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DE LITERATURA EM TRADUÇÃO



Os Muitos Mapas da Irlanda

Science, technology, and humanism in Pat Boran's poetry (Ciência, tecnologia e humanismo na poesia de Pat Boran)

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Resumo: Apresentamos a tradução de três poemas do poeta irlandês Pat Boran, a saber, “Bed time in the Scientist house”, onde percebemos uma relação próxima do poeta com a ciência; “Answering Machine”, onde a relação homem-máquina surge como um atenuante da solidão e, por fim, “The Bomb”, onde os terrores da guerra são apresentados em uma perspectiva de ilusão. Questões e desafios da tradução são apresentados.

Palavras-chave: Pat Boran, Ciência na poesia, Tradução.

Abstract: We present the translation of three poems by the Irish poet Pat Boran: “Bed time in the Scientist house”, where we perceive a close relationship between the poet and science; “Answering Machine”, where the man-machine relationship emerges as a mitigating factor for loneliness; and, finally, “The Bomb”, where the terrors of war are presented in an illusionary perspective. Translation issues and challenges are presented.

Keywords: Pat Boran, Science in Poetry, Translation.

Biographical and bibliographical notes

Pat Boran is an Irish author, born in Portlaoise, central Ireland, in 1963 and lives in Dublin for many years. He received the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award

(1989). In 1990, he published his first book, *The Unwound Clock* (Dedalus Press) and has not stopped publishing poetry since then. He has more than a dozen books published, and in 2022 “*On a Wave of Light*” (Dedalus Press) and “*Building the Ark*” (Dedalus Press) came out. He has also published short fiction and non-fiction. In 2017 he published a selection of poems, *A Man Is Only as Good: A Pocket Selected Poems* (Orange Crate Books) from which two of the poems are here translated.

The author has dedicated his life to poetry: he was editor of Poetry Ireland Review, a renowned poetry journal in Ireland. And is responsible for a poetry program on Irish national radio, among other actions.

Furthermore, his work is highly recognized. In 2007 he was elected a member of Aosdána, Artist's Association of Ireland. In 2008 he was contemplated with the Lawrence O'Shaughnessy Award for Irish Poetry from the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota – U.S.A.

Pat Boran's poetics

Pat Boran's poetics leads us to the conclusion that he is a poet of his time. His poetry is closely linked with the technology that permeates our lives, and we often think that such technologies have always been here. In fact, older generations often tend to forget that they have lived when there was no powerful computer at hand and everything was slower. Boran's work communicates with the world by means of a mixture of images, sounds and movements that range from the tradition of books to poetry films in websites His book “*Waveforms: Bull Island Haiku*” (2015, Orange Crate Books) brings for each poem, a black and white photograph taken by the author (BORAN, 2023). From these he created the “Poem Cards”, an association of poems with the most different types of images and arts that accentuate the range of meanings of his poetry that goes beyond words. They form a frame similar to an open window to a dimension formed by colors and words.

In 2020 this experience was developed. With the inclusion of sounds and movements, he created what he calls “Poetry Films”, short videos where his poems are recited under images and a striking soundtrack and, putting these three elements together, we have something that is more than poetry, more than films, something original that touches us deeply. He had several of his Poetry Films officially selected for different Cinema Festivals around the world. Many of these materials are available on his website (Boran, 2023).

In Portuguese, we have the work “*O sussurro das cordas*” (2018, Edições Eufeme, Lisbon – Portugal) a selection of poems translated by Francisco José Craveiro de Carvalho. To the best of our knowledge, there are no Brazilian translations of this important Irish poet yet.

By looking through Boran's work, we perceive in his works a deep interest in science and technology, both as thematic concern in his poetry and for the platforms chosen to

present his poetry to the world, exploiting digital technologies in their Poetry-movies. We also noticed the commitment to humanitarian causes. Thus, as a sampling of this aspect of Boran's work, which is not the unique aspect of his production, we have chosen three poems that indicate his appreciation for science, the man-technology relationship and humanity emerging in the face of the horrors of war.

Journey through the paths of translation

We shall now discuss the details of the translations proposed for the three chosen poems.

