

Translation Studies and Adaptation Studies

JOHN MILTON

Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil

Introduction

This presentation will examine the links between Translation Studies and the new discipline of Adaptation Studies, which has grown enormously in recent years, particularly in universities in the Anglo-Saxon world. We will propose that there should be greater contact between the areas, and, more particularly, that Translation Studies has a great deal to offer Adaptation Studies.

Terminology in the area of Adaptation is a major problem, with a large number of terms such as recontextualization, tradaptation, spinoff, reduction, simplification, condensation, abridgement, special version, reworking, offshoot, transformation, remediation, and re-vision. Here I shall use the distinctions made by Julie Sanders in *Adaptation and Appropriation* (Sanders 2006: 26 passim), in which she emphasizes that an “adaptation” will usually contain omissions, rewritings, maybe additions, but will still be recognized as the work of the original author, where the original point of enunciation remains. This is similar to Dryden’s classic definition of “paraphrase” (see, for example, Bassnett-McGuire 1980:60).

Julie Sanders’ definition of “appropriation” is similar to Dryden’s definition of “imitation” (see, for example, Bassnett-McGuire 1980:60): the original point of enunciation may now have changed, and although certain characteristics of the original may remain, the new text will be more that of the adapter or rewriter.

Adaptation in Translation Studies¹

We can distinguish a number of areas where translated texts are generally altered or adapted. Initially we can mention the area of localization, particularly of websites, directing information towards the culture of the

¹ A number of works specifically on Adaptation in Translation Studies have been published in recent years. Among them we can find the following: *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation: a Practitioner’s Viewpoint*. Phylis Zatin, 2005; *The Translation of Children’s Literature: a Reader*. Ed. Gillian Lathey, 2006; *Tradução, Retradução e Adaptação, Cadernos de Tradução, no 11, 2003/1*. Ed. John Milton and Marie-Helène Torres; and *Moving Target: Theatre Translation and Cultural Relocation*. Ed Carole-Anne Upton, 2000.

consumer and making adjustments according to the general tastes of consumers of that culture.

Children's literature frequently contains adjustments that may be considered necessary by adaptors or translators. As an example, we can mention translations of the stories of Pippi Longstocking: "The French Pippi is not allowed to pick up a horse, only a pony" (Stolt 2006:73); and in the 1965 German translation the section in which Pippi finds some pistols in the attic, fires them in the air, then offers them to her friends who also enjoy firing them, is replaced by a moralistic Pippi putting them back in the chest and stating "Das ist nicht für Kinder!" (O'Sullivan 2006:98)

In the area of theatre texts, as can be seen in the work of Phylis Zatin (2005), every performance is a different version, a different adaptation of the text. Omissions or additions may be made; actors may change; actors may deliver lines differently; movement, set, lighting changes may all be made; and the relation between cast and audience will change from one performance to the next.

Advertising texts may often change greatly when a product is transferred from one country to another. Embarrassing situations may be prevented, or not. For example, the Mitsubishi 4 x 4 is sold in a number of countries such as Brazil and the UK as the Pajero; in Spanish-speaking countries it is the Montana. In Spanish "Pajero" means "wanker". Sales of the General Motors Corsa were low when it was initially marketed in Spain as the Nova (No va = It doesn't go).

Visual texts for the hard-of-hearing are generally adapted into a more simplified language as the first language of the target audience will be the respective sign language, and many of the target audience will experience a certain difficulty in reading subtitles at the speed they are produced for audiences which do not have hearing problems. Additional information on sounds, which of course cannot be heard by the audience, may also be added (see Franco & Santiago Araújo 2003). The translation of songs involves very special problems. Andrea Kaiser (1999) describes the particular problems which translators of opera librettos face when rendering them into Portuguese. They will generally attempt to avoid stresses on the nasalized diphthongs such as "ão", "ãe", and closed vowels "i" and "u", the so-called "ugly" vowel sounds, and place stresses on open back vowels.

My study of the Brazilian book club, the Clube do Livro (Milton 2002), examined the translation of classic fiction for mass markets. The Clube do Livro, which operated in Brazil from 1943 to 1989, translated and adapted much world classic fiction into Portuguese, sold its monthly issues very cheaply through door-to-door agents, and reached a print-run of 50,000 at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, a very high figure in Brazil. We can list a number of the characteristics of the Clube do Livro monthly issues. We find a certain homogenization of size, weight and style. All books were 160 pages and weighed the same in order to keep postal costs down.

