

Representation of the "Noble Savage" in the English Translation of Brazil's Letter of Discovery

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Abstract

In this paper, I wish to examine William Brooks Greenlee's translation into English of Brazil's Letter of Discovery, written by Pêro Vaz de Caminha on May 1, 1500, published by the Hakluyt Society in 1937. Many scholars consider the Letter to be the first literary example, and most important document, related to the "discovery" of Brazil. Based on postcolonial translation studies, my main goal is to raise some questions and perhaps answer a few as to why, following a common tendency found in traditional colonial translation, Greenlee chose to sometimes emphasize the "good" and "noble" nature of Brazilian native Indians in his work, and, at others, to highlight their "primitive" characteristics.

Translation as a practice raises questions of representation, power and historicity. First and foremost, the norms of colonial translation reflect Western philosophical notions of reality, representation and knowledge. By employing certain modes of representing the "Other", translation reinforces hegemonic relations. As postcolonial translation scholars have argued, translation does not happen in a vacuum; it is a highly manipulative activity, and rarely involves equal relationships.

I argue that by analyzing such translations in light of new translation theories we can begin to understand more about the translating process and remember that such a task is never free of underlying ideologies.

Key words: postcolonial translation, ideology, power relations.

I - Language and power

On April 22, 1500, the Portuguese armada led by Pedro Álvares Cabral reached the warm waters of Brazil and "discovered" the new land. There has been much discussion about the accidental or intentional nature of such "discovery", which I will not attain to in this paper. My goal here is to examine William Brooks Greenlee's translation into English of Brazil's Letter of Discovery, written on May 1, 1500 by the scribe of the expedition, Pêro Vaz de Caminha. Many scholars consider this to be the first literary example, and the most important document related to the "discovery" of Brazil. My main objective in this paper is to raise some questions and perhaps answer a few as to the reasons why the translator,

following a common tendency found in traditional colonial translation, chose certain terms that emphasized the "good" and "noble" nature of Brazil's native Indians in his work, and others that highlighted their "primitive" characteristics. I argue that Greenlee's translation approach helped reinforce the image of the "noble and primitive savage" due to the choices he made consciously or unconsciously in his translation.

Before going into the analysis itself, let us discuss how language has always been an important tool in empire-building. Caminha's letter in its original language, Portuguese, although not as aggressively imperialist as Columbus' letter reporting the discovery of the Americas, is a clear example of colonial discourse and representation of the "Other". In *The Rhetoric of Empire* (1993), David Spurr categorizes colonial discourse into twelve tropes, namely surveillance, appropriation, aestheticization, classification, debasement, negation, affirmation, idealization, insubstantialization, naturalization, eroticization, and resistance, with examples taken from journalism, travel writing, and imperial administration. Caminha's letter fits perfectly into several of these tropes of colonial discourse. For instance, Spurr reminds us that "the very process by which one culture subordinates another begins in the act of naming and leaving unnamed..." (4), and adds that "nomination and substantivization may also seem as grammatical forms of appropriation: by naming things, we take possession of them" (32). Both statements suggest the way in which language was a major tool of imperial powers during colonization, and colonizers were well aware of its importance. Therefore, in the act of conquest, it was important to establish the colonizer's language, and naming was an important weapon to efface the prior history of the places and peoples being occupied and colonized in order to bring new territories under control and expand the empire. By naming places and peoples, colonizers implied they had no prior identity, that they were being "discovered" for the first time and could be easily appropriated.

In the following example, we can see how Pedro Álvarez Cabral and his armada inscribed the presence of the Portuguese empire when they arrived in Brazil on April 22, 1500 in the sense described by Spurr when he says that "... colonization is a form of self-inscription onto the lives of a people who are conceived of as an extension of the landscape" (7). By leaving their mark on the landscape, colonizers were literally appropriating the new land, claiming that they are the true owners of a locus that was there to be taken. For the sake of comparative analysis, unless noted otherwise, Greenlee's translation, in *The Voyage of Pedro Álvarez Cabral to Brazil and Índia* (1937, pp. 5-33), will always be shown next to the "original" Portuguese used by the translator in his work, which is the text that was transcribed directly from the original letter written by Caminha and appears in *Alguns Documentos do Arquivo Nacional* (Lisbon, 1892, pp. 108-21).