“Bedtime at scientist’s house” (Hora de dormir na casa do cientista)

In this poem, taken from *“A Man Is Only As Good: A Pocket Selected Poems”* (Boran, 2017), science is treated as a set of incredible stories to be told by a scientist before going to sleep. The subject already knows the stories and asks with great expectation, *“Tell us that one again”*. This verse we translate as *“Conte-nos uma vez mais”*. We opted for a small inversion in the way we generally speak in Brazil. The form *“Nos conte mais uma vez”* is more common. However, the option for the inversions followed the original sound. First, *“Tell us”* translated as *“Conte-nos”* sounds closer than *“Nos conte”*. Second, *“uma vez mais”* was chosen instead *“mais uma vez”* to keep an open sound at the end of the verse (*“again”* / *“mais”*). Then, the unbelievable things that the scientist always talks about appear. The first three verses *“Tell us again how the universe contains/ no straight lines, though Saturn’s rings / Stay coin-thin to 500,000 miles”* we translate as *“Conte-nos novamente como o universo não tem/ linhas retas, mesmo que os anéis de Saturno / permaneçam achatados por até 500.000 milhas”*. The lyrical subject points out an absurdity, *“how the universe contains no straight lines”*? This is a reference to the space deformation according to Einstein’s theory of general relativity (Einstein, 1915) which changed the way we see space and time (Porto, 2008), a space where even light curves when propagating. The counterpoint to this absurdity is Saturn’s rings, as they *“Stay coin-thin to 500,000 miles”*. The term *“coin-thin”* has a more direct translation as *“fino como uma moeda”*; however, this literal translation of the term removes the counterpoint imagined by the author that the rings remain *“straight / reto”* for a very long distance (here represented by the exaggeration *“500,000 miles”* – retained literally in translation). Therefore, we chose to use *“achatado (flattened)”* which refers to the idea of the rings be thin, but flat, straight, like the counterpoint used.

The second stanza presents more direct enumerations about extraordinary things that the scientist knows: *“the names of Jupiter’s moons (os nomes das luas de Jupiter), “the valencies of atoms 1 to 103” (“a valência dos átomos de 1 a 103.”)* in a reference to The Periodic Table of Elements, and so on.

In the last stanza we find, perhaps, the greatest challenge in the translation of this poem. It can be said that it is the climax, the most awaited moment of the night: “*And show us, oh please, that picture*”. We use the term “*Por fim*” (in English, as “Finally”), which can be considered a domestication (Francisco, 2014). The intention of this choice was precisely to punctuate this climax, the most important and most wanted part of the night: the image “*of a space-time world like a medicine ball / dropped in a net. Just one more,*” which we translated as “*de um mundo espaço-tempo como uma bola medicinal / mergulhada numa rede. Só mais uma vez.*” Here the form “*mais uma vez*” can be used, keeping the original sound that is more closed – “*one more*”). In these verses we have a more explicit reference to Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. From the Physics point of view, the image the author tries to convey is that of a heavy ball placed on a stretched tissue/net, making it from flat/straight to curve. The term “*bola medicinal*” (literal translation of “*medicine ball*”) is not well known in Brazil by the general public. We thought about using “*Pilates ball*”, in a first moment, but then we realized that it was possible to identify through searches to the term “*bola medicinal*” as a heavy ball used in therapeutic exercises. So we opted for the literal translation. After this *grand finale*, seeing (or reproducing, who knows?) this image, whoever is in the scientist’s house can sleep.

This type of reference to science, one might say, is striking in Boran’s poetry. We can mention “*No man’s lands*” (BORAN, 2017) which refers to the Big Bang Theory, and the Milky Way. The Poetry Film “*A Winter Blessing*” quotes the Japanese physicist Ukichiro Nakaya, who studied the formation of snow, by considering our attitudes and vulnerabilities. Science is revered in our life.

Answering Machine (Secretária eletrônica)

This poem was also published in “A Man Is Only As Good: A Pocket Selected Poems”. It is a sociological treatise. Human loneliness is portrayed as waiting for a phone call, waiting to hear a voice from someone who has departed or, ultimately, from any stranger, at least. In the first verse comes the information that the subject’s contact with the world is through the answering machine: “*A flashing light will mean I’m not alone*” which we translated as “*Uma luz piscando e não estarei só.*” The answering machine will pull the lyrical subject out of loneliness.

