great Duke Ellington made famous apply, "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing..." We aimed to swing.

The following section describes how our swing was constructed, in the tradutology proposed by Berman (2012), "the reflection on translation about itself from its characteristic of experience" (2012, p.24)[13]. In this section a brief example of some of the primary challenges and a few examples of solutions are described, some of which were presented at the 2019 Entrad Conference in João Pessoa.

3   Translation of a Picaresque Underworld — Rhythm, Register and Raunch

As previously mentioned, some of the subversive characteristics that contribute to the humor in *Pornopopéia*, which we endeavored to recreate in the English translation, can be observed in each strata: genre, register and lexicogrammar.

---

[13] In Portuguese: "a reflexão da tradução sobre si mesma a partir da sua natureza de experiência."

Within the novel Moraes includes a variety of written and oral genres: haiku, poetry, song lyrics, e-mails, excerpts from other novels, insults, phone calls, drug deals, sex work negotiations, etc. Within these genres, the collision of disparate registers, as well as the turbo charged velocity of changing registers throughout the novel also contribute to subvert expectations to a humorous effect, and at a meteoric pace: a wife calls a brothel looking for her husband; a German hippie, an urban teen, a ballet dancer, and others participate in an orgy directed by the guru (madame) of a New Age cult; Chechen mafioso-tourists engage in commerce with fishermen/women on the Brazilian coast. These humorous devices, coupled with the lexicogrammar, linguistic realizations, include code-switching and mixing of a variety of national traditions (Italian, French, Spanish, English, Tupi, Ewe), zeugma and other types of polysemy, neologisms, morphological bends, and blends. This language play begins in these first lines of the novel as seen in the following:

> Vai, senta o rabo sujo nessa porra de cadeira giratória emperrada e trabalha, trabalha, fiadaputa. Taí o computinha zumbindo na sua frente. Vai, mano, põe na tua cabeça ferrada duma vez por todas: roteiro de *vídeo institucional.* Não é cinema, não é epopeia, não é arte. É –repita comigo — *vídeo institucional.* Pra ganhar o pão, babaca. E o pó. E a breja. E a brenfa. É cine-sabujice empresarial mesma, e tá acabado.
> (MORAES, 2008, p.15)

> Do it! Sit your dirty ass down in this goddamn jammed swivel chair and work, work, you sonuvabitch. There it is, the computwhore buzzing right in front of you. Go man, get it in your wasted brain once and for all: *sizzle reel* script. Not film, not epic, not art. It is –repeat after me — a *sizzle reel.* For the dough, bonehead. And the blow. And the brew. And the ganja. Full on corporate cine-asskissing, and it's over.

In these six lines, the first device that contributes to the accelerated rhythm an 'oralizing' reduction or grammaticalization, of 'filho da puta' becoming 'fiadaputa', which is rendered as 'sonuvabitch'. Next there is a neologism formed by the creation of a compound word with two roots and a diminutive suffix: *computador* + *puta* + *inha* = *computinha*. This was rendered computer + whore = computwhore, in the absence of an appropriate diminutive suffix in English – one that would not disrupt the fast paced rhythm or seem forced and awkward. For example 'kin' is a diminutive affix, however computwhorekin is awkward and slows the rhythm – doesn't swing. Next, we have the repetition of 'não é', rendered 'not' like three snare beats broken by a pause, broadly indicated by the m dash punctuation, of '—repita comigo—', rendered

J. Cooper

'—repeat after me—' and a bang on the tom-tom with, the irony imparted also in the fact that it is in italics '*vídeo institucional',* rendered '*sizzle reel*'. The velocity picks up again with an alliterative series 'pão', 'pó', 'breja', 'brenfa'. In this case, we opted to alternate with d and b: 'dough', 'bonehead' 'blow', 'brew' with the hard downbeat of a tom-tom with 'ganja', Jamaican slang for cannabis, made popular in the '80s with the Reggae, Dancehall boom. Aside from the sound, this choice is appropriate to Zeca's generation. Finally, another neologism is created with a hyphenated compound, 'cine-sabujice', created by hyphenating '*cine*' (from *cinema*) + *sabujice* (adulation)*.* We rendered this in English as a hyphenated compound noun as well, using 'cine' + 'asskissing', preserving the snakey 's' sounds. This type of language, sound and rhythmic play found in these six lines continues throughout the entire book of 475 pages.

Along with the challenge of the morphological, sound and rythmic word play, another challenge was to render the language of a broad variety of changing registers within shifting situational contexts, considering all of the register variables– tenor, field and mode. – the linguistic realizations clearly defining who is speaking, what they are speaking about, and how the utterances are delivered. Again this involves sound through pronunciation, as well as syntactic structure - grammaticality, both which effect rhythm, and enacts the demographics. It also enacts levels of power among the characters and their interactions with one another. Figure 1 presents some of these variables, and examples of some of the choices for lexical items within this diverse range of register variables.

