

TOWARDS A HISTORY OF PORTUGUESE LITERATURE IN  
ENGLISH TRANSLATION.

Volume II: From the nineteenth century to the present day

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The volume in preparation will describe and analyse the translation into English of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Portuguese literature. In line with recent approaches to Translation Studies, it will demonstrate, in the words of Theo Hermans, “an approach to literary translation which is descriptive, target-oriented, functional and systematic; and an interest in the norms and constraints that govern the production and reception of translations, in the relation between translation and other types of text processing, and in the place and role of translations both within a given literature and in the interaction between literatures” (Hermans 1985: 10-11).

In a letter to *The Academy* lamenting the English neglect of Portuguese literature, Edgar Prestage drew particular attention to the nineteenth century as a period which admirably demonstrates the wealth of this literature, a wealth of which the English-speaking world remained shamelessly ignorant (Prestage 1893). It is unlikely that he would have been greatly encouraged by the attention paid to twentieth-century Portuguese literature, and the general perception that Portugal has only one modern poet — Fernando Pessoa — and one novelist — José Saramago, borne out by the entries for Portuguese literature in the *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English* (Classe 2000). Whilst an ever-increasing number of Portuguese works of the past two centuries exist in English translation, very few of these have received much attention, either from critics or from the general reading public, a fact which may be attributed to the “unjustified

complacency and intolerable lack of curiosity about foreigners and alien cultures” of which Giovanni Pontiero accused the English (Pontiero 1997: 67). However, Pontiero did perceive the situation to be improving, albeit rather slowly (1997: 68).

*The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation* (France 2000) mentions and provides brief comment on the English translations of a small selection of Portuguese works, beginning with Eça de Queirós and concluding with José Saramago. The comments offered are, however, certainly not based on close readings of the translations, since misguided claims are made regarding some of these. For example, Roy Campbell's translations of Eça de Queirós are described as “admirable work” when, in fact, his translation of *O Primo Basílio* was a clear mutilation of the original, transforming it into a decidedly mediocre novel (Kelsh 2000a; 2000b). The author also seems to have been unaware of the many other translators of Eça's work, mentioning only Roy Campbell and Ann Stevens. *The Babel Guide to the Fiction of Portugal, Brazil & Africa in English Translation* (Keenoy et al 1995) also offers brief introductions to a selection of translated works, but its scope is limited and it does not attempt any form of critical analysis of the translations themselves.

Scholars in Portugal and the UK, as well as in the US, have occasionally undertaken studies of particular translations, or of the projection of particular Portuguese authors into the English-speaking world (Aiken 1998; Freeman 2000; Kelsh 2000a, 2000b). If we are to confine ourselves to the past two centuries (thereby excluding Camões) Pessoa is undoubtedly the most common subject of study, even making his way into the small group of authors selected by Harold Bloom as key figures within the Western Canon (Bloom 1994). No scholarly work to date, however, has painted a detailed picture of the past two centuries of Portuguese literature in English translation, based on close examination of the translators, the translations themselves, and the reception of these within the English-speaking world. The second volume of *A History of Portuguese Literature in English Translation* will do just that.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Volume I, being written by Dr Patricia Odber de Baubeta, will include a catalogue of all existing translations of Portuguese literature into English, a lengthy introduction setting out the objectives, parameters, theoretical framework and methodology of the research, and will examine the translations of Portuguese literature from its beginnings to the eighteenth century.

## Introduction: Choices

Looking at the broad picture of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature in Portugal, the introductory chapter will begin by establishing what has been translated into English and what has not been translated. An attempt will be made to deduce possible criteria underpinning the selection procedure, looking at the types of works translated (the four categories established by Heloisa Gonçalves Barbosa in her doctoral thesis (1994) — “ambassadorial works”, “authorial works”, “consumer-oriented works” and “topical works” — may be useful here), when and by whom they were translated, where and by whom they were published. Where anthologies are concerned, translators’ or editors’ prefaces will shed useful light on the choices made. It has become apparent from an initial perusal of some of these prefaces that the choices are often a result of the personal preferences of those same translators or editors. This subjectivity may be couched in terms of an attempt to choose, for example, such works “as are most characteristic of their author, or most striking in themselves” (Prestage 1894) or may be more bluntly described as “a lucky dip (...) in the richly stocked bran-tub of Portuguese lyric poetry” (Downes 1947). For more recent publications, translators, editors and publishers may be consulted in person regarding their reasons for producing certain translations.