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| <p>...ao qual monte alto o capitam pos nome o monte Pascoal, e aa tera a tera da Vera Cruz. (108)</p> | <p>To this high mountain the captain gave the name Monte Pascoal, and to the land, Terra da Vera Cruz. (7)</p> |
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Later in the letter, we come across another form of inscription when the Portuguese decided to put up a wooden cross in the new land to mark their presence, a common form of Lusitanian appropriation, although, according to Eduardo Bueno in *A viagem do descobrimento* (1998), the Portuguese usually inscribed their "presence" in newly discovered territories with a stone post or monument. Bueno uses this example to support his claim that this is one of the evidences that the discovery of Brazil was fortuitous:

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| <p>Chentada a cruz com as armas e a devisa de Vossa Alteza, que lhe primeiro pregarom, aramaram altar ao pee d ela. (119)</p> | <p>After the cross was planted with the arms and device of Your Highness which we first nailed to it, we set up an altar at the foot of it. (30)</p> |
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Another mode of representing the "Other" is journal writing itself. In so doing, colonizers rendered their account of what they saw according to their knowledge and view of the world, conveyed this message to the empires they represented, and often, the language used is close to what Spurr calls "insubstantialization" and "aestheticization." Many times in the letter, Caminha insubstantializes the native inhabitants of Brazil by comparing them to "animals", and others, especially when talking about women, he aestheticizes them by making lengthy descriptions of their "charming" bodies, always in contrast to European women. Moreover, by always talking about the people collectively, not bothering to ask their names or try to establish any type of communication with them, they become nothing more than bodies that can be described, classified and appropriated based on the colonizer's knowledge. In his canonical book, *Orientalism* (1979) Edward Said writes, "To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority means for "us" to deny autonomy to "it" – the Oriental country – since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it" (32). According to Said, language is a highly sophisticated and structured system that uses many devices to convey, disseminate, represent and exchange information.

II. The Role of Translation and Representation

Translation as a practice raises questions of representation, power, and historicity. First and foremost, traditional colonial translation depends on hegemonic notions of reality, representation, and knowledge. By employing certain modes of representing the "Other", translation reinforces hegemonic relations.

When describing Orientalism, Said constantly goes back to the idea of how the Orient was represented to Europe in the "materiality of its texts, languages and civilizations" (77). We know that a lot of the representation of the Orient was done through translations of texts that were carefully selected by imperialists to provide readers with an exoticized image of the "Other". This is also true in many of the first translations of native "primitive" texts, which were always about how non-white peoples were different – often inferior – from the West in the sense explained by Said, that "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1-2).

In *Post-Colonial Translation* (1999), Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi argue that:

First, and very obviously: translation does not happen in a vacuum, but in a continuum; it is not an isolated act, it is part of an ongoing process of intercultural transfer. Moreover, translation is a highly manipulative activity that involves all kinds of stages in that process of transfer across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Translation is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage; it rarely, if ever, involves a relationship of equality between texts, authors or systems. (2)

Both go on to remind us that translations are always embedded in cultural and political systems and that there is always an underlying ideology in the act of translating; the way translators view the world impacts their work. The translation of Caminha's letter probably took place around the early 1930's, in a period of still intense imperialist expansion, and was published, together with other documents translated by Greenlee, by a well-known geographic institution, the Hakluyt Society, in 1937, under the title *The Voyage of Pedro Álvarez Cabral to Brazil and Índia* (1937). The edition includes an extensive introduction by the translator, and, as one can see from his bibliography at the end of the book, he had access to a lot of original Portuguese historical documents, materials, and dictionaries, many of which were classic examples of colonial writing.

Greenlee stated in his preface that the translation approach he used was a "literal" one, which is based on more traditional translation theories that claim that the author and the

original text hold a superior and sacred position, and translations are considered a violation of the original and impossible to create true equivalents. Yet, despite such theoretical assumptions, we know from postcolonial translation studies that when "primitive" or "inferior" languages were translated into hegemonic ones like English, "faithfulness" was not really the approach employed. However, as I will demonstrate later, although most of his translation work has followed this technique, which is in itself problematic, instead of retaining the "spirit of the time" and ensuring "accuracy", as he claimed, its literalness also resulted in some problematic choices. Also, as I show in the next pages, in the instances when Greenlee decided to go "literal" he goes "colonial" and ends up emphasizing the "primitive" notions about the native Brazilians, whereas when he gives up such literalness, the result is the emphasis of the "noble savage" ideas.

