

**ANOTHER KIND OF COMPARATIVISM:
A HORA DA ESTRELA AND THE HOUR OF THE STAR¹**

Patricia Anne Odber de Baubeta
University of Birmingham

Introduction

THIS ARTICLE WILL REFLECT UPON GIOVANNI Pontiero's translation of Clarice Lispector's *A Hora da Estrela*.² It will also comment, in passing, on general issues related to literary translation as well as distinctive aspects of Clarice Lispector's narrative technique and choice of lexical items, principally those likely to pose problems for a translator.

Evaluating a translation is, ultimately, as subjective a business as the very act of translation itself. Both processes entail sifting through possible options, accepting some, dismissing others. There is no single or correct way to analyse a translation. Criteria may have been formulated, but these are not fixed or immutable. The almost exponential growth (*explosão*, Clarice might have said), of postgraduate courses, congresses and scholarly publications concerned with the discipline of Translation Studies has led to an equal proliferation of possible critical approaches, both theoretical and practical, of which much has been written, and much remains to be written. Furthermore, when considering the work of Clarice Lispector nowadays, we must also take account of feminist literary theories, particularly those developed by H el ene Cixous. As Susan Bassnett has pointed out:

It is significant that Cixous was developing her notion of the in-between at exactly the same time as the fledgling discipline of Translation Studies was coming into being, and indeed the development of Translation Studies through the 1970s closely parallels the development of feminist theory, even though the two areas remained apart until quite recently. (Bassnett 1993:64)

We might begin this study by mentioning a number of questions, some of which have as much to do with the economics of translation as with any intrinsic artistic merit attaching to the works in question. Why should there be an English translation of *A Hora da Estrela*, as opposed to a translation of some other novel? Those works which find their way into translation have had to compete with, and triumph over, other possible candidates for translation. This may seem very Darwinian, a literary illustration of the survival of the fittest, but we should be aware of those factors likely to influence the selection of a particular text. On the basis of research into this subject, Heloisa Gonçalves Barbosa has distinguished two sets of criteria which operate in the selection of works for translation. The first are imposed by the demands of the Anglo-American market or reading public, while the second are determined by the translators themselves:

More often than not, it is the translators of Brazilian literature who decide to translate a work, rather than the translation of a work being commissioned by a publisher. As a rule, these translators are people who, for one reason or another, happened to have gone to Brazil, where they fell in love with the country and its literature. Their love of Brazilian literature prompted them to translate it so that they could share their pleasure with others. (Barbosa 1996:46)

This was very much the case with Giovanni Pontiero, who published his first translation of the then relatively obscure Clarice Lispector in *New Directions*, New York 1972, the short story

'Amor' from *Laços de Família*. Nowadays Lispector occupies an undisputed place in the canon. Not one canon, in fact, but three: the Brazilian, the Latin American, and the 'alter-canon' of highly-rated women writers. Unlike many notable Brazilian authors, Clarice has received considerable attention from abroad, and much of this from scholars not primarily concerned with Brazilian literature *per se*. Much credit for this recognition should go to her English-language translators, who have made her works available in English from 1967 until as recently as 1992. Especially significant was the lead taken by H el ene Cixous in 1979 when she first began to write on, or out of, Clarice's works. Nor did her interest wane after Clarice's death, as can be seen from the following extract, based on a lecture given in 1984:

A few years ago when her texts began to circulate here, I said to myself, I am no longer going to give a seminar, all that is left to do is to read her, everything is said, it is perfect. But as usual everything has been repressed, she has even been transformed in most extraordinary way, they have embalmed her, had her stuffed as a Brazilian bourgeoisie with varnished fingernails. So I carry out my vigil, accompanying her through my reading. (Cixous 1988:20)

It is precisely because of such an author's elevated status that a publisher will be prepared to lay out translators' fees and general publication costs, even when the translated text cannot possibly make a profit because of low print-runs and a restricted readership. Not to mention the customary blinkeredness of the English reading public as far as translated works are concerned. The most notable exception to this is the Bible, for as Walter Costa notes, 'most people were not aware that what they read and praised was a translation' (Costa 1996:117). A publication such as *The Hour of the Star*, however, will enhance the reputation of a publishing house, and prestige will accrue to other works on the publisher's list.

Who carries out the task of translation? Who is sufficiently 'quali-

fied', and motivated to undertake what may oscillate between labour of love and grinding chore? Again with reference to the Clarice Lispector's works, Pontiero was unusual in the wealth of experience that he brought to his translations. Firstly, a profound knowledge of the Brazilian (and Latin American) socio-cultural context, rendering it highly unlikely that he would misread the referent systems and thus fail to convey the ideational meaning of the original text. Secondly, Pontiero was thoroughly versed in the intricacies of Clarice's prose, as is borne out by his 'Afterword', and a series of critical studies (Pontiero 1990, 1991, 1996, 1997). Finally, and perhaps most important, Pontiero was sensitive to the risks and rewards of the task he so willingly assumed:

My own progress in the art of translation has been a combination of persistence and great good fortune. Convinced that the sheer effort of translating Luso-Brazilian texts would provide me with a deeper understanding and help to make me a more perceptive critic, I struggled on. [...] The linguistic and cultural barriers are considerable; the rewards on the other hand are immense. Unconventional and challenging, the prose of these writers [Clarice Lispector and José Saramago] forces the translator into a close study of their highly personal approach to the literary process. In both writers, colour, temperature and sound patterns are as important as any coherent discourse. (Pontiero 1994:73).

Finally, we might speculate as to who will actually read *A Hora da Estrela* in translation. This putative reader exerts more influence than we might believe. Literary works are translated in radically different ways, depending on the reader/consumer whom the respective publishing house wishes to attract. Nowadays, no book or translation proposal is complete unless accompanied by a detailed breakdown of the market segment to be targeted. This may comprise a juvenile or adult readership, the 'educated' or the 'average' reader. Additionally, if a text is to be re-translated, then the publisher will be swayed by notions of modernity, originality, crea-

tivity, or even something so fundamental as greater accuracy than was found in earlier versions. Such reasons account, in part, for the existence of multiple translations of such canonical writers as, for example, Shakespeare or Jorge Luis Borges. From the translator's point of view, the reader is a prime consideration in making lexico-grammatical and stylistic choices:

Without a clear sense of audience, it is impossible to make the right selections from the ideational [...] All texts depend on interaction with their readers and relative success or failure depends on what the reader takes away. (Coulthard 1978:184-5)