Longer works, such as the translations of *Wuthering Heights* and *Moby Dick*, were published in two volumes, and other works managed to fit into 160 pages through the use of smaller type or extensive cuts. “Offensive” material was cut. In *Gargantua* references to bodily functions (“O belle matière fecale qui doit boursouffler en elle!”), the list of dialect words for the penis, satire of the Catholic church as when Rabelais suggests that monks and nuns should be chosen from amongst the best-looking young men and girls, and that they should marry each other, and in *The Professor*, the low opinion of the Flemings coming from Charlotte Brontë’s mouthpiece, the male teacher Crimsworth, are all lost in the Clube do Livro translations. Political references are also cut. In *Hard Times* a reference to the “grinding despotism” of factory life is cut, and the union leader’s call to unity is considerably softened in translation. Stylistic elements are also lost as Rabelais’ puns and use of Latin in the mouths of the pompous pilgrims, Charlotte Brontë’s occasional use of French and her lines of poetry used as epigraphs are also missing.

Thus we can see a number of constraints that will influence the adapter’s or translator’s decisions: a) the requirements of the target audience in terms of age (children’s literature), disability (texts for the hard-of-hearing), and social class (Clube do Livro). Commercial factors may also influence. In order to keep production costs down all of the Clube do Livro’s translations had to fit into 160 pages. André Lefevere (1982/2000) describes productions of Brecht’s *Mother Courage* in New York: the 1963 Broadway production was forced to cut a number of the songs as, if the time given over to the songs had exceeded 24 minutes, it would have been considered a musical and would have been obliged to use a full orchestra due to union regulations (Lefevere 1982/2000:246).

Annie Brisset (2000) describes the politicization of the translation/adaptation of Michel Garneau’s *Macbeth* in Quebec, in which the use of Quebec French, repetition of “Mon pauvre pays” and other key expressions made the Quebec audience make the obvious link of a Quebec dominated by the tyrant (English speaking Canada, the US, France and Parisian French, or a combination). In *Translation in a Postcolonial Context* Maria Tymoczko (1999) describes the way in which the Irish Independence movement distorted the qualities of the mythical Irish hero Cu Chuliann. For example, Lady Gregory’s popular tales of Cu Chuliann took away his fleas, his womanizing and his frequent sloth, cleaned him up, and, ironically, made him into much more of an acceptable Tennysonian chivalric knight.

As I mentioned in my discussion of the Clube do Livro the constraints may frequently be of a sexual, scatological, political, or “moral” nature.

Historical factors will be important. Literary translations entering France in the 17th and 18th centuries, the so-called *belles infidèles*, had to obey the norms of *clarté*, *beauté* and *bon goût*. Houdar de la Motte’s translation (in Lefevere 1982:28-30) of the *Iliad* halved the number of

books, cut out all the gore and repetitions, and produced a translation that was more like a tragedy by Racine or Corneille.

Finally, language pairs may also influence the way in which we translate. The tendency is to adapt much more when we are translating from a language which is much further away from the source language than a language which is grammatically much closer.

We can say that Translation Studies has a strong theoretical background to support practical studies. My own study on the *Clube do Livro* (Milton 2002) used as its theoretical basis concepts from Descriptive Translation Studies. Itamar Even-Zohar (1978/2000) stressed the fact that in many societies, particularly smaller nations, translated works will be used to fill in different areas of the literary system. Gideon Toury (1978/2000) develops Even-Zohar's ideas and contrasts "adequate" translations, which closely follow the form of the original, and "acceptable" translations, which use a fluent domesticating language, often masking the fact that the work in question is a translation. Many societies demand "acceptable" translations, such as the *belles infidèles*. André Lefevere (1982/2000) develops the concepts of rewriting and refraction. A classic work will be refracted in many forms: annotated editions for academics, translations, abridgements, serials, plays, video games, songs, etc.