III. The "Noble Savage"

The traditional notion of the "Noble Savage" has traditionally been used to refer to peoples who lived in harmony with nature, generous, innocent, unable to lie, physically healthy, with moral courage, without sexual inhibitions, and unusually intelligent. According to Terry Jay Ellingson in *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (2001), although they were attributed to Jean Jacques Rousseau, the ideas both of the "Noble Savage" and an anthropological science of human diversity appear to have grown out of the writings of Renaissance European traveller-ethnographers that can be traced back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, "where they appear together in Lescarbot's (1609c) ethnography of the Indians of eastern Canada". (12-13). Thus, the first appearance of the term and ideas about the "nobility" of the savages seems to date back to Lescarbot's *Histoire de la nouvelle France*, published in Paris in 1609, and translated into English the same year, when it made its entrance into English literature. However, the full-blown myth only emerged in the 1850s.

There is little doubt that Pêro Vaz de Caminha's letter has helped to feed into the imagery related to stereotyped notions of Brazil's native Indians, especially when he comments on their "innocence", which was always related to the "lack of shame" in covering their private parts. All these characteristics were then propagated by other explorers, including the sensationalist descriptions of Americo Vespucci, and ethnographic accounts of the new land, not only by the Portuguese, but also by the French and the Dutch, who also established a presence in Brazil. According to John Hemmings in *Red Gold: The Conquest of Brazilian Indians* (1978):

It was in such a world of fantasy that Europeans came to imagine the native peoples of Brazil ... a letter from a pilot on one of the first voyages was widely diffused through Europe: it depicted the Brazilians as beautiful naked people living innocently in a perfect climate surrounded by birds and animals. (13)

I argue that all this literature, including the contrary notions that came up in the twentieth century which brought to light the unrealistic and condescending stereotypes present in the early notions of the "noble" savage, were available to Greenlee when he embarked on his translation. So, why did the translator decide to emphasize the "romanticized" notion of Brazil's native Indians?

IV. The translation of Brazil's Letter of Discovery into English

William Brooks Greenlee studied philosophy and history at Cornell and got his degree in 1895. After he had sat in the history class of English Professor Henry Morse Stephens and listened to Stephens's lectures about Portugal and India, he was so enraptured that right after graduating, in 1895, he went around the world looking for actual evidence of the marks left by Portuguese traders and seafarers. From his many trips abroad, Greenlee brought

back many books home to Chicago, purchased here and there from Macao to Lisbon, which amounted to 6,000 volumes, later donated to the Newberry Library.

From his private collection and his travels around the world Greenlee decided to set down his ideas about the Portuguese sea voyages of the sixteenth century and submitted them to the Hakluyt Society of London. In 1937 *The Voyage of Pedro Álvarez Cabral do Brazil and Índia* appeared. For the first time, someone had brought together the widely scattered published and unpublished documents relating to the discovery of Brazil by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. Greenlee translated them into English, edited them, and wrote a long introduction, full of informative notes.

Greenlee was a Fellow of the *Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa*, of the Royal Geographical Society, of the American Geographical Society, an Honorary Fellow of *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo*, a member of the Royal Institute of Philosophy and of the Hakluyt Society. In 1950, the Portuguese government bestowed upon him the rank of Commander of the Order of St. Iago, an ancient order founded in the thirteenth century, and a decoration for the highest merit and services in the fields of science, arts, and literature. He died at the age of 80 in 1953.

In *Post-Colonial Translation*, Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi suggest that a translation tradition developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which texts from Arabic or Indian languages were cut, edited, and published with extensive anthropological footnotes. Edward Lane, the famous translator of *The Thousand and One Nights*, informed readers in notes that Arabs "were far more gullible than educated European readers and did not make the same clear distinction between the rational and fictitious" (6). Edward Fitzgerald, translator of *The Rubayat of Omar Khayyam*, went further and accused "the Persians of artistic incompetence and suggested that their poetry became art only when translated into English" (6).