Who, then, constitutes the readership for Clarice Lispector in translation? The answer may seem like a statement of the obvious: those people who do not have sufficient knowledge of Portuguese to read Lispector in the original. This category of reader may include students of foreign (Brazilian, Latin American) literature, comparativists, and feminists who wish to test out the hypotheses of Cixous, Irigaray, *et al.* Others will approach the translation as they would any other work of literature, for intellectual stimulus or gratification. To satisfy such readers as these, the text must read well, its literary quality should be clearly discernible. Barbosa observes that 'a literary work will be rejected by the reading public if the language in which it is written is not fluent, idiomatic English' (Barbosa 1996:47). This is significant, since such preoccupations may condition decisions taken by translator and copy-editor, even when the source text itself is marked, repetitive or even downright peculiar. Problems arise when translating Clarice for precisely these kinds of reason:

Phonological and graphic effects, so important for the ideological status of the text, are sometimes changed or even lost in translation. [...] Now Lispector's idiosyncratic use of punctuation is often modified by translators, thus affecting the meaning of the text. A comparison of French and

English translations of Lispector for this volume also reveals numerous conceptual discrepancies, often inflecting interpretation and thus further complicating the translator's task. (Cixous 1990:viii)

There yet another category of reader, the literary *voyeurs*, who read out of a certain curiosity, to see where the translator's interpretation and eventual translating strategies differ from their own. More charitably, they might be described as occupying that privileged locus between languages and cultures, the 'in-between', which allows valuable insights into both the source text, the target text and into the translating process itself. Though one should heed the caution voiced by Walter Costa, in respect of the translations of Borges:

In order to be able to make meaningful statements about a translated literary text perhaps too many conditions need to be fulfilled. Among these one would expect a reasonable knowledge of the two languages involved, a knowledge of the two literary traditions, a reading experience of literary texts in general, familiarity with the basic concepts of theoretical and applied linguistics, literary theory and literary criticism as well as a deep understanding of the main issues of translation theory and translation criticism. In addition, an acquaintance with the English and Hispanic cultures, that is with their textual traditions, both oral and written, would also be important. (Costa 1992:1-2)

I do not pretend to possess all of these knowledges, rather a 'nodding acquaintance' with some of them. My standpoint is that of *voyeur*, and the purpose of this scrutiny is to reach an understanding of what Clarice Lispector incorporates into her prose fiction, and how a translator may deal with this.

Methodology

The method adopted, to borrow Clarice's own metaphor, "é trabalho de carpintaria" (p.28). Despite Maria Luísa Nunes' apparent acceptance of Rodrigo S.M.'s affirmation, 'Em *A Hora da Estrela*, o narrador faz questão de dizer-nos que sua meta é a simplicidade e o seu ofício, o de um carpinteiro' (Nunes 1984:284), we should remember that if there is the jobbing carpenter, accustomed to carrying out simple wood-working tasks, there is also the skilled craftsman, capable of producing the most elaborate marquetry or relief carving. Furthermore, like any other traditional craft, carpentry has its own highly specialised vocabulary to describe its tools and techniques. For example, one tool is called a 'spokeshave'. Carpenters have numerous terms to describe different types of joints, such as fox-tails; and the end-products of their labours often have unusual, baffling names:

The whatnot evolved as a distinctive piece of furniture in the period 1800-1900. Its development stems from the smaller mid-eighteenth-century stands and the later Regency-Victorian period canterburies. Many whatnots of the 1790 to 1840 period feature a music canterbury at the bottom, with a tiered arrangement above. (Bryant 1990:57)

Carpentry is not so simple a matter as Rodrigo S.M. would have us believe: 'Pretendo, como já insinuei, escrever de modo cada vez mais simples' (p.28). This is, I believe, a clear instance of Clarice Lispector saying the exact opposite of what she actually means, using the rhetorical figure antiphrasis, and effectively leaving the reader to glimpse, or disregard, the truth that hides behind her words. Pontiero reads between the lines and translates the phrase as 'the craft of carpentry' (p.14).

My 'carpentry' will involve a 'dove-tailing' of the two texts. I do not propose to root out errors or cavil over Pontiero's choices, but will focus on the specific solutions and strategies adopted by a translator who has had to reconcile the simultaneous demands of a

prestigious Brazilian text, a highly reputed publishing house and, one assumes, a knowledgeable and exigent reading public. Coulthard reminds us:

The translator's major difficulty is the construction of the new ideal reader who, even if he has the same academic, professional and intellectual level as the original ideal reader, will be crucially different in terms of textual expectations and cultural knowledge. (Coulthard 1996:5).

These variables in the translation equation require the translator to make a number of choices, not only between those old friends fidelity and equivalence, but also, on occasion, between transparency and opacity.

The North American critic, Earl E. Fitz, has suggested that 'there is little about Lispector's diction that is troublesome to the reader' (Fitz 1985:46). However, this declaration seems somewhat unconvincing in the light of his earlier comments, that 'Lispector's syntactical deformation of the traditional Portuguese sentence is done, consciously or not, to force us to define and interpret the world differently' (p.42), and that the message of her sentences 'remains open to interpretation, the uncertainty extending beyond the grammatical closure normally provided by the syntax' (p.43). If these characteristics of Clarice's prose present challenges for the monolingual reader, what dangers do they signify for the translator?

Text analysis

Using the same approach as I have taken elsewhere (Odber de Baubeta 1996:157-180), I shall reflect mainly on the translator's handling of selected lexical items. Grammatical structures, sound patterning and Clarice's use of repetition will be discussed at the appropriate juncture.

Lexical items

Of all Clarice's literary works, *A Hora da Estrela* is sometimes described as the one most profoundly rooted in the Brazilian social reality. It is not then surprising that the novel should contain allusions to foodstuffs, flora, fauna, places or objects that are commonly found in Brazil, in other words, items which belong to a readily identifiable, if not unique geographical, political or social space. These items may be 'culture-bound', deeply rooted in their specific culture, to the extent of becoming 'cultural untranslatables':

Texts may be defined as 'cultural untranslatables' when they contain references to objects, practices, customs, beliefs that belong to one particular society or culture but do not exist in another, and hence have no corresponding lexical realization. Among the most culture-bound items are buildings, aspects of social life and food. (Oder de Baubeta 1996:160)

A Hora da Estrela does not contain an elevated number of cultural allusions, but those which are present are significant.