Figure 1 — Examples of types of language found in some of the contexts and registers of speakers in the novel.

Speaker	Contexts and Registers	Lexicon
Protaganist - junkie, filmmaker (feature, porno, comercial); Italian descent; Paulistan; writer; polyglot, libertine.	Varied: familial, narrative, technical - cinematography, technical - porn film industry, technical - video production of commercials, intimate:	Drug slang (ex: *peteca*, -twist *pó* - blow, *fissurando* -jonesing), Italian - *cazzo* Spanish – (*dio mio, cabrón, pelotas*) French – see figure 2 English –repetition of lyrics, quotes from writers, loan words from marketing, and technical fields from cinematopgraphy – see figure 2

		Italian – Paulistan slang *catso* High brow (ex: Zeca quotes Proust) crude (*buceta*, cunt,)
Middle-class intelectual woman Paulistan	Intimate, familial	academic language, normative grammar,
Dealer of Italian descent Paulistan, wannabe Cuban gangster	Commercial	Drug slang, Spanish and Italian slang
Fishermen and women merchants of indigenous descent on Paulistan coast	Commercial, intimate – non grammatical realizations	*muleque palmera; qué que foi agora; bora; o desgramado do gringo*
urban and coastal teens	Semi-intimate	alternative grammar, slang
Police	On the job	technical - law enforcment, cop slang
Lawyer	Professional, informal	legalese, affectionate
Hippies / New Age	Semi-intimate, pseudo spiritual	new age terminology, hippie slang
Miner (from Minas Gerais)	Semi-rural	Idomatic expressions from Minas Gerais
Afrobrazilian, coastal, polyglot (Mina Ewe, French Portuguese) alcoholic	Street	slurred speech, mina ewe, coastal slang

Source: Moraes (2008) and data from this research

The following figure 2 presents a series of some of the types of linguistic play previously mentioned (blends, neologisms, code-mixing, haiku, end- rhymes) that contribute to the humor. These are just a few examples of some of the devices and linguistic play that contribute to the hilarity of this work – the particular types of laughter, which include mocking laughter at social stereotypes, pornographic taboo laughter, carnival laughter (subversion of hierarchies), and the tensions between sex and laughter, sexual foibles and transgressions etc. and general rule breaking with the inevitable invention that comes with it. Genre shock, register shock of various types – the swinging. However, it is not a melodious swing in a lyrical sense, it is a jarring, daring, risky swing.

Figure 2 — Linguistic play and transgressions contributing to the humor of the work

BLENDS	CODE-MIXING/ SWITCHING	HAIKU, marketing phrases,	SEMANTIC play mono and bilingual	
Computinha Computwhore	¡ ¡ ¡*Embutidos de frango*!!!! (here at the level of punctuation) *Dío mio, unas chicas macanudas , Cabrón*	Haiku *depois de cagá depois de fudê viva o bidê!*	*dar uma pelota*	give a rat's culo

J. Cooper

	Esé, por supuesto, mira	after a big crap after a hot lay long live the bidet!		
Surubrâmane Brahmanorgy	*laissez-faire, laisser-passé, laisser-live, laisser-smoked, laisser-fuck*	Marketing phrase *Porco só dá chabu.. Peça Itaquerambu – o embutido do frango bidu.* Pork my friend will leave you limp. Itaquerambu sausages are chicken pimped.	*trabalho de sopro*	blow job
Bagadabronhar Bagadaboner	*Catzo, cazzo mina-eue Amê ekê me nyã nya i le tso*		*açougue sexual*	meat market
despiroquetes locolitas *hitchcockadas* hitchcockonade	Flashback, Nothing is real, Rock n'tango, junky , bad trip, help me, çaite, girl, poodle, baby, Body & Soul, Come on Baby Light my Fire, tight close up			

