

THE TRANSLATIONS OF *O CLUBE DO LIVRO*

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ABSTRACT: *This article examines the translations of the Clube do Livro between 1943 and 1976, concentrating on the ways in which the translations were altered to fit into the norms of the Clube do Livro: sexual, religious, political and scatological references*

were cut, and there was a homogenization of the language register.

KEY WORDS: *Clube do Livro; Censorship; Translation; Adaptation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Clube do Livro*, a book club which published monthly volumes, distributed either by post or by carrier, initially existed between 1943 and 1976 and achieved enormous success, with press runs of up to 50,000, a very high figure in Brazil, where the press run for the average novel is around 3,000. Its publications were mostly classics, both foreign and Brazilian, in roughly equal proportions, though in its later years, it began to publish a number of detective and adventure novels and organised a novel competition and published the winning novel.

The prefaces and introductions of the *Clube do Livro* emphasise its enlightening role as a bringer of culture to the Brazilian people. Its inten-

tion was to "*recrear-lhes o espírito, ilustrá-lo e, quando possível, elevá-lo*" (Silas Marner: 6).

However, what I intend to show in this paper is that this self-professed role was undermined by ideological, political and economic factors. The bringer of light was a company which had a very definite connection to the military regime (1964-1984), which showed no interest in the stylistic factors of the original works, and which cut much of the original work, when it contained material which might be politically offensive to the military regime, when it contained scatological or sexual references, or when it was necessary to hew the original down to the standard number of pages, 180 pages from 1960 until 1970, and 160, after 1970, though some works, such as *Ivanhoé*, *O Morro dos*

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Ventos Uivantes and *As Aventuras de Huck* were published in two monthly installments.

2. THE HISTORY OF THE *CLUBE DO LIVRO*

We can look at the original languages of the works published by the *Clube do Livro*:

	1943-45	1946-50	1951-55	1956-60	1961-65	1966-70	1971-76
Portuguese	11	24	24	26	25	31	34
French	10	13	13	13	10	7	9
English	4	10	16	11	14	9	19
Russian	3	4	4	2	3	2	1
Others	2	9	3	8	7	11	2

Most popular authors:

Portuguese: Machado de Assis 22; Affonso Schmidt 21; José de Alencar 13; Willy Aureli 4; Afrânio Peixoto 3; Paulo Dantas 3; Lima Barreto 3; Bráulio Ferreira 3.

French: Dumas 7; Balzac 6; Verne 5; Sand 4; Flaubert 3; Hugo 3.

English: Dickens 8; Stevenson 8; Scott 6; Wilde 6; London 3; Poe 3; Twain 3.

Russian: Turgeniev 6; Dostoevsky 4; Tolstoy 3; Gorki 3.

It seems that in its early years, the aims of the *Clube do Livro* were somewhat more serious. Its books were longer; they were often reprints of previously issued Martins translations. For example, *Madame Bovary*, published in 1944, *Salambô* (1944) and *Eugênia Grandet* (1944) were all over 200 pages in close print.

The *Clube do Livro* was set up at the same time as English began to take over from French as the major foreign language in Brazil. Initially we can see a dominance of novels trans-

lated from the French, but this soon gives way to novels from the English in the 1950s. We expect a book club such as *Clube do Livro*, which often uses already published translations, to follow a number of years behind to main publishing houses. There are a number of reasons for this. With the naval blockade of France from 1941 onwards to the end of the Second World War, French originals were increasingly difficult to get hold of and more books from North America were imported. After the War, the United States increasingly dominated the world economically, and there was more and more interest in things American, particularly through the influence of the cinema. Thus, the growing interest in detective fiction as *Clube do Livro* began to publish translations of American detective fiction after 1965 (Norman Roleday, P.N. Oppenheim). Added to this, *Editora Globo* of Porto Alegre had published a successful series of translations from writers in English towards the end of the 1930s, and *José Olympio* began to publish translations from English in the early 1940s.