Food

Food and drink are mentioned periodically in the novel. These allusions are not crucial to a global understanding of the narrative, but they do constitute significant semantic features and must therefore be handled carefully by the translator. One of the earliest of these occurs in a description of Macabéa:

Ninguém olhava para ela na rua, ela era café frio' (p.42)

Pontiero changes this very Brazilian metaphor into a simile, making the meaning more transparent, by the addition of an explicit comparison:

No one paid any attention to her on the street, for she was as appetizing as cold coffee (p.27)

Another food reference is 'um sanduíche de mortadela' (p.27, p.84). This contains a whole series of connotations that do not automatically carry over into the English. The main one is poverty. The translator has to make it clear that mortadella is what girls like Macabéa habitually eat: in other words, it is cheap and accessible. However, for the English reader, accustomed to the higher cost of mortadella in delicatessens, the connotations are lost. This point is too trivial to merit an explanatory footnote, and if he had translated it as a cheese or ham sandwich, he would have deleted the local colour, the Brazilian quality, which is so essential for the narrative. The solution found is to insert an adjective, 'the usual mortadella sandwich' (p.14), thus signalling the fact that this is the staple diet of the poor. The reader is left to make the remaining connections. As Costa suggests:

Now and then a lack of idiomaticity, an unknown word or an oddly constructed sequence, will attract the attention of the reader. But in general the reader him- or herself will provide the corrections needed so that the normal reading process may be carried out unhindered. (Costa 1992:115)

Another food item relates to Macabéa's childhood, and what she ate for dessert, the 'sobremesa de todos os dias: goiabada com queijo, a única paixão na sua vida' (p.43), which is translated as her favourite dessert: guava preserve with cheese, the only real passion in her life' (p.28). This might have been rendered as 'daily dessert', more faithful to the original 'de todos os dias', but the biblical echo would have been outweighed by the alliterative effect, producing something closer to one of the advertising jingles that Macabéa listens to on Rádio Relógio. The insertion of 'real', goes some way to conveying the pathos and poverty of Macabéa's life in the North East. Moreover, it prepares the ground for the

description of her feelings towards Olímpico de Jesús, who is subsequently described as 'sua goiabada-com-queijo' (p.59), 'her guava preserve with cheese' (p.42). By repeating the phrase, the author suggests that Olímpico de Jesús is something special and appetising, associated with home, childhood, happiness. The bitter-sweet dessert, known more popularly in Brazil as 'Romeo e Julieta', is an ironic comment on the singularly unromantic relationship between them, and on the tragicomic nature of her existence: Macabéa is completely besotted, while Olímpico de Jesús is contemptuous to the point of callousness.

References to food equate to recollections of life in the North East. 'Tinha saudade de quando era pequena — farofa seca — e pensava que fora feliz (p.50). This is rendered as 'She recalled her childhood with nostalgia — dried mandioca — and believed she had been happy' (p.34); 'num aflitivo domingo sem farofa' (p.51) becomes 'One distressing Sunday without mandioca' (p.35).

The next passage is important because it conveys two important pieces of information about Macabéa and Olímpico de Jesús: first that they do not communicate easily, and secondly, what draws them to one another is a shared regional identity:

As poucas conversas entre os namorados versavam sobre farinha, carne-de-sol, carne seca, rapadura, melado. Pois esse era o passado de ambos (p.63).

On the rare occasions when the couple actually held a conversation, they invariably discussed food: flour, salted beef, dried meat, brown sugar and molasses (p.47)

Pontiero emphasises their inability to communicate. 'Namorados' defies a one-word translation, and 'courting couple' would suggest a cosiness that just does not exist. The most problematic item is 'rapadura', because of its various connotations. Pontiero opts for accuracy, but for an English reader, brown sugar will suggest a soft substance that can be added to coffee. The definition found in Taylor's Dictionary, 'hard square of raw brown sugar, eaten as

food or candy', is far too unwieldy to insert into a text. 'Hard sugar candy' might convey some of the meaning, but 'candy' is deceptive, making the reader think of gaily wrapped sweets that would be purchased by or for a child. 'Rapadura' is a poor person's sweet or sweetener. 'Hard cane sugar' might also have been suitable.

The translators of Miguel Torga's *A Criação do Mundo* (first published 1937, revised in subsequent editions), had to contend with identical problems. *O Segundo Dia*, the second book of this fictionalised biography, narrates the youthful protagonist's travails as an *emigrante* in Brazil. The following table demonstrates the range of solutions chosen by three different translators when faced with allusions to the characteristic food and drink of Brazil.

Portuguese	English	Spanish	French
cachaça (74)	brandy (73)	aguardiente de melaza (90)	<i>cachaça</i> (86)
carne seca (74)	beff jerky (73)	carne seca (90)	viande sèche (86)
três rapaduras (79)	three blocks brown sugar (78)	tres tarros de açúcar mascabado (95)	trois pots de mélasse (92)
cachaça (79)	<i>cachaça</i> (78)	aguardiente de melaza (95)	<i>cachaça</i> (92)
cachaça (86)	sugar-cane brandy (86)	aguardiente (103)	<i>cachaça</i> (100)
aguardente (86)	liquor (87)	aguardiente (104)	d'alcool (100)
cachaça (7)	brandy (87)	aguardiente (105)	<i>cachaça</i> (102)
as rapaduras (97)		el açúcar con melaza (105)	la mélasse (102)
da carne seca (97)	the dried beef (88)	la carne seca (105)	la viande séchée (102)
rapadura (92)	molasses (93)	azúcar mascabado (111)	la mélasse (108)
cachaça (103)	rot-gut brandy (105)	aguardiente (124)	<i>cachaça</i> (121)
uma garrafa de litro vazia à bênção do	an empty bottle of <i>cachaça</i> to be filled	una botella vacia a que se lo bendijera	un litron vide pour qu'il

barril de bagaceira (118)	at the fazenda's barrel (122)	el barril del aguardiente (141)	reçoive la béné- diction du barril de <i>bagaçõ</i> (139)
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The French translator provides a brief glossary comprising 'Le vocabulaire désignant la flore et la faune du Brésil, certaines nourritures et boissons, etc.' (p.74), leaves *cachaça* and *bagaçõ* in italics for greater authenticity, but does not include *rapadura* in the list, translating it as 'molasses'. The Spanish is misleading, because 'tres tarros de azúcar mascabado' suggests soft sugar. ('Mascabado' gives rise to 'muscovado' in English). The American translator achieves accuracy through the word 'blocks', though she later forgets to translate 'rapadura', and is inconsistent in her renderings of *cachaça*, for which another possibility might have been 'firewater'.

Coincidentally, Heloisa Gonçalves Barbosa touches on the same question, in connection with her investigation of English-speaking readers' responses to translations of João Guimarães Rosa's 'A terceira margem do rio':

Some readers pointed to the items of food as the main indicators of Brazilian culture [...] The items of food mentioned in the story are: bread, bananas and raw brown sugar (Barbosa 1996:50).

Presumably the 'raw brown sugar' is *rapadura*. In any case, Barbosa's research suggests that the translation of food items is significant for reader recognition and response.

A further food comparison is found in the following description of Macabéa's life:

a vida lhe era tão insossa que nem pão velho sem manteiga'
(p.76)

This is rendered as 'Her life was duller than plain bread and butter' (p.508). This leads to a change in focus. For the English

speaker, the phrase 'bread and butter' has the status of idiom, often functioning as an adjectival phrase within a sentence. What we have here is a preference for dynamic translation over literal translation: the translator has opted for idiomaticity so that the English will read well. But the translation has the effect of distorting the meanings contained in the original text. A translation of 'pão velho sem manteiga' as 'stale bread without butter' would highlight the material poverty rather than dreariness of Macabéa's life; 'stale, dry bread' would convey poverty, and also the notions of punishment, being imprisoned, which are also implicit in the narrative: Macabéa is caught in the trap of her own 'antecedentes', the victims of the *sertão*.