André Lefevere suggests that the formation of a canon of world literature is in the hands of translators and their publishers (Lefevere 1980), and his contention that the canonisation or non-canonisation of literary works is affected by “issues such as power, ideology, institution and manipulation” (Lefevere 1992: 2) will be evaluated in the specific context of Portuguese literature in English translation. Given the size and influence — both economic and cultural — of the English-speaking world, translation into English, in particular, can be considered a major step towards entry into the canon of world literature. It may be argued that Jose Saramago would never have won the Nobel prize were it not for the English translations of his novels, while conversely Miguel Torga might have been awarded the Nobel prize, for which he was nominated on more than one occasion, if more and better English translations of his work had existed. This suggestion raises the question of why one author was more favoured by translators and publishers than the other. Historical circumstances may have been an influential factor here, the censorship

of the *Estado Novo* keeping Torga's work from the centre of the Portuguese canon for a long period. Another question that arises at this point is whether canonical status in the source language is a prerequisite for translation, or whether, in some cases, the fact of being translated into another language may affect the canonical status of a work within its home literary system, as seems to have been the case for António Lobo Antunes (Zenith 1997). Only a detailed study of the totality of Portuguese literature in English translation will enable valid conclusions to be drawn on matters such as these.

A further issue to be investigated is the fact that very few major nineteenth-century works were translated before the second half of the twentieth century. The exceptions to this are therefore of particular interest. In the late nineteenth century the USA experienced a huge increase in demand for novels, and publishers found that the most economical way of meeting the demand was to publish translations of European novels (Tebbel 1975: 171). This probably accounts for Mary Serrano's translation of *O Primo Basílio*, published in 1889, and Roxana Dabney's translation of *Os Fidalagos da Casa Mourisca*, published in 1891. The other translator engaged in making nineteenth-century Portuguese works available to an English-speaking readership was Edgar Prestage, whose translations of Antero de Quental's sonnets and Almeida Garrett's *Frei Luis de Sousa* appeared in 1894 and 1909 respectively. Academics like Edgar Prestage and Aubrey Bell did a huge amount to make Portuguese literature accessible within the English-speaking world. To what extent this role was later taken on by other individuals or by small publishing houses and bodies responsible for the promotion of Portuguese culture is a factor that will be explored. The Portuguese Arts Trust, the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Instituto Camões have certainly done a great deal to promote Portuguese literature in the UK, and publishers such as Carcanet, Dedalus and Harvill currently publish a steady trickle of translations from the Portuguese.

In the twentieth century, one point to be discussed is the translation of women's writing. Certain works in this category may have been translated because of a drive to make women writers visible within national and world literary systems, or due to their highly controversial nature, as in the case of the *Novas Cartas Portuguesas*, which was published in English within three years of its publication in Portugal.

Another factor to be considered in this analysis of the texts chosen for translation is Even-Zohar's assertion that "texts are chosen according to their compatibility with the new approaches and the supposedly innovatory role they may assume within the target literature" (1990: 47). It is certainly the case, for example, that Griswold Morley believed the sonnets of Antero de Quental to possess qualities unknown in English poetry. In the preface to his translation of the sonnets he states that "the Portuguese are endowed with an intensity and profundity of emotion denied to many other peoples and, in addition, they possess the sure sense of form which one usually associates with the French race. Both of these gifts, together with a Germanic penchant for metaphysical speculation, are found in the extraordinary *Sonnets* of Antero de Quental" (Morley 1973). Edgar Prestage, the first to translate Antero's sonnets into English, was also aware of their "exceptional merit", but there may well have been other influences acting upon his choice of text for translation. His copious correspondence with Lusophile and Lusophone scholars, housed in the King's College Archive in London, includes a letter in which Sir Richard Burton makes suggestions of Portuguese works which Prestage might translate (Pound 1987).