The translations of Russian works were all almost certainly taken from already existing translations in French. Thus, with the decline in translations from the French, there is a decline in translations from Russian through French.

3. THE *CLUBE DO LIVRO* AND THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT

As a large number of its sales were to public libraries, the *Clube do Livro* did all it could to maintain good relations with the military government after 1964.

In 1971 the *Clube do Livro* published *O Mundo de Olavo Bilac*, a biography of Olavo Bilac by Henrique A. Orciuoli, with Introduc-

tion by Gotfredo da Silva Telles. This biography concentrates on his unrequited love throughout his life for Amélia. But a final chapter is added which shows how Bilac, a lifelong pacifist, proposed, at the time of the First World War, that a national compulsory military service should exist in Brazil. This would not necessarily have a bellicose aim, but rather one of "civismo". It would teach "culture, work, hygiene, discipline and clear-sightedness, all of which would increase patriotism. The introduction emphasises these intentions. The old stargazer has become the singer of the epopey. Without abandoning his faith in pacificism, the former anti-militarist has begun to exalt the soldier and the benefits of civic virtues. Silva Telles tells us that Bilac helped the "Liga de Defesa Nacional" to start, and he also encouraged the beginning of the scouting movement in Brazil. In the introduction Silva Telles wonders whether he was contradictory, and reaches the conclusion that as times had changed he was justified in changing his mind. So, in times of necessity, the poet will support the military, and there is a solid connection between the pen and the sword.

This connection can be seen in the publication of *Terra Encharcada* by General Jarbas Passarinho (1965), one of the leaders of the military coup who was Minister of Labour (1967-69) and then Minister of Education (1969-74). The introduction states: "A constante da vida do soldado e do homem público, contudo, são as letras".

4. ENLIGHTENMENT AND PATER- NALISM

The attitude of the *Clube do Livro* to the writers they publish is one of unmitigated def-

erence: "*O imortal Tolstoi procura, nestas empolgantes páginas...*". Of Balzac's *Eugênia Grandet*; "*É livro imortal, que perdurará através do tempo*"; the author of *The Professor* is "*a imortal Charlotte Brontë (sic)*"; and of *Hard Times*; "*O culto da beleza e do amor consagra Charles Dickens como um dos maiores escritores de todos os tempos*"... "*esta cena patética e bela*"... "*comovente livro*".... "*empolgantes páginas*".... "*inimitável obra literária*" ... "*imortal Dickens*".

The attitude of the editors towards the readers is always one of paternalism. Unusual or foreign words and classical references are explained. For example, in *The Professor*, there are footnotes explaining "*Pylades and Orestes*", "*Croesus*", "*Loth*", "*Rebecca*" and the origin of the word "*hypo-condriac*", amongst others.

Advice is given: the *Clube do Livro* is particularly worried about drinking and eating habits. The editors of the *Clube do Livro* seize on Charlotte Brontë's references to the "*rudes cuidados de comer e beber*" in *The Professor* with the following footnote:

Por esta pequenina frase, brilhantemente traduzida por José Maria Machado, fidelíssimo, como sempre, ao difícil texto do original inglês, percebemos que para Charlotte Brontë (sic), nascida em 1816 e falecida em 1855, com apenas 39 anos de idade, comer e beber eram "rudes cuidados". Esta errada concepção vem de longe e atinge inúmeras pessoas que julgam ato inferior o indivíduo ter certo encanto pelas coisas alimentares, e que é elegante não comer ou comer pouco. Este erradíssimo ponto de vista tem feito muitas vítimas; a própria Charlotte

Brontë, talvez tenha pago com sua vida o descaso alimentar que se adivinha no que escreve. A tuberculose, que a levou tão cedo dêste mundo, não teria sido consequência do seu erro alimentar? E suas duas irmãs não teriam, também cometido a mesma imprevidência? (The Professor: 160)

Alcohol is seen as a great evil and the editors of the *Clube do Livro* attempt to correct the impression that may be given by certain authors that alcohol has beneficial effects. The footnote in *Tempos Difíceis* says that:

O valor energético que o xerez produz no organismo humano, como no caso citado por Dickens, é devido à queima que as bebidas alcoólicas efetuam no organismo humano à custa do complexo vitamínico B e de tôdas as outras vitaminas....o uso e abuso das bebidas alcoólicas são responsáveis pelas faixas patológicas que atingem a nossa saúde, principalmente, nos quadros clínicos das estomatites, gastrites, colites, hepatites, polinevrites, delirium-tremens, alucinações... (Tempos Difíceis: 57)

The *Clube do Livro* even finds a medical reason for publishing detective fiction, as in the case of *Uma Mulher Corre na Noite* (1965), by Norman Roleday. The *Nota Explicativa*, by Jacob Penteado, suggests that although the detective novel has occupied a secondary position in literature, it has been praised by psychoanalysts and specialists in nervous disorders as it can be of great help in the treatment of stress, acting as an escape valve from the tumultuous life of modern times.

5. O GIGANTE GARGÂNTUA

I would now like to look at three translations to show how scatological, stylistic, political, religious and narrative elements have been eliminated.

O Gigante Gargântua was published by the *Clube do Livro* in a "tradução especial de José Maria Machado" in 1961. This edition also contained 19 pages of excerpts from *Pantagrueu*. Unusually, the translator admits that he has made ample use of the scissors:

Nessa edição para o Clube do Livro, foram aparadas todas as incongruências e ousadas liberdades do autor, com racional adaptação do texto. Os leitores não suportariam a tradução pura e simples de muitos trechos, que fomos obrigados a eliminar, por uma questão de decência e probidade. (O Gigante Gargântua: 14-15)

In the "Nota Explicativa" Domingos Carvalho da Silva does not quite share the enthusiasm of the translator for the cuts made:

A tradução que se segue foi, como dissemos, escoimada pelo tradutor, certamente em atenção às tendências do público assinante das edições do "Clube do Livro". As passagens mais cruas e mais irreverentes foram (sic) suprimidas e, em consequência o colorido que hoje se poderia chamar "engagé" – da novela, esmaeceu. Permanece ... boa parte da expressão de um livro que não sobreviveria ao tempo se não fosse, também, como obra literária, uma alta realização do espírito humano. (O Gigante Gargântua: 11)

Indeed, José Maria Machado prudishly eliminates all references to the sexual act and bodily functions which Rabelais takes such great delight in. For example, direct reference to love making cannot be contemplated: "*Moiennans lesquelles loys, les femmes vefves peuvent franchement jouer du serre croprière (make love) à tous enviz et toutes restes, deux miès après le trespas de leurs mariz*" (Rabelais: Ch III: 51). References to bodily functions must be cut: "*Non obstant ces remonstrances, elle en mangea seze muiz deux bussars et six tupins. O belle matière fecale que doivoit boursoffler en elle!*" (Ibidem: Ch. 4: 57). José Maria Machado also ignores the puns and word games as in the following paragraph: "*Par mesmes raisons (si raisons les doibz nommer et non resveries) ferois je paindre un penier, denotant qu'on me faict pener; et un pot à moutarde, que c'est mon cueur à qui moult tarde; et un pot à pisser, c'est un official; et le fond de mes chausses, c'est un vaisseau de petz; et ma braguette, c'est le greffe des arrestz; et un estront de chien, c'est un tronc de ceans, où gist l'amour de mámye*" (Ibidem: Ch IX: 95). Needless to say, he also omits the long list of nicknames and euphemisms for the penis (Ibidem: 111). When a bodily function is mentioned, it is euphemised. The "pissa" referring to Gargantua's mare becomes "soltou águas" (Ibidem: Ch. XXXVI: 289).