If Olímpico de Jesus is Macabéa's 'goiabada-com-queijo', then for him, she is 'um cabelo na sopa. Não dá vontade de comer' (p.78). Pontiero translates this as, 'you're like a hair in one's soup. It's enough to make anyone lose their appetite' (p.60). Again, for greater clarity, the original metaphor is transformed into a more accessible simile. The Portuguese 'comer' probably has sexual connotations; these are present in the English 'appetite'.

Food for Olímpico de Jesus becomes a means of asserting his power or 'superiority'. It is wielded as symbol of male sexuality, a weapon in a sexual conflict. See, for instance, the description of how Olímpico de Jesus wins over Glória:

Ele, para impressionar Glória e cantar logo de galo, comprou pimenta malagueta das brabas, na feira dos nordestinos e para mostrar à nova namorada o durão que era mastigou em plena polpa a fruta do diabo. Nem sequer tomou um copo de água para apagar o fogo nas entranhas. O ardor quase intolerável no entanto o enrijeceu, sem contar que Glória assustada passou a obedecê-lo (p.83).

In an attempt to impress Glória and play the macho, he bought red hot peppers at the market frequented by Northeasterners, and to show his new girl-friend just how tough he was, he bit right into the devil's fruit. He didn't even

drink a glass of water to quell the burning sensation. The unbearable pain made him feel tough and a terrified Glória suddenly became submissive (p.65).

Food and the satisfaction of sexual desire are again equated, when Olímpico de Jesus is compared to a male bee:

E agarrou-se em Glória com a força de um zangão, ela lhe daria mel de abelhas e carnes fartas (p.83)

And he attacked Glória with the ferociousness of a male bee, craving for her honey and that succulent flesh (p.65)

Food, or the absence of it, is also linked to social status. Even if Macabéa is not intellectually capable of articulating an opinion on class difference, during the course of the novel, she does become more aware of such matters, and she knows why Glória is more attractive to Olímpico de Jesus: 'E tudo devia ser porque Glória era gorda' (p.78), translated more euphemistically as 'This was probably due to the fact that Glória was buxom' (p.61). This buxomness signals her superior position on the social scale, which is also marked by the street where she lives with her parents and the kind of food they eat.

É que na suja desordem de uma terceira classe de burguesia havia no entanto o morno conforto de quem gasta todo o dinheiro em comida, no subúrbio comia-se muito (pp.83-4).

In the foul disorder of a third-class suburban bourgeoisie one could still count upon eating well, for most of their money was spent on food (p.66).

The implication is that this third class bourgeoisie, although no longer completely impoverished, has not yet shaken off the memory of hunger. Hence the tea at Glória's house:

um farto copo de grosso chocolate de verdade misturado

com leite e muitas espécies de roscas açucaradas, sem falar num pequeno bolo (p.84)

A cup filled to the brim with piping hot chocolate mixed with real milk, a selection of sugared buns and even a small cake (p.66)

There is a slight change in emphasis from one language to the next, presumably to make the drink seem more appetizing to the English reader; 'filled to the brim' has the same connotations of abundance as 'farto' in Portuguese. 'Piping hot' does not correspond to 'grosso', but suggests warmth and comfort. In the translation of 'chocolate de verdade misturado com leite' the 'real' element is transposed to the milk. The changes are minimal, intended perhaps to take account of British dietary preferences, and suggest greater luxury. In case the reader has missed the point, the chocolate is later described as 'coisa de rico', (p.84), 'something intended for the rich' (p.66).

Food is again used as a marker of social class in the encounter between Macabéa and the doctor. As a matter of fact, it signals more than a difference of class and education; food becomes a symbol of everything that is absent from Macabéa's life. The abyss of incomprehension between doctor and patient widens when he salves his conscience by offering her dietary advice, recommending that she eat food that she has never even heard of.

Finally, the visit to Madame Carlota. It is significant that Macabéa is offered cold coffee, 'o café frio e quase sem açúcar' (p.90), a reminder of how negligible the girl is, while the clairvoyant devores her chocolates with almost sensual greed:

Madama Carlota enquanto falava tirava de uma caixa aberta um bombom atrás do outro e ia enchendo a boca pequena. Não ofereceu nenhum a Macabéa. Esta que, como eu disse, tinha tendência a notar coisas pequenas, percebeu que dentro de cada bombom mordido havia um líquido grosso (p.92)

As she spoke, Madame Carlota extracted one chocolate

after another from an open box and popped them into her tiny mouth. She made no attempt to offer one to Macabéa. Macabéa who, as I mentioned, tended to notice the smallest detail, observed that inside every chocolate Madame Carlota bit into, there was a thick cream filling (p.73).

This greed on its own might not be especially significant, but Madame Carlota is also recounting her life story to Macabéa, the story of a prostitute later turned brothel-keeper. Eating rich chocolates, oral gratification, has become a substitute for the sexual activity and pleasure of her youth. Macabéa is not invited to participate because she is sexually inexperienced. Her virginity excludes her from this kind of communion. Nonetheless, she observes what is happening. The narrator has already pointed out that despite her tubercular, malnourished body, Macabéa is sensual, and has the capacity to feel.

What might otherwise pass unnoticed, the recurring use of metaphors and similes associated with food, or food used as a symbol, of regional identity, poverty or economic privilege; food as sexual signifier - all of these deployments of meaning become more apparent when examined in the context of translational or interpretative strategies. None of the elements in the original text has been lost or omitted. In some cases there have been slight alterations or transformations, but the connotations are retained as far as the English will permit.

Flora

Because this is, in some respects, an urban novel, there are few references to the world of nature. However, there is one recurring lexical item, not to mention metaphor, which demands some thought from the translator, the word *capim*. This is a distinctively Brazilian word, describing a genus of grass that is found in Brazil. However, in order to avoid complicated botanical definitions or intru-

sive footnotes, the translator has chosen to render this quite simply as *grass*. The difficulty lies in the symbolic values attached to *capim*. *Grass* for a British reader could easily mean the green lawns that surround our country houses, that constitute our golf courses, or adorn our small squares of urban garden. But *capim* in this context, has very different connotations, and offers different interpretative possibilities. Where some of the allusions might suggest life and if not vitality, then at least persistence, others point to grass as a metaphor for stunted growth, and thus for Macabéa herself.

até no capim vagabundo há desejo de sol (p.43)
but even among weeds there exists a need for sunlight (p.28)

According to the *Novo Dicionário Aurélio da Língua Portuguesa*, ‘vagabundo’ does not normally collocate with ‘capim’. The sense, however, is perfectly obvious, and there are additional connotations, especially if we refer back to the earlier description of Macabéa, ‘Ela nascera com maus antecedentes e agora parecia uma filha de um não-sei-o-quê’ (p.42), which Pontiero translates as ‘She had been born with a legacy of misfortune, a creature from nowhere’(p.26). ‘Vagabundo’ could be translated as ‘inferior’, ‘common’, ‘worthless’, so in this context, ‘weeds’ seems a reasonable solution.