Adaptation Studies

Unlike Translation Studies, which usually deals with interlingual translation, individual studies in Adaptation Studies usually deal with inter-semiotic and intralingual versions, and only occasionally look into interlingual questions. This may be because most contemporary studies in Adaptation Studies, certainly in the UK, originate from the monolingual departments of Theatre Studies, Film and Media Studies, Dance Studies, Music Studies, Cultural Studies, and English Literature.

A common study would be an examination of the adaptation of a classic novel to a play then to a film then to a musical or opera. Alternatively we find studies on novels which appropriate ideas from other novels or plays, and among them we find a large number of adaptations and appropriations of Shakespeare and other "greats".

An examination of the articles published in a recent journal will provide us with a representative sample of contemporary work in Adaptation Studies. In the *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance* 1:1, published in 2008, we find the following articles: i) an analysis of the Merchant/Ivory film version of Henry James' *The Golden Bowl*; ii) a description of the chain or reworkings around Nikolai Leskov's novella *A Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (1865), of course itself based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, which was used by Shostakovich in his opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, which was then made into a film by Shapiro (1967); iii) A proposal for a

translation of *Calabar* by Chico Buarque and Ruy Guerra; iv) a description of shows based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 19th century; and v) an analysis of a Newcastle version of Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*.

Let us now mention some of the bibliographical references in these articles. Firstly, Julie Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, which appears to have become something of a "bible" in the area; Jay David Boulter and Richard Grusin's, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*; Raymond Williams, particularly his concept of "epochal analysis"; Brian MacFarlane's idea that narrative is a shared aspect of novels and film; and the Marxist cultural critics Tony Bennett and Jane Wollacott, who emphasize the ways in which the media are used ideologically. Only in "Translating Calabar" do we find references to mainstream Translation Studies: Haroldo de Campos's concept of anthropophagy, and mentions of the work of Douglas Robinson, Maria Tymoczko, and Carol Maier.

Continuing this line of thought, we can examine the theoretical references of Julie Sanders' *Adaptation and Appropriation*. Mostly they come from post-structuralism: Derrida, who mentions, "The desire to write is the desire to launch things that come back to you as much as possible in as many forms as possible"; Foucault's "What is an Author?", which stresses that the author function is historically specified and changes over time ("The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each"); Roland Barthes' "death of the author", which liberates the practices and options of remaking which are available to the reader and adapter; Julia Kristeva, who writes that any text is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality"; Hillis Miller, whose literary text is "inhabited by [...] a long chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions, guests, ghosts of previous texts"; Gérard Genette's categorization of "hypertext" as adaptation and "hypotext" as source text.

Sanders also refers to T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" on reworking texts from the past; Harold Bloom's "Anxiety of Influence", whereby texts are reinterpreted and reworked into new contexts; and Charles Darwin's concept of the adaptation of species.

Discussion

Nowhere in *Adaptation and Appropriation* does Julie Sanders mention the importance of translation in Adaptation Studies. Indeed, in Duska Radosavljevic's "Translating the City: A Community Theatre Version of Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire* in Newcastle-upon-Tyne", we can see translation as something of an aporia as the importance of language transfer is glossed over. The author mentions the use of "Having briefly considered hiring a translator for the original screenplay, eventually, we realized the wonders of contemporary technology and derived the first version of our script by simply downloading the subtitles from a DVD." (Radosavljevic 2007:60)

It seems to me that Adaptation Studies has been very dependent on theories from outside its own particular area and has not yet developed its own theoretical framework. This point is supported by Lawrence Venuti in “Adaptation, Translation, Critique” (2007), where he criticizes the lack of theoretical basis found in much work on Film Adaptation. He believes that Toury’s concepts of acceptability and adequacy can be used as a means of defining equivalence, particularly in the way that they are adapted by Patrick Catrysse, who develops the idea of semiotic and pragmatic norms from Toury.

Venuti then develops the wider concept of *interpretant*. There are two kinds of *interpretant*: “formal interpretants”, structural correspondence between the adapted materials and the plot details, particular style of director or studio, or concept of genre that necessitates a manipulation or revision of the adapted materials; and secondly, “thematic interpretants”, codes, values, ideologies, which may include an interpretation of the adapted materials that has been formulated elsewhere, a morality or cultural taste shared by the filmmakers and used to appeal to a particular audience, or a political position that reflects the interests of a specific social group.