Whoever made the phone call and left a message could have been the expected person or a stranger. He doesn’t know just by seeing the flashing light. Or could have been even a random sound “*of someone somewhere having second thoughts*” (“*de alguém nalgum lugar tendo dúvidas*”) In this verse, the alliteration “*someone somewhere*” was maintained by the choice of “*alguém nalgum*”. In the sequence, we may have another example of domestication by translating “*and hanging up. But at least I’ll know it means / that someone thinks about me, now and then,*” translated as “*e desligando na minha cara. Ao menos saberei / que alguém pensa em mim, de vez em quando*”. The poem conveys the idea that the other

person abruptly hangs up and the lyrical subject is surprised/frightened and conveys an exacerbated drama caused by his loneliness. That's why I thought that "*desligando na minha cara*" ("*hang up in my face*" as we say in Brazil) is more faithful to the dramatic. In this passage, I omitted the part of the verse "*it means*" from the translation because in Brazil we do not write or speak that way and the idea of meaning of "*Ao menos saberei*" for "*at least I will know that*" is clear with this shorter form.

It is worth mentioning the last two verses. In the penultimate one, "*Alone there in the doorway of your room*", translated as "*sozinho no portal de seu quarto*", the word "*doorway*" could be literally translated as "*entrada*" or "*soleira*", but, however, from this position the lyrical subject sees the sky, so this position where, alone, the sky can be seen must be a kind of gateway ("*portal*").

The use of the term "*portal*" for "*doorway*" is also justified by the last verse where the lyrical subject sees "*a sky*" and not "*the sky*". He sees something particular, he is "*Like a man before an endless, starless sky*", which we translated as "*como um homem diante de um céu infinito, mas apagado*". Instead of the literal translation "*sem estrelas*" to "*starless*", we opted for "*apagado*", which means, "*off*", "*without light*", "*dark*", that is, it has the same meaning as "*sem estrela*" but is more poetic in Portuguese.

A constant concern was choosing terms and words that accentuated the character of despair of the lyrical subject ("*how desperate you've become*" / "*quão desesperado você se tornou*"). This is a beautiful poem with deep meaning. The answering machine today would be what? Notifications of "likes" on social networks? Would the bedroom portal be the cell phone screen? What technology offers a flashing light that gives us the impression that we are not alone?

The bomb (A bomba)

The last translated poem is taken from a Poem Card on the author's website (Boran, 2023), entirely in consonance with diary war humanity lives in different part of Earth. In fact, this poem was written especially for an anthology of anti-war poems produced by the Italian poet Paolo Ruffilli. On the card, the poem appears under a photo by photographer Алесь Усцінаў (pexel.com) of a post-bombing neighborhood.

The poetic image that Boran offers us is sublime and touches us deeply. A war is inconceivable, it's surreal, an ordinary person who values everyday peace cannot understand a bombing, for example. The poem begins with its lyrical subject being deaf after the bomb explodes: "*After the bomb exploded, / For minutes he heard nothing at all / But a high-pitched whistling*," which was translated as "*Depois que a bomba explodiu, / Por minutos ele ouviu / Tão somente um assobio agudo*." The last two verses had information merged to be more in tune with the Brazilian way of speaking. This sharp whistle gave the lyrical subject a certain peace, indeed, the absurd is seen as an illusion and Boran uses the term "*As if*" to direct events. The horror was seen under an illusion "*As if the war / (...)*" "*were finally*

over“, translated as “como se a guerra”/(...) “finalmente tivesse acabado.” It will always use “*finally*” (“finalmente”) for the end of any war, even if it only lasts a unique second.

The most delicate point of the translation of this poem was the last stanza. This is because the author abandons the “*As if*” structure but maintains the idea that everything was happening as if everyone were coming “*from the victory celebrations*”, the last verse of the penultimate stanza translated as “*vindos de celebrações da vitória*”. In the unconscious of the lyrical subject, the war not only ended, but they won! Everyone celebrated the big victory! Consequences of such celebrations culminate in the last stanza of the poem, where the lyrical subject could already hear the broke voices and these voices became broken “*as if they had*” been singing and dancing an endless night. So, to make it clearer in the translation, we used the term “*as if*” in Portuguese version (“*como se*”) also in the last stanza to leave no doubt that this is an illusion and that war is an absurd thing that contrasts with what you learn about humanity, but that in our history we had continuous wars around the world. When will we all on Earth be hoarse and staggering because we actually sang and danced through an endless night?

Final remarks

In summary, we present here the translation of three poems by the Irish poet, Pat Boran. The poems were chosen to exemplify themes present in the poet's work, such as, for example, his great affinity with science, with technology, which he explores to present new poetic platforms and new forms of contact with poetry, and, finally, a very large humanitarian commitment. His poetry is needed these days. Respect and love for science and empathy with others are ways of making our lives more human. Further studies on the poet's life and works can help reveal more about contemporaneity and its social dynamics.