If Macabéa is ‘capim’, then ‘desejo de sol’ is the need for affection, the human warmth she seeks in Olímpico de Jesus.

Ela era subterrânea e nunca tinha tido floração. Minto: ela era capim (p.46)
She was subterranean and had never really flowered. I am telling a lie: she was wild grass (p.30)

The metaphor of growth, the instinct to survive, recurs throughout the narrative:

a vida brotava no chão, alegre por entre pedras. (p.46)

This is translated with some optimism by Pontiero:

life sprouted from the ground, jubilant between the paving stones. (p.30)

Towards the end of the novel, we find another instance:

e entre as pedras do chão crescia capim. (p.90)
On the pavement tiny blades of grass sprouted between the paving stones. (p.71)

Here Macabéa actually thinks about grass, perhaps comparing it to human existence:

capim é tão fácil e simples (p.90)
grass is so easy and simple (p.71)

After she has been knocked over by the yellow Mercedes, and lies dying in the gutter, grass becomes a means of transmitting authorial irony, the irony not of her existence, but of her death:

viu entre as pedras do esgoto o ralo capim de um verde da mais tenra esperança humana. (p.95)
as she looked at the stones around the sewer and sprouting blades of wild grass; their greenness conveyed the most tender hope. (p.80)

More than irony, there is a cruel kind of pathetic fallacy. In certain literary works, nature mirrors human emotions and suffering. Macabéa's contact with the world of nature is demeaning:

Voltando ao capim. Para tal exígua criatura chamada Macabéa a grande natureza se dava apenas em forma de capim de sarjeta (p.99)
Returning to the grass. For a creature as meagre as Macabéa, abundant nature was offering itself in a few sparse

blades of grass growing in the gutter (p.80)

The final allusion to grass comes very close to the end of novel, when Macabéa lies dying in the gutter. Grass is the last thing she sees, and is as futile and out of place in the big city as she has been:

Fixava, só por fixar, o capim. Capim na grande Cidade do Rio de Janeiro. À toa. Quem sabe se Macabéa já teria alguma vez sentido que também ela era à-toa na cidade incontestável. (p.99)

She stared, just for the sake of staring, at the blades of grass. Grass in the great Metropolis of Rio de Janeiro. Adrift. Who knows if Macabéa had ever felt at some time that she, too, was adrift in the great unconquerable city? (p.80)

Yet there are discernible contradictions in the grass metaphor. Although out of place, 'à-toa', *capim* seems to represent something tough, wiry, that survives against all the odds. Macabéa, run over by a Mercedes, does not survive 'in life', but she has acquired immortality through Rodrigo S.M.'s narration. The North East of Brazil will produce, like *capim*, an inexhaustible supply of Macabéas, the 'nordestinas que andam por aí aos montes' (p.25), translated as 'all those unfortunate girls from north-eastern Brazil' (p.12), wretchedly poor, etiolated, yet with the will to resist.

One other 'botanical' allusion concerns Macabéa's inchoate sexuality:

Ela nada pedia mas seu sexo exigia, como um nascido girassol num túmulo. (p.88)

She herself asked for nothing, but her sex made its demands like a sunflower germinating in a tomb. (p.70)

The Portuguese is interesting, in that 'nascido', apparently a past participle, precedes the noun. If this 'nascido' is in fact a noun, we would expect it to be followed by 'de'. This is not re-

flected in the English word order. But if the position of 'nascido' emphasises the nascent state of the flower, there is an attempt to match this by using 'germinating'. The symbolism of the sunflower is striking, in either language, and takes us back to the earlier statements 'há desejo de sol' and 'nunca tinha tido floração'. A sunflower can only reach its natural height and flower if it draws adequate nutrition from the soil, and receives sufficient sun-light. Macabéa has received neither nutrition or warmth. Statements such as these seem to contradict or at least undermine Rodrigo S.M.'s avowal of impartiality at the beginning of the novel:

Bem, é verdade que também eu não tenho piedade do meu personagem principal, a nordestina: é um relato que desejo frio. (p.27)

It is true that I, too, feel no pity for my main character, the girl from the North-east: I want my story to be cold and impartial. (p.13)

Spaces and places

A Hora da Estrela is in some respects an urban novel, one reason why the occurrences of 'capim' take on such significance. Set in Rio de Janeiro, it simultaneously depicts the alienation of the poor migrant, Macabéa, and the alterity, of the disaffected narrator, Rodrigo S.M.:

Sim, não tenho classe social, marginalizado que sou. A classe alta me tem como um monstro esquisito, a média com desconfiança de que eu possa desequilibrá-la, a classe baixa nunca vem a mim. (p.33)

I belong to no social category, marginal as I am. The upper classes consider me a strange creature, the middle classes regard me with suspicion, afraid that I might unsettle them, while the lower classes avoid me. (p.18)

'Marginalizado que sou' is translated as 'marginal', an adjective. 'Marginalised' might have been more accurate, suggesting the result of a process of rejection, but it might also be overstating the case.

The urban environment is marked in several ways, through references to shops, streets, neighbourhoods. These fulfil two functions: they establish the setting against which the 'action' of the novel takes place, and form a contrast with the rural world from which Macabéa, Olímpico de Jesus, Rodrigo S.M., and Clarice herself, have migrated:

É que numa rua do Rio de Janeiro peguei no ar de relance o sentimento de perdição no rosto de uma moça nordestina (p.26)

In a street in Rio de Janeiro I caught a glimpse of perdition on the face of a girl from the North-east. (p.12)

As we can see from the above, geographical and spatial references never come on their own, but are always part of some psychological evaluation.

Como a nordestina, há milhares de moças espalhadas por cortiços, vagas de cama num quarto, atrás de balcões trabalhando até a estafa (p.28)

There are thousands of girls like this girl from the North-east to be found in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, living in bedsitters or toiling behind counters for all they are worth. (p.114)

The translator wishes to locate the girl in her appropriate context, social, economic, and therefore inserts 'of Rio de Janeiro', for greater clarity.

tinham vindo para o Rio, o inacreditável Rio de Janeiro, a tia lhe arranjava emprego, finalmente morrera e ela, agora sozinha, morava numa vaga de quarto compartilhado com

mais quatro moças balconistas das Lojas Americanas. (p.45)

she had arrived in Rio, the incredible Rio de Janeiro, where her aunt had found her a job. Then her aunt had died, and the girl was on her own, lodging in a bedsitter with four other girls who worked as shop-assistants at a well-known department store. (p.29)

The English translation makes Macabéa seem more independent, or perhaps gives more emphasis to her aloneness, than the Portuguese. In an effort to render the text more transparent for the foreign reader, 'Lojas Americanas' becomes 'a well-known department store' (p.29). 'Worked as shop-assistants' seems perfectly reasonable. Had the translation been into American English, one might have expected to find 'counter-hands'.