I argue that such tradition has also survived in the twentieth century, in which by writing long and extensive introductions to their work translators have caused readers to have a preconceived notion about the texts they were about to read. These so-called introductions, prefaces, and footnotes are full of the tropes described by David Spurr, including insubstantialization, classification, appropriation, and aestheticization in the sense that translators in control of hegemonic knowledge describe, characterize, classify, and render peoples, their cultures, and history insubstantial. Colonial translators have clearly seen themselves as belonging to a higher cultural system. "Translation was a means of both containing the artistic achievements of writers in other languages and of asserting the supremacy of the dominant, European culture" (6).

In *Translation, History and Culture* (1992), André Lefevere reminds us, "Translations are not made in a vacuum. Translators function in a given culture at a given time. The way they understand themselves and their culture is one of the factors that may influence the way in which they translate" (14). It is not difficult to imagine Greenlee as an authority in Portuguese history and see how all his Western knowledge and preconceived ideas and vocabulary about "primitive" cultures and the "noble savage" became interwoven in his translation.

As mentioned above, Greenlee claims he adopted a literal approach to his translation of the letter. Even old translation studies scholars argue that 'word for word' translation is not the best way to approach such a task. Even Cicero in ancient Rome claimed this technique 'is not useful to the orator' (Venutti 2004: 14). Moreover, St. Jerome's approach to his translation of the New Testament in 380 A.D. followed a 'sense for sense and not word for word', and he goes on to add that "if I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, ..." (Nida 1964: 13). As described by Eugene Nida in 1964, in *Towards a Science of Translation*, in the dilemma of "the letter vs. the spirit" William Brooks Greenlee decided to be "faithful" to the letter in detriment to the "spirit" of the original communication. I argue that it would have been perhaps better if the translator did not "look upon a language as some fixed corpus of

sentences, but as a dynamic mechanism capable of generating an infinite series of different utterances" (9).

Next, I discuss some translation decisions made by Greenlee. In the example below, we can see one of the first moments when he acts as a colonial translator in the sense described by Bassnett and Trivedi:

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| ...do que tiro seer jente bestial e de pouco saber; e por ysso sam asy esqujvos . (115) | from which I infer that they are bestial people and of very little knowledge; and for this reason they are so timid . (23) |
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According to Silvio Castro, one of the scholars who have provided an insightful critical analysis of Caminha's letter in *O descobrimento do Brasil: a carta* (1985):

The use of the adjective 'bestial', apparently contradicting the constant niceness shown by Caminha to the people of the new land, **should not be taken literally**, because it is perfectly inserted in the semantic spirit of archaic Portuguese" (69) (bold and translation mine).

In the first instance, Greenlee adopted his "literal" approach in rendering *bestial* into 'bestial,' carrying over to the English language all the "primitive" connotations that such a term possesses. As shown above, the use of another more archaic meaning of *bestial* in Portuguese, which is *grosseria* 'rudeness', 'uncouthness', could perhaps have given readers a different and less colonial view of the native peoples of Brazil. In the other example the translator decided not to go "literal" in the translation of the adjective *esqujvos* into 'timid'. Although it is very difficult, if not impossible, to explain exactly Greenlee's word selection process, one can have an idea of the choices he had among the words available in books and documents that could have conveyed a meaning closer to the original adjective. Although Greenlee does not list any of the dictionaries he used in his bibliographical references, the *Dicionário Etimológico Da Língua Portuguesa* (1967) by J. P. Machado tells us that this word has a Germanic origin and means *ter resguardo* 'to be reserved', and the Porto Editora's *Dicionário de Português-Inglês* (1998) also provides us with 'unsociable'. 'Timid' in the English language carries other meanings, including 'subject to fear; easily frightened; wanting boldness or courage; fearful, timorous' (OED). My argument is that by choosing 'timid' Greenlee emphasized a characteristic that the native Indians perhaps did not have, but was part of the translator's vocabulary for describing the "noble savage."