In this introductory chapter, then, the interrelations between the English literary canon, the Portuguese foreign canon within the English-speaking world, and the Portuguese national canon will be traced. The theoretical basis for this analysis will already have been expounded in Volume I of the *History*, where a complete catalogue of translations will also be incorporated, but this chapter will apply the theory to the specific case of Portuguese literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## **Section 1: Translators and Publishers**

The first chapter will focus on late nineteenth-century American translators, exploring the phenomenon of translations being used to meet the huge demand for novels in the United States towards the end of the nineteenth century (Tebbel 1975). Of particular interest is Mary Serrano, not least because of the introductory note to her translation of Eça's *O Primo Basílio*, which proves rather shocking to those concerned about fidelity to the original text:

In presenting this graphic picture of Lisbon life to the American public, the translator has assumed the respon-

sibility of softening here and there, and even at times of effacing, a line too sharply drawn, a light or shadow too strongly marked to please a taste that has been largely formed on Puritanic models, convinced (without entering into the question of how far a want of literary reticence may be carried without violating the canons of true art) that while the interest of the story itself remains undiminished, the ethical purpose of the work will thereby be given wider scope. (Queirós 1972: 5)

The intellectual biography of this translator merits investigation, taking into account all that is known about her background, all that she has written about the process of translation, and her broader translation activity itself (the years 1891 to 1895 witnessed the publication of Serrano's translations of no less than eight Spanish novels — by authors such as Alarcón, Pardo Bazán, Galdós and Valera). In an article entitled "A Plea for the Translator" (Serrano 1897), Serrano wrote of the imperative to remain faithful to the original text, even when this may shock the aesthetic senses or moral views of the translator. Such a stance is clearly contradicted by her approach to the translation of *O Primo Basílio* and her introductory note to this translation. A similar contradiction between theory and practice has been observed by Kabi Hartman in her analysis of Serrano's translation from the French of the journal of Marie Bashkirtseff, published in the same year as the translation of *O Primo Basílio* (1889). Hartman concludes that Serrano "fails to live up to her philosophy of mirroring, for her ideology of mollification creates a distorted 'reflection' of Bashkirtseff and her *Journal*" (Hartman 1999: 78). However, since the two translations referred to were published eight years prior to her statements about the translator's commitment to fidelity, the possibility of a development in her views must be allowed for. This could be explored by means of a close examination of the translations — most of which are from Spanish — completed by Serrano in the intervening years. Roxana Dabney's role as translator will also be examined in this chapter, as will the influence of scholars, such as George Ticknor and Henry Longfellow, and publishers such as William Ticknor, on the promulgation of Portuguese literature in the United States (Tompkins 1985). Although Longfellow was not very complimentary in his references to the Portuguese poetry of the first half of the nineteenth-century, he certainly established a very solid tradition of bringing foreign literature to the attention of the

English-speaking world, his major work being published on both sides of the Atlantic (Longfellow 1855).