Conclusion

Venuti, then, uses Translation Studies theory to ground his concept of *interpretant*, and points in a direction which I believe Translation Studies may follow: that of playing a central role in developments in Adaptation Studies through participating in publications, conferences, courses, sites, etc. From the editorial to the first issue of *Adaptation in Film and Performance* it seems that Translation Studies is in fact very welcome: “For the newly emerging discipline of Adaptation Studies, this journal hopes not only to provide a forum of discussion of adaptive practice but also, importantly, new stimuli and impulses. By turning, for example, to translation studies as a closely related field of enquiry, we hope to see the beginning of a constructive relationship that will further our understanding of the creatively, ideologically, politically and socially charged process of rewriting and reshaping all that is adaptation.” (Hand and Krebs 2007:4)

References

- Artt, Sarah. 2007. “Art of the Past: Adapting Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl*”. In *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*. Volume 1, Number 1 - 2007. 3-4, 5-16.
- Bassnett-McGuire, Susan. 1980. *Translation Studies*. London: Methuen.
- Chapple, Freda. 2007. “Adaptation as Education: *A Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District*”. In *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*. Volume 1, Number 1 - 2007. 3-4, 17-31.

- Brisset, Annie. 1990/2000. "The Search for a Native Language: Translation and Cultural Identity". In Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*, 343-375.
- Even-Zohar, Itamar. 1978/2000. "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem". In Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*, 192-197.
- Franco, Eliana, and Vera Lucia Santiago Araújo. 2003. "Reading Television: Checking Deaf People's Reactions to Closed Subtitling in Fortaleza, Brazil". In *The Translator: Volume 9, Number 2, 2003: Special Issue. Screen Translation*, 249-267.
- Hand, Richard, and Katja Krebs. 2007. Editorial. In *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*. Volume 1, Number 1 - 2007. 3-4.
- Kaiser, Andrea (1999). "Óperas no Brasil: versões em Português". M.A. dissertation, Faculdade de Música, Universidade de São Paulo.
- Lathey, Gillian (ed.) 2006. *The Translation of Children's Literature: a Reader*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Lefevere, André. 1982/2000. "Mother Courage's Cucumbers: Text, system and refraction in a theory of literature". In Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*, 233-249.
- Lefevere, André. 1982. *Translation/ History/ Culture: a Sourcebook*. London: Routledge.
- Milton, John. 2002. *O Clube do Livro e a Tradução*. Bauru: Editora da Universidade do Sagrado Coração (EDUSC).
- Milton, John, and Marie-Helène Torres (eds.) 2003. *Tradução, Retradução e Adaptação, Cadernos de Tradução, no 11, 2003/1*.
- O' Loughlin, Jim. 2007. "Uncle Tom's Cabin as Dominant Culture". In *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*. Volume 1, Number 1 - 2007. 3-4, 45-56.
- O'Sullivan, Emer. 2006. "Narratology Meets Translation Studies, or The Voice of the Translator in Children's Literature". In Lathey, Gillian (ed.), *The Translation of Children's Literature: a Reader*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 98-109.
- Radosavljevic, Duska "Translating the City: A Community Theatre Version of Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire* in Newcastle-upon-Tyne". In *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*. Volume 1, Number 1 - 2007. 3-4, 57-70.
- Sanders, Julie. 2006. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London: Routledge.
- Senna, Pedro de. 2007. "In Praise of Treason: Translating Calabar". In *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*. Volume 1, Number 1 - 2007. 3-4, 57-70.
- Stolt, Birgit. 2006. "How Emil Becomes Michel: On the Translation of Children's Books". In Lathey, Gillian (ed.) *The Translation of Children's Literature: a Reader*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 67-83.

- Toury, Gideon. 1978/2000. "The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation".
In *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 198-211.
- Tymoczko Maria. 1999. *Translation in a Postcolonial Context*. Manchester:
St. Jerome.
- Upton, Carole-Anne. 2000. *Moving Target: Theatre Translation and
Cultural Relocation*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 2007. "Adaptation, Translation, Critique". In *Journal of
Visual Culture* 2007(6), 25-43.
- Zatlin, Phylis. 2005. *Theatrical Translation and Film Adaptation: a
Practitioner's Viewpoint*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.