Translations

Hora de dormir na casa do cientista

Para Peter

Conte-nos novamente como o universo não tem
linhas retas, mesmo que os anéis de Saturno
permaneçam achatados por até 500.000 milhas.

Conte-nos uma vez mais.

Gostamos muito disso sempre.

Diga-nos os nomes das luas de Jupiter,
a valência dos átomos de 1 a 103.

Ilustre-nos o movimento aleatório constante,
quasares à beira da invisibilidade.

Por fim, mostre-nos, por favor, aquela imagem
de um mundo espaço-tempo como uma bola medicinal
mergulhada numa rede. Só mais uma vez,
suavemente, como música,
e então iremos dormir.

Bedtime at scientist's house

For Peter

Tell us again how the universe contains
no straight lines, though Saturn's rings
stay coin-thin to 500,000 miles.

Tell us that one again.

We always enjoy it.

Tell us the names of Jupiter's moons,
the valencies of atoms 1 to 103.

Illustrate constant random motion,
quasars on the brink of invisibility.

And show us, oh please, that picture
of a space-time world like a medicine ball
dropped in a net. Just one more,
softly, like music,
then we will sleep.

Secretária eletrônica

Uma luz piscando e não estarei só.
Daqui a pouco talvez eu ouça a sua voz,
Ou a voz de um estranho, ou o som
de alguém nalgum lugar tendo dúvidas

e desligando na minha cara. Ao menos saberei
que alguém pensa em mim, de vez em quando,
provando ou não quem seja,
ao menos haverá alguma consolação

no fato de mandarem um presente de luz,
um sinal de que meu retorno será bem-vindo.
Você não está só, dirá, de cara,
a luz verde da secretária eletrônica.

Ou ainda: quão desesperado você se tornou
para o amor, um sopro de surpresa,
sozinho no portal de seu quarto
como um homem diante de um céu infinito, mas apagado.

Answering Machine

A flashing light will mean I'm not alone.
A moment later maybe I'll hear your voice,
or that of a stranger, or the sound
of someone somewhere having second thoughts

and hanging up. But at least I'll know it means
that someone thinks about me, now and then,
and whoever they prove or do not prove to be,
at least there is a sort of consolation

in the fact that they send a gift of light,
a sign to welcome me on my return.
You are not alone, it will say, first thing,
the green light of the answering machine.

Or else: how desperate you've become
for love, the glimmer of surprise,
alone there in the doorway of your room
like a man before an endless, starless sky.

A bomba

Depois que a bomba explodiu,
Por minutos ele ouviu
Tão somente um assobio agudo.

Como se a guerra,
com os seus tantos sons aterrorizantes,
finalmente tivesse acabo.

Como se seus vizinhos feridos
cambaleantes, como ele,
pelas ruas empoeiradas,

fossem foliões na madrugada
vagando para casa de manhãzinha,
vindos de celebrações da vitória

os seus rostos pálidos, as suas roupas esfarrapadas,
as suas vozes roucas (eis que ele já as podia ouvir)
como se tivessem dançado e cantado
e cantarolado e bailado numa noite sem fim.

The Bomb

After the bomb exploded,
For minutes he heard nothing at all
But a high-pitched whistling.

As if the war,
with its many terrifying sounds,
were finally over.

As if his wounded neighbors
now staggering, like himself,
through dust-filled streets,

were late-night revellers
wandering home in early morning,
from the victory celebrations

their face pales, their clothing in tatters,
their voices broken (he could hear them now)
from having danced and sung
and sung and danced the night way.

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José A. Huguenin: born in Cantagalo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He has a PhD in Physics and is Full Professor at Fluminense Federal University in Volta Redonda, where he lives. A poet and prose writer, he had received several literary awards for poetry and short stories. His literary texts have been published in several anthologies. He is the author of *Vintém* (2013) *Experimentos poéticos* (2016), *Koiah* (2019), *Poemas de tempos de cólera* (2021), *Universalidades* (2022), *De manga a jiló provei na terra onde me batizei* (2014), *A parede & outros contos* (2015) and *Vidas sertanejas* (2021), the novel *O vaqueiro e o jornalista* (2018), among others. The selection of poems “*O movimento das palavras*” was published in 2015 in *Revista Brasileira*, by the Brazilian Academy of Letters. Huguenin is the current president of the Academy of Letters of Volta Redonda (AVL).