Source: Moraes (2008) and data from this research

The blends in these examples are fairly straighforward, preserving the morphemic categories in the blends from the source language to the target language: suruba = noun + brâmane = adjective // brahman = adjective + orgy = noun (the syntax is inverted as is the norm in the English with regards to adjectives); Bagada = prefix + bronhar = noun // Bagada = prefix + boner = noun; hitchock = root + adas = suffix // hitchcock (o) = root + nade = suffix.   The exception was with the *despiroquetes*, which refer to Miro, the coke dealer's, underage-entourage, harkening then to Nabokov's Lolita, and combining that with the Spanish code-mixing that Miro uses, imitating the Cuban Miami gangsters he admires, I have rendered them as 'locolitas'. Another instance refers to the translation of code-mixing that occurs in the source text itself in the expression. *dar* (give) *uma* (a) *pelota* (ball) – *pelota* then being in Spanish, which in Portuguese would be *bola*. The saying in Portuguese, to give a ball, means, to care about something, which in this case was used in the negative – not to care about something. This corresponds to the American English expression, to give a rat's ass. In this case, we replaced ass with *culo*, since *culo* is an extremely well understood noun in American English culture of the presumed readership of this novel. In this way, the code-mixing of the source text is preserved

in the target text. The haiku and the marketing jingle are examples of the chimey rhyme coupled with the pornographic content in the first case and a humorous parody of the marketing jingle genre in the second.

Final remarks

This article has been a brief description of some of the results of my post-doctoral research project, carried out between 2018 and 2019, discussing translation issues in general, and the theories that shaped the methodology in translating *Pornopopéia* by Reinaldo Moraes. I have also presented only a brief overview of some of the issues related to my translation process, with a smattering of examples of certain challenging maneuvers, and the solutions for translating them. Future works include further analysis of the pace of the novel, and also the incredible dexterity of the linguistic play, the various types of laughter, the social configurations expertly played out in the registers of the dialogue, the body terminology choices (the many terms for genitals) and other keywords that perform a variety of grammatical and semantic functions such as *porra, puta,* and *caralho*, which serve as intensifiers, nouns, adjectives, and expletives. Ultimately, the challenge of translating transgressions involves a process of transgressing in reverse – following the rules (operational norms) of the original transgression, the translator, she, herself, must then transgress as magnificently in the target language, to meticulously reproduce spontaneity. Returning to Maier, as an actor having rehearsed a million times somehow pulls off surprise, or Dryden's expert tight rope walker, who thrills the audience by feigning falling. As Zeca writes to his editor toward the end of the novel, giving him instructions about revisions of the manuscript, which is the narrative being related: "*E tente se divertir escrevinhando, que é pra bosta sair dançando...*" (MORAES, 2008, p. 316) – "Try to have fun scribbling; this shit should come out dancing, as that famous grafitti on the crapper door more or less announces."

References

BAKHTIN, M. **Rabelais and His World**. Translated by Hélène Iswolsky. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984.

J. Cooper

BENJAMIN, Walter. The Task of the Translator. *In:* SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Theories of Translation**: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

BERMAN, Antoine. **A Tradução e a Letra ou O Albergue do Longínquo**. Tradução: Marie-Hélène C. Torres, Mauri Furlan e Andreia Guerini. Florianópolis: PGET/UFSC, 2012.

BRESSANE, Ronaldo. **NO LIMITS**. Available at: http://nolimits.terra.com.br/2009/07/pornopopeia-um-livro-hilariante-com-a-cara-do-brasil/24 de julho de 2009.

BUKOWSKI, Charles. **Mulheres**. Tradução: Reinald Moraes. São Paulo: L&PM editores, 2011.

BURROUGHS, William. **Junky**. Tradução: Reinaldo Moraes. Rio de Janeiro: Má Companhia, 2013.

CHAMBERLAIN, Lori. Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation. *In:* VENUTI, Lawrence (ed.). **Rethinking Translation**. London: Routledge, 1992 57-74.

DRYDEN, John. On Translation. *In:* SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Theories of Translation**: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

EMERSON, Caryl. Translating Bakhtin: Does his Theory of Discourse Contain a Theory of Translation? **University of Ottawa Quarterly**, v. 53, n.1, p. 23-33, 1983.

FROTA, Jennifer. **Girl Passion and the First Kiss**: selected stories from Clarice Lispector's Felicidade Clandestina. MA thesis, San Francisco: San Francisco State University, 1998.

JAKOBSON, R. On Linguistic Aspects of Translation. *In:* SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Theories of Translation**: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. p.144-151.

JOYCE, James. **Ulysses.** New York: Random House,1946.

LANG, George. La Belle Altérité: Towards a Dialogical Paradigm. **Translation Theory Canadian Review of Comparative Literature**, v. 19, n.1-2, p. 237-251, 1992.

MAIER, Carol. Translation as Performance: Three Notes. **Translation Review**, v. 15, n. 1, p. 5-8, 1984.

MARTIN, James Robert; ROSE, DAvid. **Genre Relations**: Mapping Culture. Equinox: London, 2008.

MARQUES FILHO, José Virginio. **Orgia de exceção**: um esboço do projeto literário de Reinaldo Moraes. Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 2015. Disponível em: < http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/8/8151/tde-11122015-133152/ >.

MILTON, John. **Tradução**: Teoria e Prática. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1998.