O quarto ficava num velho sobrado colonial da áspera rua do Acre entre as prostitutas que serviam a marinheiros, depósitos de carvão e de cimento em pó, não longe do cais do porto. (p.45)

The bedsitter was in an old, colonial-style tenement in Acre Street, a red-light district near the docks inhabited by women who picked up seamen in the streets between the depots of charcoal and cement. (p.29)

These details are important, accentuating not Macabéa's status as an individual — so far in the narrative she had not been individualised with a name — but her membership of a large urban underclass made up of the poor, the anonymous — 'a moça anónima da história' (p.46) —, the disaffected, the new *retirantes* or *flagelados*. Again, the translator follows the procedure of rendering places and buildings more recognisable to an English readership. 'Sobrado', a house of two or more storeys, or large plantation owner's home, has no precise equivalent in English. 'Tenement', deriving perhaps from Pontiero's knowledge of urban Scotland, suggests a large building that can house many different families or

single occupants. It certainly conveys appropriate implications of shared kitchens, lavatories, and poverty. Although 'colonial' does not literally mean 'colonial-style', 'colonial' by itself would suggest wealth, decayed gentility, that does not sit comfortably with the prostitutes and the docks. Finally, while 'áspera' (rough, coarse), seems to have been omitted, it has been replaced by the explanatory phrase 'a red-light district'. From the rather passive 'serviam a marinheiros' the English moves to the more dynamic 'picked up sailors'. Here there is a clear attempt by the translator to spell things out for the uniformed reader. As can be seen in the following extract, where the neutral 'lugar', place, becomes the negative 'slum':

Rua do Acre. Mas que lugar. Os gordos ratos da rua do Acre. (p.45)

Acre Street. What a slum. The plump rats of Acre Street. (p.30)

The narrative includes a series of elements in the urban landscape: the warehouses near the docks, the 'botequim' where she sometimes eats a hard-boiled egg, the restaurants where she will not eat lunch or dinner, the cinema she visits once a month, the quayside where the cargo ships fill her with yearning, rua do Lavradio, praça Mauá, rua Conde Bonfim, the ironmonger's, butcher's shop, the public park, the zoo, the factory where Olímpico de Jesus works, buses, the taxi Macabéa takes to Madame Carlota's apartment in Olaria. There are also several fairly explicit allusions to the social geography of the city:

Veç por outra ia para a Zona Sul e ficava olhando as vitrines faiscentes de jóias e roupas acetinadas. (p.50)

Occasionally she wandered into the more fashionable quarters of the city and stood gazing at the shop windows displaying glittering jewels and luxurious garments in satin and silk. (p.34)

However, what is explicit to a Brazilian reader may not be so evident to the English reader, which accounts for the conscious decision of the translator to remove any possible doubts.. Thus 'Zona Sul' becomes 'the more fashionable quarters of the city', 'roupas acetinas' is translated by the string 'luxurious garments in satin and silk' with its distinctive, sibilant sound patterning to suggest more richness and luxury, and reproduce the sound rustling fabric. As a consequence, greater pathos attaches to Macabéa's window-shopping: she seems immeasurably poorer.

The same technique is used in this next extract. Here the translation process mirrors what is happening in the narrative: the translator spells things out for the reader in the same way that Olímpico de Jesus feels obliged to enlighten Macabéa, with the strongly marked 'raparigas':

O Mangue está cheio de raparigas que fizeram perguntas demais.

Mangue é um bairro? (p.72)

The brothels in the Mangue are full of women who asked far too many questions.

Is the Mangue a district? (p.55)

In a sense, the translator has pre-empted Madame Carlota's nostalgic references to the Mangue district:

Ai que saudades da zona! Eu peguei o melhor tempo do Mangue que era freqüentado por verdadeiros cavalheiros. (p.93)

How I miss the red-light district. I knew the Mangue when it was at its best and frequented by real gentlemen. (p.74)

What is taken for granted by the speaker, Madame Carlota, is brought to the surface for the foreign reader. Thus 'zone' becomes 'red-light district' in preference to the more neutral 'zone', for effects of clarification.

Identity

Under this rubric, we find several vocabulary items that could present difficulties for a translator. The first of these is 'a nordestina'. This could have been translated as 'the North-easterner', but this would have had the effect of deleting the gender marker. Pontiero's 'the girl from the North-east' is as good a way as any to define a character. For an English reader, there may even be an intertextual echo of Jobim's song 'The girl from Ipanema', also Brazilian, from Rio. The irony is that the girl in the song is beautiful, and, unlike Macabéa, does turn people's heads. Some of the connotations of 'nordestina' will inevitably be lost in translation but Macabéa emerges quite distinctly as someone who has her roots in the 'sertão de Alagoas' and belongs to the North Eastern literary tradition. The blustering, bullying Olímpico de Jesus, 'galinho de briga que era' (p.61), would not be out of place in Jorge Amado's *Terras do Sem Fim*, and Macabéa is very much the daughter of Graciliano's Fabiano, or João Cabral de Melo Neto's Severino. How this lineage, 'maus antecedentes' (p.42), or 'herança do sertão' (p.43), as the narrator puts it, is rendered in translation, is quite another matter. The easiest solution would be to have an elucidatory footnote or end note. But this would disrupt the reading process and introduce too 'sociological' a note into a novel that reflects equally on the narrative process and on wider existential concerns.

The translator does find a partial solution. One is to insert an evocative adjective. 'unfortunate', so that the 'nordestinas que andam por aí aos montes' (p.25) become 'all those unfortunate girls from north-eastern Brazil' (p.12). Here we have a prime example of a translator who interpreting for the benefit of those English readers who will not automatically understand the negative associations of the North East: drought, poverty, starvation. Of course, many of these become more apparent as the narrative progresses, especially through Macabéa's recollections of her childhood.