Chapter two will look at the role of Lusophiles and Hispanists, examining the considerable contribution of figures like Edgar Prestage and Aubrey Bell to the dissemination of Portuguese literature in the English-speaking world. In addition to many articles on Portuguese literature, Bell wrote two key texts on the subject — *Studies in Portuguese Literature* (1914), *Portuguese Literature* (1922) — and also translated a selection of poems (1913) and the Queirós novel *A Relíquia* (*The Relic* [1915]). In addition, he produced a work that will be an essential resource for the compilation of the catalogue to be included in the present history: his *Portuguese Bibliography* (1922).<sup>2</sup> Edgar Prestage did a great deal to correct what he saw as the neglect of Portuguese literature in England. His translations included works by Fernão Lopes, Camões, Francisco Manuel de Melo and, of greater interest for the purposes of this chapter, Almeida Garrett, Antero de Quental and Eça de Queirós. Prefaces to these translations, such as that to the sonnets of Antero de Quental, where Prestage explains something of his priorities when translating this poetry, will be studied alongside Prestage's other writings, many of which deal with aspects of Portuguese literature. Another valuable source of information here will be Prestage's correspondence with other scholars and writers about work-related matters, as well as the letters of congratulation that he received on the publication of some of his translations (Pound 1987). Roy Campbell, although his approach is less scholarly than that of Prestage and Bell, will also be considered in this chapter since, to his translations of works by Camões, Pessoa, Antero de Quental, Francisco Bugalho, José Régio, Joaquim Paço d'Arcos and Eça de Queirós, he added a book about Portugal which included chapters on Portuguese literature. Also, like Prestage and Bell, he lived for an extended period in Portugal. His translations vary enormously in quality. A poet himself, he translated poetry with an obvious desire to do justice to the original text. Such was not the case with his prose translations, which appear to have been undertaken for purely financial reasons. Ironically, having described Eça de Queirós as "Portugal's greatest prose writer" (Monteiro 1994: 134), his incompetent translation of the brilliantly constructed and sharply yet affectionately satirical *O Primo Basílio* resulted in a novel which a review in the *TLS*

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<sup>2</sup> This bibliography was updated by Carlos Estorninho in 1953.

dismissed as “not a great novel” but “a crisp, well constructed domestic drama of seduction and blackmail” (TLS 1953). The accusation of incompetence may seem a harsh one, but it is surely justifiable when we consider that Campbell’s translation cut out over one quarter of the novel, removing much of the psychological depth from the characters and undermining the social satire, and was hampered by linguistic ignorance leading to frequent ridiculous errors, such as the rendering of Luiza’s conclusion of an argument with her husband with the words “Ê preciso pôr um cobro” — meaning “We must put an end to this” — as “We’ll have to put on a table-cloth”. In spite of these shortcomings, however, it must be admitted that Campbell made a significant contribution to the presence of Portuguese literature within the English-speaking world.

Chapter three will consider the work of contemporary professional translators, such as Gregory Rabassa, Richard Zenith, the late Giovanni Pontiero and Margaret Jull Costa. All of these translators have been very open about the process of translation and a study of their approaches will be undertaken. Pontiero and Costa have both published on the challenges posed by translating Saramago (Pontiero 1997; Costa 1999). A comparative approach to their theoretical and practical approaches to translating the Nobel prize winner may be included here. Similarly, in 1991, Zenith and Costa both produced translations of Pessoa’s *Livro do Desassossego*, and a comparative study of their work could be undertaken, also bearing in mind Alfred MacAdam’s version, published in the same year. The relationship between translator and author — described by Saramago as “an exchange between two individual personalities which have to be complemented, and, above all, an encounter between two collective cultures which must acknowledge each other” (Pontiero 1997: 86) — will also be examined. In addition, translators will, where possible, be consulted about their work.

The final chapter of section one will briefly account for the other people involved in translation, including academics, poets and other creative writers. The main observations made in the preceding chapters will be pulled together here with the aim of establishing whether there has been any noticeable development in attitudes to the translation of Portuguese literature. A useful reference point when seeking to draw conclusions on this matter will be the descriptive study of changes in translation methods throughout the twentieth century, compiled by Lawrence Venuti and Mona Baker (Venuti 2000). The roles of translators, editors



and publishers in bringing Portuguese literature to the attention of the English-speaking world will be evaluated at this stage.

## Section 2: Authors and Their Works

Gideon Toury has made a strong case for the need to develop the branch of descriptive translation studies through detailed analysis of the facts available, namely the translations themselves (Toury 1995). This section will undertake just such a descriptive approach to the process of translation, through a series of detailed studies of the texts.