The translator also takes no interest in Rabelais' stylistic variations. The rhymes, such as "*Chiart,/Foirart,/Petart,/ Brenons, Chappart/ S'espart/ Sus nous./ Hordous,/ Merdous,/ Esgous,/ Le feu de saint Antoine te ard!! Sy tous/ Tes trous/ Escλους/ Tu ne torche avant ton depart!*" are ignored (Ibidem: Ch. XIII: 125), as is the list of games (Ibidem: Ch. XXII: 179-185), and puns, e.g.: "*Que fera cest hyvrogne icy? Qu'on me le mene en*

prison. Troubler ainsi le service divin! Mais (dist le moyne) le service du vin faisons tant qu'il ne soit troublé; car vous mesmes, Monsieur le Prieur, ayez boyré du meilleur" (Ibidem: Ch. XXVII: 229). This last pun would be possible in Portuguese with "*serviço divino*" and "*serviço do vinho*", but instead is weakly translated as "*serviço diário*" (O Gigante Gargântua: 67).

Rabelais' use of Latin in a section where he mocks holy relics and the excessive use of Latin. When the pilgrims are swallowed by Gargantua, they even speak in Latin. "*Cum exurgerent homines in nos, forte vivos deglutissent nos, quand nous feusmes mangez en salade au grain du sel; cum irasceret furor eorum in nos, foristan aqua absorbuisset nos, quand il beut le grand traict...*" All the Latin is ignored in the Portuguese version.

The *Clube do Livro* does not join in with Rabelais' critique of certain elements of the Church. Chapter XL "*Pourquoy les moynes sont refuyz du monde, et pourquoy les ungs ont le nez plus grand que les aultres*", satirising the lives of the monks is missing, as is Gargantua's proposal that the religious devotés should be able to get married: "*Item, parce que ordinairement les religieux faisoient troys veuz, sçavoir est de chastité, pauvreté et obediencia, fut constitu't que là honorablement on peult estre marié, que chacun feut riche et vesquist en liberté*". (Ibidem: Ch. LII: 403).

6. TEMPOS DIFÍCEIS

In another study, "*A Tradução de Romances Clássicos do Inglês para o Português no Brasil*" (Milton: 1995), I have shown that right up until recent years, translations of clas-

sic novels into Portuguese refused to contemplate any kind of sub-standard language. All slang and sub-standard language was translated into correct Portuguese, thus losing much of the original effect. Indeed, sub-standard language is central to such authors as Faulkner, Mark Twain and Dickens, and to lose it in translation is to lose much of the original intention of the author. In *Hard Times* the naïve simplicity and goodness of Stephen Blackpool contrasts with the lack of feeling and calculation of Mr. Bounderby. Stephen speaks in northern dialect:

"I ha' coom ... to ask yo yor advice. I need't overmuch. I were married on Eas'r Monday nineteen year sin, long and dree. She were a young lass – pretty enow – wi' good accounts of herseln. Well! She went bad – soon. Not along of me. Gonnows I were not a unkind husband to her" (Tempos Difíceis: 110).

This is translated into somewhat highbrow Portuguese:

"Vim ... pedir-lhe um conselho. Do qual muito preciso. Casei-me há dezenove anos na segunda-feira de Páscoa. Ela era moça nova, bonita e ninguém tinha coisa a dizer a seu respeito. Mas bem depressa deu para o mal. Não por minha culpa. Deus sabe que não fui mau marido para ela" (Hard Times: 56.).

My study showed that we never find any attempt to recreate dialect in any of the translations of so-called "classic" novels. I would say that the major reason for this is the continuation of the mentality of *belles indifférentes* right into the second half of the twentieth century.