In the passage below, we see Greenlee going a step further to bring us his view of the "noble savage", according to the traditional beliefs mentioned earlier:

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| ... e aly pararom; e naquilo foy o degradado com huum homem, que logo ao sair do batel ho agasalhou ; e levou o ataa la;...(111) | ... and there they stopped. And there, too, the young convict went with a man who, immediately upon his leaving the boat, befriended him, and took him thither ...(14) |
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According to the *Vocabulário da carta de Pêro Vaz de Caminha* (1964), a glossary published in 1964 by Sílvio Batista Pereira specifically to interpret the letter, *agasalhar* in Portuguese means *dar agasalho a, abrigar* 'to provide cover, shelter'. This is corroborated by the Porto Editora's *Dicionário de Português-Inglês*, which provides us with 'to lodge, shelter, welcome, etc'. A Portuguese Jesuit priest, Fernão Cardim, although some ninety years later, also makes use of the word *agazalho* when describing the customs of the natives when receiving guests in their homes, in *Tratados da terra e gente do Brasil* (1584), which is one of the books included in Greenlee's bibliography. Cardim states, "*Entrando-lhe algum hospede*

pela casa a honra e agazalho que lhe fazer e chorarem-no ...", which can be translated into, 'When a guest enters their home they cry in order to honour and **welcome** him ...' (translation and bold mine) . His rendering of the verb into 'befriended' shows Greenlee's intention of emphasizing the romantic notions of the noble savage, in which Brazil's native indigenous peoples were generous/friendly toward the colonizers.

The example below is another instance where Greenlee's imperialist discourse plays out:

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| <p>Aly por entam nam ouve mais fala nem emtendimento com eles por a berberja d eles seer tamanha que se nom emtendia nem ouvia njngem. (112)</p> | <p>Then for the time there was no more speech or understanding with them, because their barbarity was so great that no one could either be understood or heard. (15)</p> |
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In the original, *berberja*, according to the Sílvio Batista Pereira's glossary of the letter, means *barbárie*. This word has its roots in Latin, which also carries the connotation of 'foreign nation and language', corroborated by the *Dicionário Etimológico da Língua Portuguesa*. If we read the original sentence closely and analyze the context in which it was written, right after 'for the time there was no more speech or understanding', one of the translator's choice could have been 'because their language was so foreign that no one could either be understood or heard'. Ten years later, another translator of the Letter, Charles David Ley, made the following rendering of the same passage in *Portuguese voyages, 1498-1663* (1947), "It was not possible to speak to these people or understand them. There was such a chattering in uncouth speech that no one could be heard or understood" (47). Therefore, in this instance, and according to his claim, Greenlee went "literal" and "colonial" and carried over to the English language all the connotations of "barbarity", which has always been the common trace associated with "primitive" peoples

In the following example, Greenlee decides to go "literal" again, but not entirely:

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| <p>...; e hũa d aquellas moças era toda timta de fumdo a cima daquela timtura, a qual certo era tam bem feita e tam redomda, e sua vergonha que ela nom tjnha, tam graçiosa...(112)</p> | <p>...; and one of the girls was all painted from head to foot with that paint, and she was so well built and so rounded and her lack of shame was so charming... (16)</p> |
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In the example above, Caminha makes a pun between the word used for the women's genitals, 'shame,' and the lack of shame in exposing them. In the original Portuguese, he says, 'and her shame, which was something she did not have, was so exquisite/ beautiful' (my translation). Greenlee seems to have missed the point and adopted a translation that ended up emphasizing the noble savage idea of "innocence" by saying that it was their 'lack of shame' that was 'so charming'. Caminha was not referring to the 'lack of' but actually to the woman's 'shame/genitals'. Not to mention that some of Caminha's "humor" was lost in the translation.

In the passage below, Greenlee emphasizes the idealized and romanticized vision of the "earthly paradise" in his translation:

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| <p>Aly folgou ele e todos nos outros bem hũa ora e meya e pescaram hy amdando marinheiros com huum chimchorro; e matarom pescado meudo nom mujto. (112)</p> | <p>There he and the rest of us had a good time for an hour and a half, and the mariners fished there, going out with a net, and they caught a few small fish. (16)</p> |
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The verb *folgar*, according to the glossary of the letter and other Portuguese dictionaries, also means *ter folga, descansar dos trabalhos* 'to take a break, rest', which clearly seems to be what the men were doing, and not 'having a good time'. By choosing this time not to go so "literal," and based on his colonialist ideology, Greenlee emphasized the paradisiacal notion of the new land.