Chapter five will focus on the nineteenth-century Romantics, carrying out a close analysis of Prestage's translation of Garret's *Frei Luis de Sousa* (1909), bearing in mind the specific problems posed by the translation of drama (Törnquist 1991). Also to be submitted to close examination here are Parker's version of *Viagens na Minha Terra* (1987), the translation of Júlio Dinis's *Os Fidalgos da Casa Mourisca* (translated by Dabney in 1891) and the two novels by Camilo Castelo Branco that currently exist in translation: *A Queda dum Anjo* (Clough 1991) and *Amor de Perdição* (Clemente 2000). If Isabel Almeida's forthcoming translation of *A Queda dum Anjo* is available in time, it will also be examined. Detailed comparative readings of source and target language texts will seek to highlight particular challenges posed by different authors and texts and the ways in which these have been tackled by the translators. John Parker, in the introduction to his translation of *Viagens na Minha Terra*, refers to the stylistic choices to be made by the translator of "any work belonging to an earlier century" (Garrett 1987) and Alice Clemente, in the preface to her translation of *Amor de Perdição*, comments on the particular challenges posed by Camilo, whose translator must negotiate "the range of the author's linguistic registers" and tread "the fine line between lyricism [...] and the sarcasm and irony of the author's satire" (Castelo Branco 2000).

Chapter six will explore the realm of poetry translation, by focusing on a selection of poets whose works have been translated on different occasions by different translators. The variety of approaches to solving the unique problems of translating verse will be examined, with reference to existing scholarship in this area of translation studies (Pound 1931; Atlas 1973; Paz 1992; Bassnett 1998). One area to be explored is the way in which professional poets, such as Ruth Fainlight, Jonathan Griffin and Roy Campbell, have undertaken the task of translating poetry,

and whether the works they choose to translate bear any resemblance to, or exert any influence upon their own works. Jonathan Griffin has published on the process of translating poetry, claiming the existence of “uma semelhança essencial entre a interpretação da música e a tradução de poesia” and asking the fundamental question “É possível ser-se fiel ao conteúdo global de um poema em língua estrangeira sem ser fiel à sua forma?” (Griffin 1982). Ruth Fainlight also provides an interesting angle for investigation, having published in 1980 a collection of original poems entitled *Sibyls and Others* (Fainlight 1995: 71-153) and then in 1988 a translation of Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen’s poem “Sibilas” (Fainlight 1995: 296). An initial reading of the two reveals parallels in theme and imagery, raising the question of when Fainlight first read Sophia’s poem (which was first published in 1950) and whether her own work may have been influenced by it.

Key poets to be considered for inclusion in this chapter are Antero de Quental (translated by Prestage, Morley, Morland, Downes, Campbell, Zenith and Bell), Eugénio de Castro (translated by Bell and Downes), Joaquim Paço d’Arcos (various translators, mostly scattered in anthologies), Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (translated by Longle, Fainlight, Griffin, Levitin, Sapinkopf and Zenith), Jorge de Sena (translated by Griffin, Longland, Brooksmith, Monteiro, and others) and Eugénio de Andrade (translated by Brooksmith and Levitin). The numerous translations of Pessoa’s poetry will not be included here since Pessoa has already made his way into the English-language canon, and his translated works have thus been the object of frequent study. Stephen Reckert talks of “foreign readers coerced into taking notice by a hard sell of Fernando Pessoa, implying that [...] Portugal has only ever had one poet: a marketing strategy at once demeaning to the literature as a whole and unjust to such predecessors and contemporaries of Pessoa’s as Cesário Verde and Camilo Pessanha” (Reckert 1993: 9-10).

Chapter seven will look solely at the works of Eça de Queirós. This author merits a chapter apart because of his canonical status in the source culture and the fact that his works have been repeatedly translated between 1889 and the present day. Indeed, further translations of his works, stimulated by celebrations of the centenary of his death, have recently been completed by the likes of Alison Aiken and Margaret Jull Costa. Costa is currently working with the Dedalus publishing house to bring out a translation of one of Eça’s novels each year until 2005. The