MILTON, J. ; HIRSCH, I. . Translation and Americanism in Brazil 1920-1970. **Across Languages and Cultures**, Budapest, v. 6, n. 2, p. 234-257, 2005.

MORAES, Elaine Robert. Reinaldo Avec Sade. **Cadernos de Ética e Filosofia Política**, v. 1, n. 26, p. 93-105, 18 dez. 2015.

MORAES, Reinaldo. **Tanto Faz.** São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1981.

MORAES, Reinaldo. **Abacaxi**. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 1985.

MORAES, Reinaldo. **A Órbita dos Caracóis**. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2003.

MORAES, Reinaldo. Estrangeiros Em Casa, **National Geographic Brasil**, 2004. [em parceria com o fotografo Roberto Linsker].

MORAES, Reinaldo. **Umidade – Histórias**. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2005.

MORAES, Reinaldo. **Barata** São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 2007. [Ilustrações de Luli Penna].

MORAES, Reinaldo. **Pornopopéia**. Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva. 2008.

MORAES, Reinaldo. **O Cheirinho do Amor** - crônicas safadas. Rio de Janeiro: Alfaguara, 2014.

MORAES, Reinaldo. **Maior que o Mundo**, Rio de Janeiro: Alfaguara, 2018.

MORAES, Reinaldo. Autor do cultuado 'Tanto Faz'. Icone da literatura dos anos 80. Reinaldo Moraes. Interviewed by Arnaldo Bloch**.** *In:* **O Globo Cultura Online**, 13/06/2009. Available at: https://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/autor-do-cultuado-tanto-faz-icone-da-literatura-dos-anos-80-reinaldo-moraes-volta-tona-3193590. Accessed in: Jan. 2019.

MORAES, Reinaldo. Voices of Brazil: the writer who likes to shock. Interviewed by Dom Phillips. *In:* **The Guardian***,* International Edition, January, 26, 2014. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/26/voices-of-brazil-writer-reinaldo-moraes-pornopopeia. Accessed in: December, 2019.

MORAES, Reinaldo. Um pornopopéia maior que o mundo. Interviewed by Luiz Rebinski. **Rascunho**. Available at: http://rascunho.com.br/29768-2/. Accessed in: Nov., 2019.

OLIVEIRA, João Daniel Guimarães. **Sem Penelopes à espera: uma leitura da Pornopopéia, de Reinaldo Moraes**. Master's dissertation. Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana. Available at: http://tede2.uefs.br:8080/handle/tede/477. Accessed in: Nov. 2019.

ORTEGA Y GASSET, José. The Misery and the Splendor of Translation. *In:* SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Theories of Translation**: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. p. 93-112.
PARIS, Jean. Translation and Creation. ARROWSMITH, William; SHATTUCK, Roger (ed.). **The Craft and Context of Translation**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961. p. 57-67.

PAZ, João Daniel Guimarães. **Sem Penélopes À Espera**: Uma Leitura Da Pornopopéia, De Reinaldo Moraes. Trabalho de dissertação. Universidade de Feira de Santana, 2012.

PAZ, Octavio. Translation: Literature and Letters. *In:* SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Theories of Translation**: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. p. 83-92.

PEREIRA, Rogério; REBINSKi, Luiz, editores. *Editorial*. **Cândido.** #95, Curitiba, June, 2019. Available at: www.candido.bpp.pr.gov.br. Accessed: November, 2019.

PHILLIPS, Dom. Voices of Brazil: the writer who likes to shock. **The Guardian**, International Edition, Jan. 26, 2014. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/26/voices-of-brazil-writer-reinaldo-moraes-pornopopeia. Accessed in: Dec., 2019.

POUND, Ezra. *Guido's Relations. In:* SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Theories of Translation**: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. p. 83-92.

PROUST, Marcel. **Remembrance of Things Past**. Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terrence Killmartin. New York: Vintage Books, 1981. v. I & II.

PYNCHON, Thomas. **Vineland**. Tradução: Reinaldo Moraes e Matthew Shirts. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012.

RABASSA, Gregory. No two snowflakes are alike: translation as Metaphor. *In:* SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **The Craft of Translation.** Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

ROTHENBERG, Jerome. *Composition as Translation/Translation as Composition*. Palestra apresentada no San Diego State University, 22 mar. 2004.

SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **The Craft of Translation**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Comparative Perspectives**: Anthology of Multiple Translations. New York: American Heritage Custom Publishing Group, 1994.

SCHULTE, Rainer; BIGUENET, John (ed.). **Theories of Translation**: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

SADE, Marquis de. **Philosophy of the Bedroom**. New York: Grove Press, 1065.

TOURY, Guideon. The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation. **Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond**. Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995, p. 53-69.