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| <p>Emquanto estevemos aa missa e aa preegaçom seriam na praya outra tanta gente pouco mais ou menos como os d ontem com ser arcos e seetas, os quaaes andavam folgando e olhando nos; (113)</p> | <p>While we were at mass and at the sermon, about the same number of people were on the shore as yesterday with their bows and arrows, who were amusing themselves and watching us; (17)</p> |
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Again, the verb above clearly indicates in the original that the natives were simply 'resting' on the beach, and the translator decided to take it a step further and render it as 'amusing themselves' to emphasize the happy nature of the "savages" and to imply that they were amused and engaged in the catholic ceremony, which is not in the original text.

In the example below, Greenlee probably got confused with the original sentence:

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| <p>Trazia este velho o beijo tam furado, que lhe caberja pelo furado hum gram dedo polegar; e trazia metido no furado huia pedra verde roim que çarava per fora aquele buraco; e o capitam lh a fez tirar; e ele nom sey que diaabo falava, e hia com ela pãra a boca do capitam pãra lh a meter. (115)</p> | <p>This old man had his lip so bored that a large thumb could be thrust through the hole, and in the opening he carried a worthless green stone which closed it on the outside. And the captain made him take it out; and I do not know what devil spoke to him, but he went with it to put in the captain's mouth. (21)</p> |
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The sentence in bold could have been simply translated into 'I do not know what the devil (the hell) he spoke' (my translation). As in a typical example of colonial translation in the sense explained by postcolonial translation studies scholars, in which "primitive" peoples are seen as deprived of souls and with evil beliefs, in the English translation it seems that the native Indian was possessed by an evil force and in some kind of communication with the "devil", in a clear example of the David Spurr's insubstantialization trope.

By using 'wild men' in the excerpt below, the colonial translator gave up his "literal" approach and came through again in his work:

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| <p>... e com quanto os com aquilo muitosegurou e afaagou, tomavam logo huia esqujveza coma montezes, e forn se pãra cjma. (115)</p> | <p>And although he reassured and flattered them a great deal with this, they soon became sullen like wild men and went away upstream. (22)</p> |
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In the original, Caminha referred to the natives as *montezes* 'mountain animals', comparing them with European animals he knew back home, and using this image to say they showed *esqujveza* 'distrust,' according to the glossary of the letter, and not 'sullen' in the sense of 'stubborn' or 'unyielding' when this word is associated with animals in the English language (OED). Moreover, the translation fails to show that the Indians did not trust the Portuguese, which is clear in the original.

One of the biggest problems when translating a text 'literally' is what to do when one comes across words that have more than one meaning in a specific language, or when a translator runs into 'false friends', words that seem to have the same meaning because of their common root. This is what we see in the example below:

...; e estiveram asy huum pouco afastados de nos; e depois poucos e poucos mesturaran se comnosco; e **abraçavam nos** e folgavam; ... (116) ... and they kept a little apart from us, and afterwards little by little mingles with us. **And they embraced us** and had a good time; and some of them soon slunk away. ... (23)

An experienced translator would think twice before rendering *abraçar* into 'embrace' because of the context in which it is used. How odd would it seem if the native Indians of Brazil, who supposedly had never had contact with "white men" before, would simply start embracing and hugging them? If we take a closer look at the verb *abraçar*, for instance in the Portuguese Dictionary of the *Academia de Ciências de Lisboa* (2001), we will find other connotations, including *estar à volta, rodear, cercar* 'surround'. Greenlee's "literal" choice of 'embrace' here is a clear intention of highlighting the friendly and generous nature of the "savage".

Foram se la todos e **andaram** antr eles (...) e deziã que em cada casa se colhiã xxx ou R (40) pessoas ... e, como foi tarde **fezeram nos** logo todos tornar, e non quiserã que la ficasse nehuum...(116-117) They all went there and **mingled** with them (...)And they said that thirty or forty persons dwelt in each house ... And, as it was late, they presently **made all of us** return and did not wish any one to remain there. ... (25)

In the above example, Greenlee again decided not to go "literal" and translated *andaram* into 'mingled,' taking the simple verb 'walk' a bit further and bringing to the translation all the connotations of the verb 'mingle'. Further, the reflexive Portuguese pronoun *nos* can mean 'us' and 'them' in different instances. However, when the verb ends in 'm', *os* 'them' needs the addition of an 'n', thus becoming *nos*. By not following this grammatical rule, Greenlee translated it into 'us', which resulted in the inclusion of Caminha in that particular story, when actually he was talking about the convicts who had gone to the village of the natives and the story they told when they came back. So, Caminha did not go to the village on that occasion in the Portuguese original, but readers in the English language are given the impression he did.