Tempos Difíceis may seem a strange choice for a book club which has a close connection with the military government to publish. However, right from the beginning of the Introduction, the editors take great pains to insist that there is no left-wing revolutionary message to Dickens' work: "*É um livro de idéias, embora não se possa denominar propriamente um livro de combate.*" It must be distanced as far as possible from the Brazil of 1969 and becomes a regional novel from a far-off epoch: "*Nele se apresenta um aspecto novo da sociedade provinciana do seu tempo, a luta surda entre o antigo e o moderno, através de uma burguesia de outras eras*" (Ibidem: 8). Instead of being linked to the present, *Hard Times* is linked to the slavery and the dark ages of the past, which have now been superseded by the Universal Convention of the Rights of Children and of Men, the freedom from slavery, the fight against usury, the United Nations, the ecumenical contemporary Church, and, in Brazil, greater rights for workers, which have existed since 1922. It seems possible that we are nearing the world which was dreamed of by Dickens. José Maria Machado then comments that *Hard Times* was a critique of laissez-faire economic policy, then prevalent in Britain. But José Maria Machado doesn't allow himself to dwell on this possible element of social criticism and never allows any comparison with the inequalities present in Brazil in 1969 to be made: it is book which transcends place and time: "*é bem um livro de tese em que se apresentam problemas básicos de superior transcendência e vão além de qualquer período de atualidade*".

The translated text must also be modified in order not to give the impression that *Tempos Difíceis* is a subversive work: The following section might be considered subversive, despite Dickens' opinion that a decision to support the

selfish union official, Slackbridge, would be wrong.

That every man felt his condition to be, somehow or other, worse than it might be; that every man considered it incumbent on him to join the rest, towards the making of it better, that every man felt his only hope to be in his allying himself to his comrades by whom he was surrounded; and that in this belief, right or wrong (unhappily wrong then), the whole of that crowd were gravely, deeply, faithfully in earnest; must have been as plain to any one who chose to see what was there, as the bare beams of roof, and the whitened brick walls (Dickens: 171).

In the translation, the idea of unity and mass action is lost. The error they made becomes clearer.

Toda aquela multidão acreditava, com uma fé grave, profunda e sincera, na conclusão, certa ou errada (errada desta vez, infelizmente), a que [Slackbridge] chegara.

Similarly, "*the slaves of an iron-handed and grinding despotism*" (Dickens: 169) becomes the mild "*trabalhadores e companheiros*" (Tempos Difíceis: 90). And the Introduction emphasises that *Hard Times* is **not** "*um livro de combate*".

Apparently quite absurd changes can also be seen. The *Clube do Livro* translation of *Silas Marner* changes the name of the house where Squire Cass lives from the "*Red House*" (Eliot: 96) to the "*Casa Amarela*" (*O Tesouro de Silas Marner*: 66), probably to avoid the idea that the work may have had any revolutionary intention

and the mansion may have been a communist bunker! But, more seriously, censorship was so strong when this translation was published (1973) that any book with any mention of a socialist country in the title, or by an author with a Russian sounding name, or even with a red cover, may have been seized by the federal or state police (Halliwell: 483).

7. O PROFESSOR

Apart from *Gargântua, O Professor* is the only translation published by the *Clube do Livro* in which the translator admits he has omitted some of the longer descriptive passages. Let us look more closely as to whether it is just these longer descriptive passages that have been left out. Some of these passages are mainly descriptive such as Crimsworth's description of his room in Chapter 7, that of his walk around Brussels in the same chapter, and the physical description of the female pupils in Chapter 12. Also, Crimsworth's inner monologues are frequently trimmed, as for example in Chapter 1, where he is discussing the attempt he is making to earn his own living, his opinions of Hunsden in Chapter 4, and his considerations on his dislike for his job in Chapter 5. But we can also find some other very clear elements that are omitted in José Maria Machado's translation. Crimsworth/Charlotte Brontë show a very clear and bigoted anti-Catholicism: Belgium is the land of popery, which makes its inhabitants liars, tale-tellers and dishonest. All the very forthright comments in the original such as: "*I know nothing of the arcana of the Roman Catholic religion, and I am not a bigot in matters of theology, but I suspect the root of this precious impurity, so obvious, so general in Popish countries, is to be found in the discipline, if not the doctrines of the*

church of Rome" (Brontë: Ch. XII, p.84); "Sylvie was gentle in manners, intelligent in mind; she was even sincere, as far as her religion would permit her to be so..." (Ibidem: Ch. 12: 87); "I was no pope. I could not boast infallibility" (Ibidem: Ch. 20:165).