Sertão offers a challenge for precisely the same reasons. Although the (limited) action of the novel is set in Rio de Janeiro, the

sertão is never far away. Not necessarily as a real place; if anything, it has mystical, legendary qualities. But it stands in constant counterpoint to the big city. Unlike the *capim* that sprouts between the paving stones, Macabéa never puts down roots in the urban environment, she is never assimilated:

Uma vez por outra tinha a sorte de ouvir de madrugada um galo cantar a vida e ela se lembrava nostálgica do sertão'.
(p.46)

'From time to time, the girl was lucky enough to hear a cockerel welcome the dawn. Then she would remember the backwoods of Alagoas with nostalgia' (p.30)

Throughout the novel, *sertão* is translated as 'backwoods of Alagoas'. This is yet another example of Pontiero's interpretative, clarifying procedure. We should note the divergence from the 'standard' translation of *sertão* as 'backlands'. This was the noun used to translate Euclides da Cunha's novel *Os Sertões* (1902), which was published in English as *Rebellion in the Backlands*. Guimarães Rosa's masterpiece, *Grande Sertão Veredas* became *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*. While neither 'backlands' or 'backwoods' conjures up the specificities of arid landscape, dried up riverbeds and bleached bones, animal and human, that we have come to expect from films such as *Órfãos da Terra* or *Morte e Vida, Severina*, at least 'backwoods' has connotations of remoteness, backwardness, rural deprivation. The difficulty is that England is not extensive enough to have 'backwoods'. Rural areas tend to be imagined as havens of peace and quiet, at least by harried city dwellers; farm labourers might have a different perspective. One lexical equivalent could be borrowed from the United States, but 'backwoodsman' is more reminiscent of Davy Crockett than the Brazilian North East. One other suggestion might be 'barren lands', despite, or perhaps because of its echoes of the English language translation of Graciliano Ramos' *Vidas Secas* as *Barren Lives*. More recently, Berthold Zilly was awarded the Wiesland Prize for his German

translation of *Os Sertões*, under the title of *Krieg im Sertão*, in 1995.

Olímpico de Jesus is from the ‘sertão da Paraíba’ (p.60), ‘the backwoods of Paraíba’ (p.43). Whatever that indefinable quality of *sertanejo*, there is instant recognition when Macabéa and Olímpico de Jesus meet for the first time:

se reconheceram como dois nordestinos, bichos da mesma espécie que se farejam (p.59)
 recognized each other as native North-easterners, creatures of the same species with that unmistakable aura (p.42)

The target text focuses more on their shared regional identity, and seems to emphasise the spiritual or psychological aspect of their encounter, whereas the source text expresses in animalistic terms the instinctual nature of this recognition, which precedes - and obviates - any verbal exchange between them. Indeed, the image of two animals sniffing at each other is not out of place. Macabéa has already been described as if she were a dog, nor should we forget the manner of her dying, like a dog that is run over by a car.

ela como uma cadela vadia era teleguiada exclusivamente por si mesma. (p.32)
 like some vagrant bitch she was guided entirely by her own remote control. (p.18)
 Essa moça não sabia que ela era o que era, assim como um cachorro não sabe que é cachorro (p.42)
 The girl did not know that she existed, just as a dog doesn't know that it's a dog. (p.27)

‘Ela era o que era’ is not precisely ‘she existed’, which should be translated as ‘she was what she was’; the translator has compressed the Portuguese, in order to avoid repetitiousness, since the following phase adds further elements of repetition.

ela sabia muita coisa assim como ninguém ensina cachorro

a abanar o rabo (p.44)
the girl knew lots of things just as a dog knows how to wag
its tail (p.28)

Again, there is a slight shift in focus, so that 'no one teaches a dog to wag its tail' becomes a statement of instinctive behaviour, 'a dog knows how to wag its tail'.

Portuguese lexical items

One of the most difficult words to translated from Portuguese into English is *saudade*. This word occurs at various points in the narrative. The solutions found are more than adequate, and are achieved in some cases by modularity. The simplest one is a generic translation, where 'saudade' is rendered quite simply as 'feeling' (p.12). 'Tinha saudade de' (p.50), becomes 'She recalled... with nostalgia' (p.34); 'dava-lhe saudade do futuro' (p.45) becomes 'made the girl yearn for some future' (p.29); 'saudade do que poderia ter sido e não foi' (p.48) is translated as 'a yearning for what might have been and never was' (p.32). 'Ai que saudades' (p.93) becomes 'How I miss' (p.74). As we can see from these examples, the translator uses a series of lexical items, and grammatical structures to convey the range of meanings contained in the multi-purpose *saudade*.

Another essentially Portuguese, or rather, Brazilian lexical item, is 'beata'. According to Taylor's *Dictionary*, this has several meanings: 'a very devout woman; one who feigns devoutness, hypocrite'. As an adjective, 'beato, beata' signifies overly devout, sanctimonious, bigoted'. With this novel, the translator deals with 'a tia beata' (p.43) by using the two-for-one rule: 'her maiden aunt, a sanctimonious spinster' (p.27). In this way, none of the information, or the criticism, is lost. For 'a sua beatice' (p.44), he comes up with 'The old girl's sanctimonious ways' (p.28), again with no discernible loss of connotations.

Losses and omissions

Costa talks about omissions that are 'part and parcel of the process of transfer from ST to TT' (p.71). There are several occasions when one or two words seem to disappear between *A Hora da Estrela* and *The Hour of the Star*, but the meaning is adequately carried by those lexical items that remain. Such lapses does not have any real impact on the coherence of the target text, and can be attributed to translator's fatigue. They do, however, point up the need for a copy editor who is competent in the source and target languages.

At the same time, it should be remembered that certain rhetorical figures, notably paronomasia, obdurately defy translation, thus provoking a certain loss of meaning. In such cases, translation becomes an exercise in damage limitation. The best example of this concerns Olímpico de Jesus' political aspirations:

Quando Olímpico lhe dissera que terminaria deputado pelo Estado da Paraíba, ela ficou boquiaberta e pensou: quando nos casarmos então serei uma deputada? Não queria, pois deputada parecia nome feio. (p.62)

When Olímpico insisted that one day he would become a politician in his native state of Paraíba, she was astonished and thought to herself: when we get married does that mean that I shall be a politician as well? She didn't fancy the idea because the word 'politician' sounded quite unpleasant. (pp.46-47)

In a case like this, it is very difficult to see what else the translator could do, other than adopt a compromise solution. The humour in the Brazilian text is based on from the wordplay deriving from the resemblance between 'deputada', (female) politician, and words deriving from 'puta', meaning 'whore'.

Another type of loss involves sound patterning, and again, there are no easy solutions. The clearest example of this occurs when the narrator alludes to Macabéa's childhood as 'uma infância sem bola nem boneca' (p.48). The translator must choose between an utter-

ance that uses alliteration and rhyme, or one that conveys the information contained in the original. In the event, the option was for accuracy and the evocation of sadness, achieved through metonymy: 'a childhood without games or dolls' (p.32).

More difficult to explain are those translations that deliberately eliminate Clarice's repetitions. For instance two declarative sentences, 'Este livro é um silêncio. Este livro é uma pergunta (p.31) are compressed into one: 'This book is a silence: an interrogation' (p.17).