Below, the translator again seemed to want to emphasize the niceness of the native Indians:

Era já a conversaçã d eles comnosco tanta que casy nos torvãvam ao que havãmos de fazer. **By now they kept us so much company** as almost to disturb us in what we had to do. (27) (117)

Actually in the original, according to the letter's glossary and the Portuguese Dictionary of the *Academia de Ciências de Lisboa*, *conversação* simply meant that they were around them all the time. Another possible translation would simply read, "by now they were around us so much that it almost disturbed us in what we had to do" (my translation). In the English passage above we again have the impression that the native Indians were "nice" and "friendly".

V. Conclusion – Resistance

As I have tried to show above through specific examples of Greenlee's rendering of Brazil's Letter of Discovery into English, translations are not at all void of hegemonic

ideologies and relations. They represent such notions and have extensively been used to describe "primitive" cultures. Moreover, we are well aware that humans are a product of their time, and the way they interpret the world must filter through their own subjective experiences. My reading of Greenlee's translation seems to support the idea that his choices were based on the knowledge and vocabulary he had about the Portuguese voyages of conquest around the world, which were rife with "colonial" discourse.

Although I have pointed out some of the translator's problematic choices of words and misinterpretations in the translation of Brazil's Letter of Discovery, I would like to add that Greenlee's contribution to the Anglo-American world is of great value. If it were not for his work of collecting and translating Portuguese history, English-speaking readers would not have had access to such materials. My point here is simply that perhaps if he had embarked on his translation today, when postcolonial translation scholars have been constantly bringing to light the problems created in translations performed by "colonial" translators, and new cultural studies theories challenge translations that claim to be transparent, objective, and faithful in order to expose underlying hegemonic ideologies, the outcome of his work would have been different.

David Spurr's last trope in *The Rhetoric of Empire* is entitled Resistance, which he also calls 'other voices,' "Let us hear, in unmediated purity, the testimony of those who are the objects of colonization and exclusion" (193). I believe that in this sentence, Spurr makes a direct reference to the problematic of translation, and I would argue that one of the ways of hearing 'other voices' is to re-translate canonical works, which were first translated with an imperial "gaze", in light of more harmonious relationships between cultures and nations. Analogously, it seems important to study and analyze not only translations of historical documents, but also of any works of fiction, in light of new relations among different cultures, paying close attention to signification and contextuality in order to uncover underlying ideologies. Since there will always be endless translations of an "original" work, which will certainly be different from one another, maybe it is time for a new translation of the Letter of Discovery into English, perhaps performed by native translators or Western professionals with a more critical point-of-view of their colonial and postcolonial positions. Moreover, Spurr says that the 'study of language is essentially an act of resistance,' referring to it being applied to cultural differences in the postcolonial world. He suggests that in order for a discourse to be free from colonial tropes it needs to have knowledge about ambivalence, inequality, and 'affirmation of difference'.

This is not to say that we will be able to right what was wronged in the past, but at least we will begin to have a better idea of what goes on in the translation process and probably seek more harmonious relationships in the task.

As Edwin Gentzler reminds us in *Contemporary Translation Theories* (2001):

This is not to say that the past can ever be made whole – the amphora ... lies in fragments. However, among those fragments, the translator can find connections, complicities, and contradictions from which to rethink how the past has been reconstructed and begin to imagine alternatives. (180)

The fact that Translation Studies have received increasing attention over the years and have come to occupy more and more space in the academic universe is also a sign of resistance to traditional problematic notions about the field. By studying, researching, and analyzing translation as a practice, both in colonial and postcolonial times, by challenging the traditional notions that translation is inferior to the original text and by proposing new ways to translate, we move toward understanding better the important role of this practice.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE



With a BA in Translation and Interpreting from the Unibero University in São Paulo, Brazil, Cristiano A. Mazzei has built a solid career in translation (English and Portuguese) in his native country, Brazil. After working as a translator and interpreter in different companies, Cristiano opened his own business in 1997, providing translation and interpreting services to major multinational corporations in Brazil and abroad. In 2000, after passing the board examination, he became a Certified Translator in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. He is now pursuing his MA in Translation Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Cristiano's academic areas of interest include postcolonial translation, gender writing in translation, and exploring foreignizing modes of translation.