José Maria Machado seems to go to great lengths to ensure that no offence will be given to any reader through the deterministic ideas that Charlotte Brontë ascribes to: "...a band of very vulgar, inferior-looking Flamandes, including two or three examples of that deformity of person and imbecility of intellect whose frequency in the Low Countries would seem to furnish proof that the climate is such as to induce degeneracy of the human mind and body..." (Ibidem: Ch. 12: 86). The translation is very "politically correct" as it cuts any allusions to the Flemings as an inferior race: "Flamands certainly they were, and both had the true physiognomy, where intellectual inferiority is marked in lines none can mistake; still they were men, and, in the main, honest men..." (Ibidem: Ch. VII: 58). In fact, all passages where national characteristics are discussed are either omitted or pared down. After M. Pelet gets drunk and insults Crimsworth in Chapter XX, the description of Pelet as "a thorough Frenchman, the national characteristic of ferocity had not been omitted" is left out. The nationalities in "French politeness, German good-will, and Swiss servility" (Ibidem: Ch. 24: 210) are cut. Hunsden's Radical comments about poverty and oppression in England are also cut. The omitted sections are set in bold:

"Examine the footprints of our august aristocracy; see how they walk in blood, crushing hearts as they go. Just put your head in at English cottage doors; get a glimpse of famine

crouched torpid on black hearthstones; of Disease lying bare on beds without coverlets, of Infamy wantoning viciously with Ignorance, though indeed Luxury is her favourite paramour, and princely halls are dearer to her than thatched hovels." (Ibidem: Ch. 24: 208)

I suggest two reasons for these cuts. One is that the *Clube do Livro* wished to be politically correct *avant la lettre*, attempting not to offend the religious sensibilities of its readers. The other is that although there was no religious censorship in Brazil when this translation was published, in 1958, such religious sensitivity may have been a leftover from the early years of the *Estado Novo* (1939-1945), when the Catholic Church played a large role in the state apparatus of the Getulio Vargas' nationalistic dictatorship, modelled to a great extent on that of Mussolini and where considerable censorship existed.

Much of the dialogue in the original which takes place in Brussels is in French. In many sections Charlotte Brontë begins in French and then switches to English. Not surprisingly, as the translation is aimed at a non-academic market, French is completely ignored. José Maria Machado changes the multi-voiced original into a monological homogenized translation. Chapter XXIII contains two poems: a section from a ballad by Sir Walter Scott and the romantic ballad originally written French by Frances and translated by Crimsworth. A prose translation is given of the first ballad, and the second is ignored. A narrative feature that is missing in the original is the meta-narrative where the author comes out of the narrative and makes an appeal to the reader, as near the beginning of Chapter 14: "Know, O incredulous reader! ..."

8. CONCLUSION

In *Ideology and the State*, Louis Althusser makes the famous distinction of the RSAAs, The Repressive State Apparatuses, the army, the police, the courts, the prisons, which function by force, and the ISAs, the Ideological State Apparatuses, institutions and organisations, both private and public, which act to repeat and propagate the ideology of the state. Althusser lists religious, educational, family, legal, political, trade union, communications and cultural ISAs. Although its influence can never be compared in scope to that of *Rede Globo*, for example, I believe that the *Clube do Livro* can just as readily be seen as an ideological state apparatus of the Brazilian military government. Many Brazilians got their first taste

of "literature", particularly foreign literature, through the *Clube do Livro*. If they read the prefaces, they would see that "great" literature is timeless, wonderful and totally unconcerned with mundane social matters. And when they read the translated texts themselves, though they might be slightly surprised at the rather one-gear dullness of the language, the idea of the purity of "great" literature, unsullied by social criticism, anti-clericism or rude language would certainly be communicated. No doubt could ever be cast that the situation in Brazil was other than perfect. In the words of Thomas Skidmore, "*uma nação dinâmica e eficientemente governada sob a liderança dos militares, avidamente apoiada pela cidadania*" (Skidmore: 267).

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