In the following extract, we see a sentence made up of three clauses, all of which could function as grammatically correct sentences on their own:

Dormia de boca aberta por causa do nariz entupido, dormia exausta, dormia até o nunca (p.38)

She slept with her mouth wide open because of her stuffed-up nostrils, dead to the world from sheer exhaustion. (p.23)

Rearranged differently on the page, these lines might lead us to think we were reading a poem. In Portuguese the emphasis is apparent, even if the reader does not immediately note it as an example of anaphora: the sleeping girl is an unlikely a subject for such a poetic treatment. The English transmits the same information as the Portuguese, but deletes the inexorability of the original. Here the author's stylistic choices have been over-ruled by those made by the translator, raising concerns about the legitimacy of 'improving' the original.

In a further example of how a repetition is reworked without loss of information, 'Faltava-lhe o jeito de se ajeitar', which occurs in two successive paragraphs (p.39), is translated first as 'She had no idea how to cope with life' and then 'The girl had no way of coping' (p.24). Some of Clarice's repetitions are for emphasis, some are playful in character, while others are motivated by irony. Unfortunately this is not always apparent from the translated text.

With regard to the syntax of the novel, the translator adopts the

policy of resolving 'difficult' passages. This explains the deletion of Clarice's aposiopesis (the sudden breaking off in mid-sentence): 'a iminência de. De quê?' (p.26), replaced by 'the imminence ... of what?' (p.12). The punctuation is changed, perhaps to meet English expectations, perhaps in order to make the rupture less abrupt. This translational strategy may stem from a perceived need to produce a text that does not read like a 'bad' translation, or indeed, like any kind of translation at all.

In any case, there are three different stages in the translation process. First, reading the text for general comprehension. Second, interpreting the text:

Clarice's texts, like Kafka's, are not narratives. They contain a secret, a lesson. But this secret and this lesson are dispersed in the verbal space in such a way that the meaning cannot be apprehended at a first reading. (Cixous: 990:98)

The final stage results in the production of a translation that is smooth, attractive and therefore acceptable to the English reader.

Final remarks

I have identified instances of loss in the process of re-textualisation, but Pontiero's translation is also studded with *trouvailles*, or singularly apposite translations into English. For instance, 'descobrimo os porquês (p.26) becomes 'discovering the whys and wherefores', a good example of the idiom choice principle. 'Curso ralo' (p.29) is translated as 'crash course', with all the right implications for the context. The translation of 'tia beata' has already been discussed. And there are moments in the novel where the translator achieves phonological 'equivalence'. The sound patterning of 'Mas voam fâscas e lascas como aços espelhados' (p.33) finds its equivalence in the sibilant alliterations of 'Sparks and splinters fly like

shattered steel' (p.19).

Verena Andermatt Conley rightly questions 'the status of readings done from texts in translation' (Cixous 1990:viii). Unsuspecting readers could, indeed, arrive at erroneous or ill-founded interpretations. But then, the same holds equally true for readers of any literary text, whether an original or a translation. In fact, even when a work is translated by its own author, deemed to have bilingual competence, there is no guarantee that the translation will be a 'faithful' re-textualisation of the source text. Nowhere is this seen so clearly as in María Luisa Bombal's English re-working of *La última niebla* (Buenos Aires, 1935). This novel was first translated (faithfully) by Richard and Lucia Cunningham and published in New York in 1982, under the title *The Final Mist*. But Bombal herself went on to produce a new version in 1947, with the title of *House of Mist*. The first text was a lyrical novel à la Virginia Woolf, the second version emerged as a pseudo-Gothic novel more reminiscent of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, doubtless because it was destined for the Hollywood film factory.

The translational nature of *The Hour of the Star*, the mediation and the manipulations of the translator, do not eliminate polyssemy. Pontiero constructs meaning in the same way as any other textualiser. In any case, we should not discount the other levels of mediation at work in the reading process. Mediation is already an integral part of *A Hora da Estrela* as the consequence of a female author's decision to foreground Rodrigo S.M., a man, as narrator. Then comes the further mediation of the critical intertext. Apparently, some critics would prefer to detach Clarice's narrative from its Brazilian context:

Although the cultural referents are not obliterated, her readings clearly do not dwell primarily on literary history and may risk not appealing to those studying a work as it reflects specifically a given culture. Instead, Cixous chooses to discuss questions of the highest possible logical category, that is of life and art or life and death. (Cixous 1990:x)

The cultural referents, references to Brazil, the North East, food and hunger, have certainly not been obliterated in the translation process. On the contrary, reading the two texts in tandem has the effect of intensifying their impact: the reader becomes more sensitive to the accumulation of allusions to the North East, through the repetition of toponyms such as Alagoas and Paraíba, the adjectives 'nordestino' and 'nordestina', typical food items, the word *sertão*, descriptions such as 'cabra safado' (p.62), which might easily be heard in a Jorge Amado novel, and comments from the narratorial voice on life in the North East. By the time the reader has completed his or her perusal of the text, Macabéa has become the quintessential distillation of the North Eastern experience. Reading the translation thus becomes an act of re-appropriation, as opposed to a deliberate ransacking of Clarice's *oeuvre* in order to satisfy the needs of a First World feminist agenda.

A close comparison of extracts from the two texts unveils the 'estória do próprio ato de traduzir', and permits us to appreciate one particular translator's technique. We note a tendency to oversignal, to explicate, but this is motivated, and perhaps justified, by his sense of audience. The examples shown above reveal a conscious avoidance of unusual collocations and disjunctive syntactic constructions: Pontiero consistently opts to render the Portuguese more transparent, to 'disambiguate'. At the same time, he rarely compromises meaning, omits remarkably little, and keeps insertions to a minimum. The result is a literary text that is unlikely to alienate or discomfit the reader.

Commenting on Walter Benjamin's theory of translation, Susan Bassnett warns against using 'the terminology of loss and gain', emphasising instead 'a notion that sees translation and writing as interconnected, with the one assuring the survival of the other' (Bassnett 1993:65). *The Hour of The Star* performs precisely this function. Pontiero's pioneering work in 'discovering', translating, but not 'colonising' *A Hora de Estrela*, has made available to English-speaking readers a seminal work of Brazilian literature to which they might otherwise be denied access, both now and in the future.

At the same time - and here it becomes extremely difficult to avoid infelicitous metaphors of penetration - the English translations of Lispector, among them *The Hour of The Star*, have undoubtedly helped to breach the international literary canon, creating a permanent place for one Latin American woman writer and blazing a trail for the translators of the future.



Notes

1. This essay was first delivered as a paper to the Segundo Congresso Português de Literatura Brasileira, organised by Professor Arnaldo Saraiva, Universidade do Porto, 8-10 May 1996.
2. The original novel was published in the year of Clarice's death, 1977. The English translation was first published by Carcanet Press in 1986. All English textual citations will be from the Carcanet paperback edition, published in Manchester in 1992. Portuguese citations will be taken from the edition published by Livraria Francisco Alves Editora, Rio de Janeiro, 1990.



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