range of translators of this author provides ample material for an in-depth study of different methods of translation. In some cases the original texts have been seriously bowdlerised (Serrano and Campbell). In others, a wide range of attempts have been made to do justice to the style and wit of this outstanding novelist. In 1981, Jorge de Sena published a paper criticising the English translators of Eça for failing to tailor their translations to the author's unique style, preferring the easy option of picking out an off-the-peg style from the selection offered by their own literature, a process which has tended to present Eça to the English reader as a lesser Dickens. The distinctive problems that Eça's work poses for the translator will be examined here alongside the wide variety solutions employed. One characteristic of the Queiroisian style, often employed to ironic effect, is his unconventional use of adverbs and adjectives. For example, in *A Cidade e as Serras*, a description of the stylish yet supremely superficial Madame d'Oriol tells us that "No inverno, logo que na amável cidade começavam a morrer de frio, debaixo das pontes, criancinhas sem abrigo — ela preparava com comovido cuidado os seus vestidos de patinagem" (Queirós 1980b: 106). The ironic intentions behind the choice of the adjective "comovido" are sadly lost in Roy Campbell's version: "... she prepared her skating costumes with the greatest of care" (Queirós 1955). The effect of the original may, perhaps, be approximated by "...she felt moved to apply herself to the careful preparation of her skating costumes", but the structure loses the neat simplicity of Eça's version, and the originality of his choice of adjective. Particular attention will be paid in this chapter to the translation of humour. A further example will serve to illustrate the translator's — in this case Margaret Jull Costa — decision to sacrifice some of the humour in favour of a more natural English expression. This time the novel is *A Relíquia* and Theodorico has just been introduced to his aunt and told "É necessario gostar muito da titi... É necessario dizer sempre que *sim* á titi!" His aunt then exclaims in horror that she thinks someone has put oil on Theodorico's hair, and the boy's first words to her are a very timid "Sim, titi" (Queirós 1918: 8), a refrain which is repeated throughout the novel with a clearly comic effect. Margaret Jull Costa translates the initial advice given to Theodorico as "You must always love her and always do as she tells you." (Queirós 1994: 16), and the "Sim, titi" a few lines later as "Yes, they did, Auntie", thereby weakening the comic refrain here and undermining its effect as it is repeated throughout the novel. Aubrey Bell, in his

translation of the same novel, opted for a more literal translation of this section — “you must always say yes to Auntie”, and Theodorico’s “Yes, Auntie” (Queirós 1954: 13) — thereby maintaining the humour. These isolated examples merely give a flavour of the kind of problem to be examined in chapter seven.

Chapter eight will focus on translations of contemporary fiction, examining a selection of contemporary novels and short stories. Authors to consider for inclusion are José Rodrigues Miguéis, David Mourão-Ferreira, Miguel Torga, Jorge de Sena, José Cardoso Pires, António Lobo Antunes, Lídia Jorge and Mário de Carvalho. The work of José Saramago would be excluded for reasons similar to those mentioned for excluding Pessoa from chapter 6, and also because the specific problems posed by translating his work have been commented on by Giovanni Pontiero and Margaret Jull Costa and will, therefore, be referred to in chapter 3. In each of the detailed studies carried out in this and the preceding three chapters, attention will be paid to the use of glossaries, footnotes and explanations in brackets (processes which make the translator visible) and also to cases of amplification and omission. A major question to be considered is to what extent a translator is willing to sacrifice the subtlety of the original text for the sake of readability. Where one person has produced translations of different works, it should also be possible to talk in terms of consistent stylistic preferences and choices.

### **Section 3: Reception**

In the words of Ria Vanderauwera, “It is not an idle question to ask what actually happened to them. Were they advertised, distributed, reviewed, sold, read? Did they receive any response?” (Vanderauwera 1985) The concluding chapter will look at the reception of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Portuguese literature in the United Kingdom and the United States. A thorough survey of all potential sources of critical response to the published translations will be carried out and, where possible, publishing houses will be consulted about advertising and sales. All of the information gathered will be used to paint as complete a picture as possible of the extent to which Anglo-American culture has embraced the Portuguese literature of the last two centuries, and conclusions will be drawn about the role of Portuguese literature within the Anglo-American literary (poly)system.

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